

Woodside asked to explain Karratha shut-in

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AUSTRALIA: The Australian government is demanding a full explanation from Woodside Petroleum on the shutdown of the Karratha gas plant last week, which resulted in a halt in gas supplies in Western Australia for more than 48 hours, according to local media reports. Energy Minister Fran Logan told local reporters the government will launch an investigation into the gas shortage if Woodside fails to provide the details.

On the morning of Jan. 2, the Karratha gas plant was shut in after a reported electrical fault. Over the next two days, industries and households were asked to conserve electricity to head off the chance of rolling blackouts. The gas shortage forced Verve Energy Power to shut some of its gas-fired generators and ask consumers to restrict electricity use, including limiting air-conditioning, on Wednesday when the temperature hit 42 degree Celsius.

Production at the plant, originally planned to re-start on Jan. 3, was delayed until Jan. 4 as Woodside struggled to re-start the machinery, which normally operates on gas, using diesel or distillate fuel, according to a report on *The Australian*. Domestic gas supplies were expected to return to normal about eight hours after resuming gas delivery through the Dampier-Bunbury pipeline.

A report on *The Australian* said the shut-in on Jan. 2 was an automatic procedure triggered by an electrical substation problem, which resulted in "smouldering switchgear," dismissing earlier speculation of a fire in the gas plant.