

Serbian state-owned power utility EPS announced that it has launched a new excavator-conveyer spreader (ECS) system at Drmno coalmine near Kostolac.

The statement from the company said that it invested almost 100 million dollars in the system, sixth of its kind at the coalmine, adding that it was successfully installed by the China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC).

Speaking at the launch ceremony Acting Director of EPS Milorad Grcic said that the project is a part of the modernization of coal-fired thermal power plant Kostolac B. According to him, the new system will increase coal production from 9 to 12 million tons per year in Kostolac, and in Kolubara basin the company plans to install two completely new systems. The project for the modernization of TPP Kostolac B also includes the construction of the new B3 unit with power output of 350 MW. Implementation of the project was officially launched on 4 January 2016, when EPS made an advance payment to the contractor - CMEC. In order to finance this project, EPS obtained a preferential loan from Chinese Exim Bank. The maturity of the loan is 20 years, with a 7-years grace period and fixed interest of 2.5 %. The deadline for the completion of the new unit is five years (until the end of 2020), and since the grace period lasts for another two years the idea is that the unit will partially repay itself if electricity production starts on time. The whole project is worth 712 million dollars and the construction of unit B3 officially started in November 2017.

In other news, Serbian Minister of Energy and Mining Aleksandar Antic said that the coal output of mines operated by EPS has increased by 5.1 % or some 900,000 tons in 2019 so far. Minister Antic said earlier that EPS plans to increase its coal production in 2019 by 1.5 % to 38 million tons.