

## **Chinese Funding to be Sought for Thar Coal**

Karachi, March 1: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for expediting a meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Energy Working Group (JEWG) to take up a proposal that suggests funding of the Thar Coal Project by Chinese financial institutions on soft terms.

Presiding over meetings held at the Bilawal House on Tuesday, March 2, 2011 to review progress on mega projects in Sindh, he said the working group setup during Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to the country in December should be used to secure financing for the coal project.

According to the President's spokesman Farhatullah Babar, he was informed that the feasibility study of the project had been concluded and it was ready for execution as soon as the financial close was achieved and critical infrastructure completed. The infrastructure projects include water supply for coalfields, installation of power transmission lines, disposal of effluent, construction of road and rail links so the site and an airport in Islamkot.

The president said that in view of a liquidity crunch it was imperative that the infrastructural projects associated with Thar Coal were executed on the basis of Public-Private Partnership for which state land and other resources could be used as the public sector's equity. According to Provincial Media Coordinator Taj Haider, Coal and Energy Development Secretary Ajaz Ali Khan said four blocks comprising about 1,000 square kilometers of the total area of over 9,000 sq-km was being developed and three joint ventures were engaged in the work.

Advertisements have been placed in foreign newspapers to invite investment and the expression of interest by foreign investors has been encouraging.

The official said that 360 km rail and road links between Islamkot and Karachi were being built and the Civil Aviation Authority was building the airport that would be completed within 19 months.