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## **Afghan, U.S. officials celebrate opening of Shurandam Industrial Park power plant**

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Businesses on the east side of Kandahar City are about to get around-the-clock power generation.

On Jan. 6, Associate Professor Dr. Tooryalai Wesa, governor of Kandahar City, and Karl W. Eikenberry, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, joined dozens of Afghan business and industry leaders, factory owners, and U.S. military and civilian government officials in celebrating the opening of a new 10-megawatt diesel generator power plant in the Shurandam Industrial Park located on the east side of Kandahar City. Press members also attended.

The diesel power plant will provide reliable power to factories and small businesses on Feeder 514 in that area. Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, the national power utility company, energized the Shurandam Industrial Park power plant on Dec. 1, 2010, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District – South.

During the past month, the plant has been operating 24 hours a day – a significant increase in the amount of power that businesses currently receive in that industrial park.

“Kandahar has such a glorious past,” Eikenberry said, citing the many benefits it has provided to the region economically, culturally, and religiously. “Sadly, tragically, Kandahar, like the rest of Afghanistan, has endured occupation and terrorism. (Celebrating the opening of this plant) today represents an improvement, a step forward for Kandahar reclaiming its past glory.

“Why do I say that? Infrastructure and power contribute to better security,” he continued. “They demonstrate that the government of Kandahar City is providing better services to its people. To the businessmen, power enables you to grow the economy of Kandahar. I have great confidence this power station can help make a difference for farmers, traders, businessmen, and entrepreneurs.

“The United States is committed to the success of Afghanistan,” Eikenberry said. “Your success is our success. Your security is our security.”

Eikenberry mentioned the expression that “actions speak louder than words.” He told Afghan citizens that the evidence of the United States’ commitment to them is in those diesel power plants. “They represent deeds, not words.”

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is working with U.S. agencies to provide more power to Kandahar City for business and economic growth. The Shurandam power plant is an intermediate step in a planned progression to bring Kandahar City to sustainable and reliable power to jumpstart business and economic development until the U.S. Agency for International Development can install a third turbine at Kajaki Dam and improve the distribution. In addition to GIROA, DABS, USACE, and USAID, the partnership includes the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team and ISAF Regional Command – South.

Providing sufficient power can’t be done quickly, so an interim – or bridging solution – resulted in the first 10-megawatt plant at Shurandam Industrial Park. A second 10-megawatt plant is under construction on the west side of Kandahar City, at Bagh-e-Pol, and will come on line in early March. The Corps of Engineers is managing the construction and the operations-and-maintenance contract for the diesel plants.

During the day’s event, several Afghan and U.S. officials spoke about the significance of the power plant to the east side of Kandahar City, including the governor, director of the Kandahar Industrial Association, and the Minister of Economy.

John Heath, KPRT development officer, summarized the need: “I walked around Shurandam Industrial Park, and I asked factory owners why they weren’t working. They told me they have many customers but no power to produce goods. They can now look at getting the factories going, building the economy, and providing jobs.”

“We are proud to be part of the team to help build the power plant, working in partnership with Engineer Faisal and your power department,” said Col. Anthony C. Funkhouser, commander of the Afghanistan Engineer District – South. “It is the vision of your leaders who saw this need to provide immediate power and who asked us to help them.”

Funkhouser described how the power bridging solution fits into the Kandahar City Power Initiative, a plan to increase power generation and distribution to the city over the next three years. The initiative invests more than \$600 million in the Southern Electrical Power System, which is the utility system serving the Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan provinces.

“Kandahar City has approximately 26 megawatts of power made available to it – 12 megawatts coming from hydropower produced at Kajaki Dam and 14 megawatts produced through diesel generators that DABS maintains.”

The diesel generator plants will add power to the grid, and USAID has contracts in place to strengthen and expand the distribution system, plus install the third turbine at Kajaki Dam, located in the Helmand province, which is recognized as the sustainable solution to supplying additional power to Kandahar City.

“Engineer Faisal and his team were absolutely critical to helping us make this happen,” Funkhouser said.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas B. Black, a power specialist with the Afghanistan Engineer District – South, said that DABS is an exceptional partner. “First, they selected this site as a key area for industry to grow,” he said.

“Then, when we were ready to tie the diesel plant into the existing transmission system, DABS engineers isolated Feeder 514 from the main substation at Breshna Kot so that our contractor could connect into it safely,” Black continued. “They are performing repairs and maintenance on the feeder lines as we commission the system and as businesses hook up. Meeting the intent and maximizing the effect is a combined effort; USACE generates it, DABS distributes it.”

Funkhouser told the audience that commissioning will continue for about another month, and during that time remaining construction at the site will be completed on the warehouse, fencing and fuel pads.

The Afghanistan Engineer District – South also awarded a contract that provides DABS with spare parts and tools to repair distribution networks, acquire maintenance vehicles, prepare connections to the power plants, and perform other maintenance services. This project, as well as the bridging solution, is being funded through the Commander’s Emergency Response Program, which provides projects or services that immediately assist the population.

He also said that the most important relationship that the Corps of Engineers has is “with your government and with DABS to improve power. We will continue to work together to exchange experience to keep the plants running.

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to support you,” Funkhouser said. “We are committed to providing you with the best power plant possible to support your businesses.”

In a press release, Wesa said, “These generators will provide power for industrial park, and those employees, whom were setting aside due to the lack of power, will find the opportunity to be back on the job.” He called the project very important for business and asked merchants to reactivate their factories in the area.

Eikenberry also encouraged business leaders and factory owners to “take advantage of this opportunity. With your assistance, we can build confidence to invest and put money into sustainable power for Kandahar City, all the while knowing that security has got to keep improving.”

Heather told the audience that he would like to see the trucks coming from Pakistan to Afghanistan, heavily laden with goods, returning that same way. “Those trucks go back empty. We need to fill those trucks with Afghan goods. This is the jumpstart that is needed.”

The diesel plants are intended to be in place for three years, until a longer term solution is in place to provide sustainable, affordable power to Kandahar City. The diesel plants will function as independent island grids separate from the main power plant – at Breshna Kot – that services Kandahar City. The diesel plants will relieve some of the demand from the Breshna Kot plant, allowing it to feed more power to other parts of the city.