

Donors back Shs.4.5b Power Plan

World Bank and IMF to boost the country's electricity distribution

By STEPHEN MBURU

A Sh4.5 billion project to end frequent power blackouts has won donor backing.

The project –expected to be completed by May next year–would improve power distribution, said Energy Minister Ochillo Ayacko.

The country would not experience any more power blackouts after May, thanks to funding by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, he said.

Power outages were caused by a weak distribution system and transmission lines, which were vulnerable to heavy downpours and strong winds, said Mr. Ayacko, who accused the previous Kanu government of neglecting the distribution system.

“We are consulting with IMF and the World Bank to fund the strengthening of distribution and transmission lines. We need around \$60 million (about Sh4.5 Billion). The problem will be behind us in due course, perhaps by May next year,” he told journalists after he opened a Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) regional conference at UNEP headquarters in Gigiri, Nairobi.

It was discouraging that sugar factories, apart from Mumias, continued to import electricity

from the national grid, while they could export it if they were self-reliant.

“Mumias Sugar Factory is contributing a capacity of 2Mw to the national power grid and has the potential for expanding production,” said the minister.

The two-day conference, organised by the African Energy Policy Research Network (AFREPREN), brings together delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Mauritius.

It is sponsored by REEEP, a UK- government initiative, aimed at boosting sustainable energy and was launched last year in South Africa during the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The conference is focusing on renewable energy and efficiency technologies and policies which deliver jobs and clean Energy cheaply.

Those taking part include Mr John Githinji, the Energy ministry's acting superintendent of power, Mr J.N. Maina, the ministry's acting director of renewables; AFREPREN Director Stephen Karekezi; Dr Amal-Lee Amin of the REEEP Secretariat, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK; and Uganda's permanent secretary for Energy, Mr. F. A. Kabagambe-Kaliisa.

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