

COAL NEWS

NEW ZEALAND

Energy Minister says coal has a role in NZ energy mix

Energy Minister David Parker recently told the 2006 Petroleum Conference the role of coal in the energy mix should not be discounted. "Coal currently supplies around 12% of New Zealand's primary energy. However, a significant hurdle for the coal sector is the need to overcome the environmental impacts of coal production and use, particularly in relation to the associated emissions of CO₂."

He said New Zealand could not lose sight of the fact that Otago and Southland lignite resources held 20 times the energy of the Maui gas field and significant proportions were likely to be economically recoverable. "The real value in developing these vast resources may be to provide a chemical feedstock rather than a primary energy fuel. A technology, which looks increasingly feasible, is to convert lignite to synthetic gas, from which petroleum fuels, methanol, ammonia/urea and electricity can be produced."

Spring Mine development shift

Managers of Spring Creek underground mine have introduced an innovative method of moving coal away from the seam. Solid Energy recently approved a new 12-month mining plan that will take extraction through to February 2007.

It has already commenced a \$1.2M drilling programme which could extend the life of the mine by a further 5 years. Extraction coal is still being 24-hours a day but trials of the new development technique have seen the number of development shifts reduced from three to two a day.

Miners have been cutting the coal and then driving the shuttle car down the underground road to dump it in water, where it is mixed to a slurry and conveyed to the surface. Now, they are depositing the coal directly into the water.

L&M coal seam exploring methane sites

L&M Coal Seam recently told the Otago Daily Times it planned to set up five pilot production sites in Otago and Southland, and hopes to produce commercial quantities of methane from gas trapped within coal seams. The company had spent \$3M on an exploration programme over the past four years, and further development and testing would take the total investment to over \$10M. The five pilot production holes to be drilled would determine methane flows and the gas would be stored in tanks and transported by road to Dunedin, Queenstown and Invercargill.

L&M has 10 exploration permits covering 1896 square kilometres in the Waikato, Central Otago, Kaitangata and Southland. The company website said assessments put the energy potential from its permit areas at 240-300 petajoules.

Hutchison to buy stake in coal terminal

Hutchison Whampoa (Hongkong) will buy a stake in New Zealand's biggest coal-shipment facility, making its first investment in the southern hemisphere to tap growing exports to China. Hutchison Port Holdings will pay NZ\$107M or NZ\$2.10 a share, for 49.9% of Lyttelton Port Co from Christchurch City Holdings. The stake will give Hutchison access to a port that includes bulk loading terminals and two cranes.

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The Hong Kong-based company is branching out to run facilities for iron, coal and other dry bulk to meet China's industrial needs. China imported a record 26.2 Mtonnes of coal last year to feed an economy that expanded 9.9%. It bought 170,806 tonnes of the fuel from New Zealand, 44% more than in 2004, valued at US\$21.7M.

Eastern Corporation raises A\$4.2M for acquisitions

Eastern Corporation has raised A\$4.2M via a placement of 70 million new shares in Eastern at an issue price of 6c per share. During 2005 Eastern established a coal asset base in New Zealand's South Island with the purchase of the operating Cascade coal mine and in Queensland's Bowen Basin with the acquisition by Mitsui of a joint venture interest in Eastern's Broughton project. Eastern plans to aggressively develop its existing projects and pursue new opportunities in the coal sector.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Signing of global clean coal power generation agreement (Australia)

HRL Ltd of Australia and Harbin Power Engineering Company (HPEC) of China recently announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, to develop a 400 MW demonstration power station in Victoria's Latrobe Valley using new clean coal technology developed by HRL and to explore future development of other power plants globally. The project will use HRL's Integrated Drying and Gasification Combined Cycle (IDGCC) Technology which is anticipated to deliver a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and 50% reduction in water usage compared with current best brown coal power generation technology in the Latrobe Valley.

Leighton Contractors to purchase Henry Walker Eltin Ltd mining assets (Australia)

Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd has entered into a Heads of Agreement with the administrators of Henry Walker Eltin Group Ltd (HWE), to purchase the Australian and New Zealand contract mining assets of the company, subject to documentation and certain conditions including the approval of the Foreign Investment Review Board.

HWE, with a long established presence in Australia's mining industry, was placed into Voluntary Administration earlier this year. Its assets include fifteen mining operations with a combined turnover of approximately A\$650M per annum, work in hand of approximately A\$1.6B and a workforce of more than 1600 people. It holds significant status in the Australian mining industry as the leading contract miner in the iron ore sector.

BHP coal deal fuels talk of new rail tunnel (Australia)

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) said BHP Billiton's search for coal in north-west New South Wales is the strongest indicator yet that the Murrurundi rail tunnel could be viable. The company has been granted an exploration licence for an area near Gunnedah (see below). It has also announced plans to expand coal loading facilities at the Port of Newcastle and a joint feasibility study with the ARTC into a rail tunnel through the Liverpool Ranges.

NSW joins hunt for more coal (Australia)

The New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma announced a new \$2B coal mining exploration project in north-western NSW that he says could generate up to 1000 new jobs. Mr Iemma said the state government had granted mining giant BHP Billiton a 5-year licence to carry out detailed exploration of the Caroon coal area near Gunnedah. The area has an estimated 500 Mtonnes of untapped coal resources.

Project approval granted to the Wilpinjong Coal Project (Australia)

Wilpinjong Coal Pty Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Excel Coal Limited, has received Project Approval for the Wilpinjong Coal Project from the NSW Ministry for Planning. The project approval will permit the construction and operation of the Wilpinjong Coal Project, an open cut coal mine to be located near Wollar, north east of Mudgee in New South Wales. The Wilpinjong Coal Project will produce up to 13 Mtonnes run of mine coal with up to 8 Mtonnes per annum of coal for domestic power generation and approximately 2 Mtonnes per annum for export markets.

New export contract for Centennial (Australia)

Centennial Coal Company Limited recently announced a new 500,000 tonnes per year export contract (for five years) with Taiwan Power Company (Taipower), the government-owned power utility. Under the contract, premium thermal coal will be supplied via the Port Kembla Coal Terminal. To ensure the long-term availability of Centennial's thermal coal to meet growing export demand, the company noted that the Ministry for Planning approved its application to extend Clarence Coal Mine by the addition of four new lease areas. This equates to 21 years of extra mine life.

Coal may be in vogue again (Canada)

Alberta's Energy Minister Greg Melchin believes coal, whether people like it or not, is poised to become the most important fuel in Canada's future. Melchin strongly urged Ontario to reconsider its seemingly inflexible position on coal,

particularly "clean coal" - a variety of technologies and power-plant designs that promise to take the most abundant fossil fuel on the continent, clean it up and turn it into low emission electricity.

Shenhua expects to boost coal production (China)

Shenhua Energy Co. plans to increase its production by 64% in the next 4 years. The company produced 122.1 Mtonnes of coal in 2005, with about 85% sold to the domestic contract market. It has set a target of producing 200 Mtonnes by 2010. Shenhua said it will cautiously select other coal mines for mergers and acquisitions as well as explore coal resources overseas this year in order to boost its market share.

Construction of coal production facilities to be accelerated (China)

The National Development and Reform Commission has stated that China will accelerate its plans to build 13 large scale coal production facilities this year. China will build several extra large opencast coal mines and some modern large scale underground mines this year. The central government would soon give its views on the construction plans for the 13 production areas. Large scale coal businesses are being encouraged to promote and invest in multiple developments.

Refinery to use coal ash for alumina (China)

China is to build its first alumina refinery in Inner Mongolia, which will use coal ash instead of bauxite as the raw material. If successful, the technology could help China to overcome a huge shortage in alumina, the raw material for aluminium.

An Inner Mongolia Mengxi Group official said the refinery would have an annual capacity of 400,000 tonnes and would recover alumina from coal ash. Construction would start in May and operation of the first phase of 200,000 tonnes per year was likely before the end of 2007. Alumina and other by-products contained in coal ash are lost in landfills, and the refinery will make use of the waste from a nearby power plant.

Agreement to share coal liquefaction technology (China)

China has agreed to share know-how with India for setting up a coal liquefaction plant. China is also open to exploring possibilities of joint projects with India in the areas of coal-bed methane (CBM) development and underground coal gasification. This recent energy talks between the two sides have opened a new chapter in India's developing relationship with China. The issues pertaining to energy sector cooperation came up for discussion at the 10th session of the India-China Working Group on Coal, held in Shanghai last year.

Ambitious coal-to-oil project hits roadblock (India)

The Indian government's ambitious plan to improve energy security by converting coal into oil seems to have hit a road block. Coal India Limited (CIL) has expressed its inability to supply the desired amount of coal for conversion, a move that may delay the project by almost a decade. The proposed project was to be developed as a joint venture between Coal India Ltd and Oil India Ltd at the latter's plant in Duliagan in Assam.

CIL has informed the coal ministry it would be able to generate surplus coal required for the coal to oil project only by 2013-14, so the project should be planned accordingly. According to a government task force report, the proposed coal liquefaction project was to be implemented by two joint venture companies—one for production of coal and the other for setting up a coal liquefaction plant and its upstream activities.

Piped gas firm in coal conversion venture (China)

Xinao Gas Holdings said it will invest in a US\$99M coal conversion project in Inner Mongolia with its controlling shareholder to diversify into the energy chemical industry. Hebei-based Xinao will invest US\$14.85M and take a 15% stake in a new joint venture - Xinneng Chemical. Its controlling shareholder and chairman Wang Yusuo, through two subsidiaries, owns the remaining stake. Xinneng is expected to receive a business licence in 6 months and commercial production will start about 3 years after the licence is issued.

Generators turn to coal as gas prices soar (Germany)

Coal is enjoying a resurgence as the fuel of choice for German electricity generators, despite environmental costs, as gas prices soar to record highs. The row earlier in the year between Russia and Ukraine over gas highlighted Europe's vulnerability in relying on imported energy and gave a further boost to home produced coal.

Germany is one of Europe's largest coal producers and relies on the fuel for a 50% of its power generation. Half of the coal is mined locally with the rest imported. German power companies plan to build 12 coal based electricity generation units with a joint capacity of over 11,500 MW to come on stream by 2010/2011.

Sale of coal through E-marketing (India)

Coal India Ltd (CIL) has sold 10.21 Mtonnes of coal through E-marketing during the April-November 2005 period. Average increase over notified price during the period was 54.2% and a total number of 17,403 bidders took part in the process of which 10,526 were successful. CIL has also released another 10Mtonnes of coal through the E-marketing mode, a system which helps to do away with unscrupulous traders and black marketers.

Xstrata Coal takes equity stake to explore opportunities (Mongolia)

Xstrata Coal has entered into an alliance agreement with Erdene Gold Inc. of Halifax, Nova Scotia, which allows Xstrata Coal the first option to enter into a joint venture and earn a 75% interest in coal opportunities identified by Erdene in Mongolia.

Through this agreement, Xstrata Coal will have access to Erdene projects and share with Erdene its extensive knowledge of coal project feasibility, development and operations to jointly pursue development opportunities. Due to its proximity to China and its growing demand for commodities, the extensive minerals deposits in Mongolia are expected to be developed rapidly in the coming years. To foster development of their deposits by international mining companies, the Government of Mongolia has adopted mining legislation similar to that of Australia.

Coal output up 5.1% on year in 2005 (Russia)

Russia's annual coal output increased 5.1% to 296.2 Mtonnes in 2005 according to the Industry and Energy Ministry. Of the total, open-pit mining output rose 6.8% to 194.2 Mt, while underground mining output increased 1.8% to 102 Mtonnes. In 2004 Russian companies' annual coal output rose 2.2%.

Government calls for higher share of coal energy balance (Russia)

The Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov said that Russia should increase the share of coal in its fuel and energy balance and the government will consider measures to support coal exports. PM Fradkov highlighted the need to boost the profitability of the coal industry. He called on the coal-producing companies to take measures to reduce costs. The government is prepared to provide informational and diplomatic assistance to the coal companies to expand coal exports.

Coal mining venture: ZESA to float tender (South Africa)

ZESA Holdings is pressing on with plans to mine coal and will soon float a tender in South Africa, China and India for the commissioning of a detailed geological survey that would determine the mining method to be used for extraction at Western and Sinamatela coal fields. The survey will be used to produce a mining development plan based on the quantities and quality of the coal underground. ZESA will need US\$100M to US\$200M for the project but the actual cost will be determined by the survey.

Kumba concludes pre-feasibility study (South Africa)

Kumba Coal (Pty) Ltd has concluded an agreement with Magaleng (Pty) Ltd, Magaleng, South Africa, to commence a pre-feasibility study for the development of the Mmamabula Central Coal Resource in Botswana. The Mmamabula Coal Resource is an extension of the Waterberg Coalfield. The latter hosts Kumba's flagship Grooteegeluk coal mine which is South Africa's largest coal operation and the world's largest coal beneficiation complex. Preliminary analysis of the coal resource indicates that there could be scope for 2 to 2.5 Mtonnes per year of thermal (power station) coal, with the possible added benefit of some 0.5 Mtonne per year of higher value metallurgical coal being produced from an open-cast mine with an envisaged life of more than 20 years.

Coal cleans up (UK)

Malcolm Wicks, UK Energy Minister said that coal powered more than half of the nation's peak electricity demand for winter and will form an important part of the Energy Review's analysis. Coal has been meeting 50% of average weekday demand, stepping in to keep electricity flowing to homes, factories and offices. This flexibility, built on the diversity of the nation's energy sources, is an important strength of UK's energy market. Cleaner generation is essential if coal is to survive the shift to sustainable forms of energy. He was encouraged that more two-thirds of the UK's coal-fired power stations have signed up to meet tough new limits on sulphur and nitrogen emissions. Coal prices have almost doubled since 2003, making it economically viable for miners to hunt for the more difficult-to-reach seams but at current prices it is still relatively cheap compared with gas.

California high-tech group eyes clean coal power plant (USA)

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group is studying building a "clean" coal-fired power plant that would be owned by local tech businesses. Plans for new coal power plants are popping up across the United States amid ample supplies of the fossil fuel and higher prices for natural gas. The Silicon Valley group's plant would install scrubber systems to reduce acid gases including sulphur dioxide from the plant's exhaust emissions. The 600 MW plant -- providing power for

about 480,000 homes -- would cost about \$850M and could sell electricity to businesses at 6.5 cents a kilowatt. The Silicon Valley region around the city of San Jose has peak demand of 2,200 MW of electricity.

Power providers say they expect carbon regime (USA)

US power company executives said they expect a series of rules and taxes will be imposed, possibly within five years, on carbon emissions, a contributor to greenhouse gas accumulation and climate change. Those regulations will challenge electric power providers using coal for fuel and may contribute to further reliance on natural gas plants and increased acceptance of nuclear power. The executives said carbon sequestration will likely be a centerpiece of future legislation with taxes and a pollution credit trading system. Power companies are currently planning to build coal-fired plants generating 100,000 MW of electricity within the next 20 years.

TECHNOLOGY & OTHER NEWS

IEA urges members to step up renewable energy R&D

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said industrialised countries must boost spending in research and development in renewable energy and not focus on subsidising the use of green but costly electricity. IEA said that spending in renewable energy research and development by its members had dropped to two-thirds of peak levels of US\$2000M reached after the oil shocks of the 1970s. IEA stressed the importance of renewable energy sources, such as hydro, solar, wind, and bioenergy.

FutureGen announcement on world's first 'zero-emissions' coal plant

The FutureGen Industrial Alliance recently announced a site selection process to determine the host site for the world's first coal-fueled "zero emissions" power plant. A Request for Proposals has been released and proposals for the host site will be due by May. Based on an evaluation of the proposals received, the Alliance will develop a list of candidate sites by July. Information about the process is provided on the FutureGen Alliance website at <http://www.FutureGenAlliance.org>.

The host site will be selected through an open, competitive process. The FutureGen plant will use cutting-edge technologies to generate electricity and hydrogen from coal while nearly eliminating emissions. It will also support testing and commercialisation of technologies to capture and permanently store CO₂. An overarching goal of FutureGen is to use coal, the US's most abundant energy resource, to achieve a clean and secure energy future.

Pursuance of carbon capture technology

The House of Commons science and technology committee said in a report that all new coal power stations should be suitable for carbon capture. Capturing and storing carbon dioxide from power stations could help Britain meet its energy needs while curbing greenhouse gas emissions. It urges the government to lead reform of international treaties to ensure storing CO₂ underground is legal. The UK is struggling to meet its targets to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 and 60% by 2050.

At the same time, domestic concerns over security of supply are increasingly dominating the debate about energy policy, reflecting unease over UK dependence on imported gas. There is significant scope for carbon capture and storage technology to contribute both to reducing CO₂ emissions in the UK and abroad, and to enhancing the security of the UK's future energy supplies.

Scientist hopes for CO₂ storage

Sir David King, UK's chief scientist said mankind's only hope of staving off catastrophic climate change is burying CO₂ emissions underground. He told the BBC carbon capture and storage technology was the only way forward as China and India would inevitably burn their cheap coal. Burning coal would be disastrous in his opinion unless they were persuaded to put CO₂ from power stations into porous rocks. Professor King has often spoken of his deep concerns about climate change and has warned of a catastrophe if we keep emitting carbon at current levels. By 2030, China's CO₂ emissions from coal use alone are expected to have doubled.

US Department of Energy seeks Australian expertise

Queensland scientist, Dr Kelly Thambimuthu, has joined an elite group of technical experts being consulted on the design of the US FutureGen project (above), a world first US\$1000M zero emissions coal-fired power station. Dr Thambimuthu reported recently on his work on the advancement and development of low emission clean coal technologies at a Wellington seminar hosted by the Coal Association of New Zealand.

CCS principles endorsed

An Australian Federal/State Government Ministerial Council meeting has endorsed a set of regulatory guiding principles for CO₂ capture and geological storage (CCS), saying it is the first step toward the adoption of appropriate regulatory regimes for the technology in Australia. The Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources says the new principles provide industry with an investment climate conducive to the uptake of CCS and “enhance community confidence in the technology to ensure integrity of abatement through long term storage of CO₂”.

“The principles are to be used as a guide in the event jurisdictions adopt CCS, [but] it is not intended that Council endorsement of the principles requires jurisdictions to implement legislation,” says the council. It has noted that demonstration CCS projects are now progressing in Australia and the principles are already being used as a guide to the development of regulation in Queensland. “CCS is a major technology that potentially can make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions,” Ministers said in a joint statement.

Australian Gorgon Project reaches environmental impact stage

A 2,500 page Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the Gorgon Project off the West Australian coast has been released and is open for comment. The Gorgon Project proposes to capture CO₂ from produced natural gas (14% CO₂) and inject it into a geologic formation. CCS will reduce the project’s annual greenhouse gas emissions from 6.7 to 4.0 Mtonnes of CO₂ equivalent. The EIS addresses three main issues: quarantining Barrow Island from the introduction of plants and animals from outside; the impact of dredging a 70km pipeline from the Gorgon gas fields; and the challenge of disposing of CO₂.

Regarding the geologic sequestration component, the EIS states, “The probability of CO₂ migrating to the surface has been determined to be remote, with potential environmental consequences limited to localised impacts on flora and possible detrimental impacts on subterranean fauna.”

BP and Edison Mission Group (EMG) plan a major hydrogen power project

BP and EMG have announced they are planning a new US\$1000M hydrogen fuelled power plant in California that will generate clean electricity with minimal CO₂ emissions. It is planned to have the new power plant online by 2011. Potential benefits include:

- Providing 500MW of new clean generating capacity for Southern California.
- Eliminating four million tonnes of CO₂ per year from the atmosphere by sequestering it underground.
- Enabling additional production from existing California oil fields by injecting CO₂ into oil reservoirs.
- Boosting the Southern California economy.
- Increasing the diversity and supply of US indigenous fuels.
- Preserving limited fresh water sources by using recycled and treated city waste water for plant needs.

The proposed Carson project would convert petroleum coke to hydrogen and CO₂ gases and around 90% of the CO₂ captured and separated. The hydrogen gas stream would be used to fuel a gas turbine to generate electricity. The captured CO₂ would be transported by pipeline to an oilfield and injected into reservoir rock formations thousands of feet underground both stimulating additional oil production and permanently trapping the CO₂.

CO₂ storage a success

An experimental project in Canada to inject CO₂ into oil fields has proven successful, removing 5 million tonnes of CO₂, according to the US Department of Energy (DOE). The project is a joint effort by the DOE, the Canadian government and private industry. CO₂ is piped from the Great Plains Synfuels plant in Beulah, North Dakota, where it is a byproduct from coal gasification, to the Weyburn oil field in Saskatchewan, Canada.

The completion of the first phase of the experimental project gives government officials and industry an indication of how carbon sequestration can both reduce the risk of climate change and allow enhanced oil recovery, extending the oil field’s life. The DOE said the Weyburn project “demonstrated the technical and economic feasibility of permanent carbon sequestration. Now that the first phase of the Weyburn project is completed, researchers are developing a manual on the findings for industry. They will also expand the carbon injection process to an adjacent field where the plan is to try to improve injection efficiencies and refine the process.

Cowlless, radial shearer drums are the future

Hydra Mining Tools International Ltd believes that many coal mines around the world can benefit from the new range of shearer drums that they have designed and manufactured. Hydra customises shearer drums for each longwall face to optimise the cutting performance of every installation. In recent years all the shearer machine manufacturers have concentrated on improving the speed, life, automation and production rates of their shearers but until now shearer

drum manufacturers have not developed the shearer drum designs to match these improvements in shearer production capability.

Hydra recognised the urgency and importance to address this problem and following three years of intensive design and development work the company is now offering "a range of shearer drums that can optimise the production performance of all shearers."

EVENTS

AshTech 2006: international conference on coal fired power station ash Birmingham, UK, 15-17 May 2006 AshTech 2006, UK Quality Ash Association, Regent House, Bath Avenue, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV1 4EG, UK Tel: +44 1902 810087 Fax: +44 1902 810187 Email: Conference@UKQAA.org.uk Internet: www.ukqaa.org.uk/AshTech2006/

International Workshop – Coal for Sustainable Energy: Clean Development & Climate Change. New Delhi, India, 16-17 May 2006. World Coal Institute, UK, Tel: +44 (0) 20 8940 0477 Fax: +44 (0) 20 8940 9624 Email: ijackson@worldcoal.org.

31st international technical conference on coal utilization and coal systems Clearwater, FL, USA, 21-25 May 2006 Barbara A. Sakkestad, Coal Technology Association, 601 Suffield Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20878, USA Tel: +1 301 294 6080 Fax: +1 301 294 7480 Email: BarbaraSak@aol.com Internet: www.coaltechnologies.com

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FEEDBACK

*This e-Newsletter is published for the Coal Association of New Zealand Inc. by CRL Energy Ltd.
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