

Dumsor looms? Energy sector insiders allege gas supply challenges lead to shedding of nearly 200MW daily

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Insiders in the energy sector have expressed serious concern over a looming power crisis, following challenges in adequate gas supply.

Many areas in the Greater Accra Region and some parts of the Ashanti Region have been experiencing intermittent power outages in the past weeks, and the situation is getting worse, with energy providers attributing the outages to repair works.

However, sources within the sector and familiar with the rapid breakdown in energy transmission, have told Myjoyonline that the situation is a result of a lack of investment in the energy sector in recent times, which has led to gas supply challenges to power plants.

The challenge

Under the erstwhile New Patriotic Party administration, regular power cuts in the middle belt and parts of the north led to the acquisition of thermal generators: CENIT, AKSA and VRA thermal to stabilise the intermittent power cuts while easing pressure on the thermal generation plants in the Tema enclave, largely for Greater Accra.

However, the resolution of the middle belt crisis with the thermal generators came with an accompanying demand for more gas to power these plants.

In spite of the new demand for gas, insiders have revealed that the gas supply has since remained the same, due to lack of sufficient investment in recent times, while power demand increases.

According to inside sources, Ghana's current demand for gas to power the said thermal plants is about 230mmscf.

However, Ghana is able to get only about 170mmscf - 100mmscf by Ghana gas and 70mmscf from Nigeria through WAPPCo.

It is this significant shortfall in gas supply that has reportedly led GRIDCo with no option but to shed load because the generation demand is not being met.

One source claimed **we are currently shedding about 200MW of power daily**, calling it alarming and a pointer to an imminent power crisis if nothing is done urgently.

According to the insider, Accra and its environs will be the most affected as the Tema enclave is the biggest loser in the gas demand chart.

Planned maintenance

Meanwhile, announcement by the government that a mass replacement of faulty transformers will begin at the end of March into April, and expected to disrupt electricity supply, has been criticised as a public relations move to cover up the real challenge facing the sector.

Experts have said such planned maintenance works cannot result in widespread intermittent power cuts.

Critics hold that widespread intermittent power cuts can only be as a result of one of two things: low voltages as a result of deficient transmission infrastructure or low generation as a result of gas supply challenges.

"In the current situation, it is a combination of both factors. The Ghanaian populace deserves to know what is happening," claimed the insider who pleaded anonymity.