

The fact that not enough lignite is produced in surface mines in Serbia requires its import from abroad at “pepper” prices, which will lead to additional borrowing by Elektroprivreda Srbije, in order to procure the necessary quantities of that energy before the upcoming winter season, according to the expert public.

It is certain that its retail price will jump, considering that coal is used as firewood in a significant number of households in our country. Recently, the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, listing the energy sources whose price jumped extremely on the market, also mentioned coal.

As a reminder, the Government of Serbia has approved EPS to import four million tons of coal by the end of 2023, in order to ensure the smooth operation of the “Nikola Tesla” Thermal Power Plant, which covers half of the country’s electricity needs, because the Kolubara Mining Basin is now gives a third less coal necessary for winter.

In the Kolubara mines, work is done in three shifts and with all available mechanization, and the depositor on which the accident occurred in the winter will be operational by the end of the year.

Kolubara mines produce about 62,000 tons of coal a day, and it was announced that 80,000 tons will be mined at the end of the summer, so import is necessary. The production of one megawatt-hour of electricity requires an average of 1.6 tons of coal, and according to the authorities in EPS, at this moment it is cheaper to import coal than electricity.

It was agreed to import 300,000 tons from Pljevlja and 100,000 tons from Banovici. That coal is somewhat better than EPS’s, which will help the company raise the quality of its own coal and reduce the use of fuel oil.

The import of coal from Bulgaria and Romania is also counted on, but the problem is transport, which increases the costs of import, and the possibility of import from Kosovo has also been announced.

There are five mines in the Kolubara mines, and the plan is for only three to work in 2025: “Tamnava zapadno polje” “Polje E” and the new mine “Radljevo” which will provide enough quality coal.

Irresponsible management, due to the fact that the field at the mines of the Mining Basin “Kolubara” was not prepared in time for coal mining, in the period when the acting director of the Electric Power Industry of Serbia was Milorad Grcic, that company will cost around 280 to 300 million euros. That is how much, according to energy experts, EPS will be forced to pay for the import of missing quantities of lignite for electricity production during the next two winter seasons.

The statements of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, that the upcoming winter will be difficult in terms of energy, and that the coal that EPS was forced to import raises a certain fear in the public whether coal will be enough for electricity production and heating. Energy expert Velimir Gavrilovic says for Danas that the authorities in charge of imports

will be able to meet the needs for coal, but EPS will therefore have additional financial costs and may be forced to take on new bank debts.

- I do not believe that there will be a shortage of coal, and thus electricity and heating for households, indeed. But what is very certain is that EPS will pay the guild because not enough lignite is produced in surface mines in Serbia, so it will have to import it. Namely, at this moment, the price of coal on the market is high for several reasons. The first is that after the ban on the import of Russian coal to the countries of the European Union, the price of that energy on the market jumped. Also, that price was increased by Germany's announcements that due to energy sanctions, Russia will produce more electricity from coal. And after the imposed embargo on Moscow, it is now a scarce commodity that automatically raises its price. Due to the irresponsible management of EPS, Serbia has come to a situation where not enough coal is produced in our country, so we have to import it.

According to him, it is far better for EPS to import coal now, regardless of the high cost price, than to buy the missing quantities of electricity during the winter, which would be significantly more expensive.

- Accordingly, the procurement of sufficient quantities of lignite, which would be a guarantee that the production of electricity will run smoothly during the winter, is completely justified and useful. On the other hand, it is necessary to emphasize that EPS did not have to come to such an unenviable position in which it finds itself. Namely, that company has its own mines and if it was managed in a valid way, not only would it have sufficient quantities of lignite for its own production of electricity, but it could also export it. That would enable EPS, in the conditions of the energy crisis, to make a lucrative profit. Instead, the company is forced to import coal and the state will not allow it to cancel those costs by increasing the retail price of electricity for consumers. Of course, the price increase will occur, but its amount will not be to the extent that EPS would be able to cover the costs due to unplanned coal imports - our interlocutor concludes, Danas writes.