

AMATA B.GRIMM POWER 3 LTD.

No. 8/2023
31 January 2023

CORPORATES

Company Rating: A-
Outlook: Stable

Last Review Date: 31/01/22

Company Rating History:		
Date	Rating	Outlook/Alert
28/02/17	A-	Stable

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RATIONALE

TRIS Rating affirms the company rating on Amata B.Grimm Power 3 Ltd. (ABP3) at “A-” with a “stable” outlook. The company rating incorporates ABP3’s stand-alone credit profile (SACP) of “a-” and its status as a strategic subsidiary of B.Grimm Power PLC (BGRIM, rated “A/Stable”).

The SACP reflects reliable cash flow from ABP3’s long-term power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and a strong performance record of its cogeneration power plant. Contrarily, the rating is tempered by the risk of reliance on its single asset.

KEY RATING CONSIDERATIONS

Reliable cash flow backed by long-term PPAs with EGAT

ABP3’s combined cycle cogeneration power plant is operated under the Small Power Producer (SPP) scheme to sell electricity to EGAT, with contracted capacity of 90 megawatts (MW). The company holds a 25-year PPA, which is on take-or-pay basis. EGAT is obliged to dispatch at least 80% of the contracted capacity, based on plant operating hours. ABP3’s electricity sales to EGAT generally represent about 60%-70% of total sales. As a result, the market risk is largely mitigated while the counterparty risk is very low. The reliability of earnings is also built from the capacity payments. Moreover, the adverse impact from volatile fuel price and exchange rate is mitigated through the index-based tariff adjustment.

Offtake agreements with industrial customers

ABP3 also sells electricity and steam to industrial customers in Amata City (Chonburi) Industrial Estate (ACCIE). The company holds multi-year off-take agreements, covering 44.1 MW of electricity and 13 tons per hour of steam. Each industrial customer is obliged to purchase minimum amount of electricity and/or steam as agreed in its respective agreement. The sale volume is driven by power demand, which is tied to industrial activity levels.

Strong record of plant performance

ABP3’s combined cycle cogeneration power plant utilizes proven combined-cycle natural gas-fired generation based on two gas turbine engines supplied by Siemens, a leading manufacturer and supplier for power generation in global market. The company has its own operation and maintenance teams for day-to-day operations. The teams leverage BGRIM’s expertise in the operation and maintenance of cogeneration power plants. ABP3 also holds the long-term service agreement (LTSA) with Siemens, which has been extended until 2034. The LTSA covers the next two major overhaul cycles of the power plant, helping ABP3 achieve high availability factor and efficiency.

Since the commencement, ABP3 has performed in accordance with operational expectations under the PPA. For the first nine months of 2022, the plant’s availability factor was down to 81.2% as ABP3 carried out a major plant shutdown for turbine maintenance. The heat rate was 7,562 British thermal units/kilowatt-hour (BTU/kWh), well below the borderline of 8,000 BTU/kWh as required by the PPA with EGAT. In terms of energy efficiency, the ABP3 plant achieved the primary energy saving (PES) expectation and received an additional tariff of THB0.36/kWh from EGAT as a fuel-saving (FS) payment. We consider the risk of performance penalties and PPA termination is very limited.

Exposure to fuel price risk

In selling electricity to industrial users, ABP3 is susceptible to fuel price risk in the event of surging gas prices. The company sells electricity to the industrial customers at discounts on tariff rates charged by the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) to large general service customers. The tariffs generally carry a fuel adjustment charge, or Ft. However, the Ft adjustment carries a time lag and is subject to the authorities' discretion on the timing and magnitude of the adjustments. As such, a spike in fuel prices could considerably impact the company's earnings.

Surging gas prices plunged earnings

ABP3's operating performance in 2022 significantly missed our forecast. For the first nine months of 2022, total electricity sales were 654 gigawatt-hours (GWh), marking a 12.5% drop year-over-year (y-o-y) due to the plant maintenance. In addition, ABP3 heavily suffered from the surge in fuel cost during 2022. Led by the post-pandemic resurgent demand and the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, gas prices soared to the record high of above THB550 per metric million British thermal unit (MMBTU) in the third quarter of 2022. Meanwhile, the adjustment of Ft did not keep pace with the rise in fuel cost. Ft for the four-month period from September to December 2022 was raised to THB0.9343 per kWh. As a result, we estimate ABP3's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) to plunge to below THB400 million in 2022, from THB802 million in 2021. The debt to EBITDA ratio is expected to increase to above 5 times.

Expectation of restored earnings

We expect ABP3's earnings to pick up, propelled by the further Ft upward adjustments and normalized gas prices. In our base-case projection, we assume gas prices to remain high in 2023. At the same time, we expect Ft to continue to increase in 2023 to make up for the hefty subsidy of electricity charges incurred by EGAT. For the first four months of 2023, Ft for the large electricity users has been adjusted to THB1.5492 per kWh. In anticipation of easing demand-supply imbalance, we expect gas prices to steadily normalize from 2024 onwards while Ft will be adjusted accordingly. We also expect ABP3's plant availability factor will resume to range 90%-98%, enabling the company to recover its earnings. In all, we forecast ABP3's EBITDA to range THB650-THB770 million per year during 2023-2025, with the debt to EBITDA ratio to decline to stay at about 2.2 times, and the debt to capitalization ratio to reduce to below 50% over the forecast period.

Single operating asset

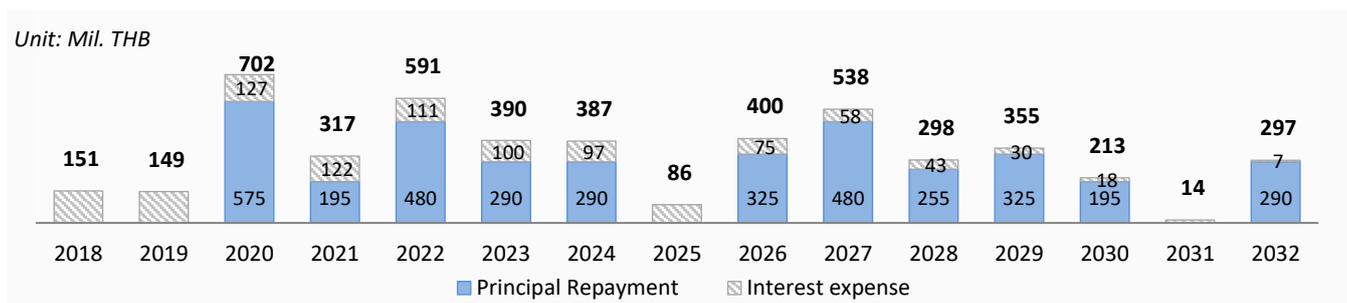
The rating is constrained by ABP3's single operating asset. ABP3's business risk is relatively higher than those of large-scale power companies with multiple power-generating assets. Given the lack of operational diversification, its earnings could be at risk of major disruptions from unforeseen events, such as prolonged outage, or damage to key parts of machinery. Nevertheless, we view the likelihood of such scenario is remote, given the proven track record of operation and the supportive LTSA.

Satisfactory debt service capability

In April 2017, ABP3 borrowed an inter-company loan of THB3.7 billion from Amata B.Grimm Power SPV1 Ltd. (ABPSPV). The proceeds were used to refinance an outstanding bank project loan. The repayment schedule of the inter-company loan matches the maturity of the bonds issued by ABPSPV. ABP3's debt service obligations vary significantly from year to year. Debt services will range from THB14 million to THB702 million per year during 2018-2032 with no principal repayments called for in 2018, 2019, 2025, and 2031. The first principal repayment was made in April 2020. We expect ABP3 to manage its liquidity needs and reserve cash for the years in which large principal repayments are scheduled to be made.

As of September 2022, ABP3 had cash on hand and cash equivalents of THB258 million. The available cash and cash equivalents combined with the forecast EBITDA should be sufficient to cover the scheduled debt services of THB86-THB390 million per year during 2023-2025.

Chart 1: Debt Service Schedule of ABP3's Inter-company Loans



Sources: ABP3 and TRIS Rating's estimates

Guarantee obligation to ABPSPV's debentures

ABP3 is one of the guarantors of the guaranteed debentures issued by ABPSPV. The other two guarantors of the debt issue are Amata B.Grimm Power (Rayong) 1 Ltd. (ABPR1) and Amata B.Grimm Power (Rayong) 2 Ltd. (ABPR2). Under the terms of the guarantee, the guarantors jointly and severally provide unconditional and irrevocable guarantees on all amounts due under the debentures, including the principal amount of up to THB11.5 billion, interest accrued thereon, and related expenses.

Strategic subsidiary under BGRIM Group

ABP3 is one among 19 cogeneration power plants under BGRIM Group. As of September 2022, ABP3's installed capacity accounted for 5% of total capacity of BGRIM's gas-fired cogeneration power plants. In terms of cash flow contribution, ABP3's EBITDA represent approximately 3% of the group's total EBITDA. Despite its small revenue contribution, we view ABP3 as a strategic subsidiary of BGRIM. In our view, the cogeneration power plants are the centerpiece of BGRIM's power portfolio, representing 74% of BGRIM's total power generation capacity.

BGRIM has five cogeneration power plants in ACCIE, including ABP3. We view ABP3 is important to BGRIM in managing overall operating efficiency of the group's power plants in ACCIE. Hence, we expect ABP3 will obtain parental support in a distress scenario.

BASE-CASE ASSUMPTIONS

These are the key assumptions in TRIS Rating's base-case forecast for ABP3's operations during 2023-2025:

- The plant availability factor to be in the range of 90%-98%.
- PPA with EGAT to be 90 MW, PPAs with industrial customers to be 44.1 MW, and steam purchase agreements with industrial customers to be 13 tons/hour.
- Annual electricity sales to be 852-926 GWh and annual steam sales of 92-100 kilotons.
- Capital expenditure to be THB24-THB30 million per year.
- The inter-company loan repayment to be made according to repayment schedule of the guaranteed debentures issued by ABPSPV.

RATING OUTLOOK

The "stable" rating outlook embeds our expectation of a turnaround in ABP3's earnings. Over the long term, ABP3 will sustain its strong operational efficiency. The company's earnings and leverage levels will be in line with our forecast.

RATING SENSITIVITIES

The prospect of a rating upgrade is limited. On the contrary, negative pressure on the rating could emerge in case of a sustained deterioration of ABP3's operating performance. Downward revision to the rating may also develop in the event of its worsening debt service capability.

According to TRIS Rating's "Group Rating Methodology", a material changes in the credit profile of BGRIM or a material change in the linkage between ABP3 and BGRIM could also impact the company rating on ABP3.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

ABP3 was established in 2010 to own and operate a cogeneration power plant under the SPP scheme. Located in ACCIE, Chonburi Province, the power plant has an installed capacity of 132.5 MW plus 30 tons per hour of steam. ABP3 has a 25-year PPA with EGAT, covering 90 MW while it has multi-year off-take agreements with industrial customers in ACCIE to sell 44.1 MW of electricity and 13 tons per hour of steam. The contracts with the customers in the industrial estate specify the minimum amounts of electricity and/or steam each customer is obligated to purchase. ABP3's plant commenced commercial operations on 1 October 2012.

ABP3's combined cycle cogeneration power plant employs proven technology from Siemens. The Siemens SGT 800 gas turbine has a proven track record, with more than 100 units sold worldwide since 1997. ABP3's power plant comprises two gas turbine units with bypass stacks, two heat recovery steam generators, and one steam turbine. The gas turbines and the steam turbine are all made by Siemens.

ABP3 has entered into the LTSA with Siemens. Siemens will provide maintenance services, including spare parts and performance upgrades, for the gas turbine units. The collaboration between Siemens and BGRIM will help ensure the reliability of the turbines and keeps maintenance costs under control. ABP3 has a 25-year gas supply contract with PTT PLC and a long-term water supply agreement with AMATA Water Co., Ltd. Moreover, the company has a contract with the PEA to purchase backup power in the event of an emergency.

As of September 2022, ABP3's shareholders were BGRIM (60.7%), Summit Sunrise Energy Co., Ltd. of the Sumitomo Group (SSEC -- 18%), Amata Corporation PLC (AMATA -- 18.3%), and B.Grimm Joint Venture Holding Ltd. (BGJV -- 3%).

The major shareholder, BGRIM, was established in 1993 as a holding company for the power business under the conglomerate of the BGRIM Group. BGRIM generates and sells electricity and steam through its subsidiaries and affiliates. As of September 2022, BGRIM had installed capacity of 3,379 MW in operation.

KEY OPERATING PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Plant Performance Statistics of ABP3

Plant Performance	Unit	Jan-Sep 2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Net output energy ¹	GWhe ²	607.4	949.4	924.4	969.8	960.0	967.9
Plant heat rate	BTU/kWh	7,562	7,496	7,499	7,439	7,523	7,521
Primary energy saving factor	%	15.1	15.4	15.1	15.7	15.1	15.2
Availability	%	81.2	96.7	97.8	96.0	95.6	97.2
Unplanned outage	%	0.8	3.3	1.8	0.9	1.2	2.5
Planned outage	%	18.0	0.0	0.4	3.2	3.1	0.3

Remarks: ¹ Net output of electricity and steam

² Gigawatt-hour equivalent

Source: ABP3

FINANCIAL STATISTICS AND KEY FINANCIAL RATIOS

Unit: Mil. THB

	-----Year Ended 31 December -----				
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Total operating revenues	3,041	2,815	3,074	2,980	2,825
Earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT)	601	584	525	557	580
Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA)	802	821	759	791	814
Funds from operations (FFO)	586	658	604	636	641
Adjusted interest expense	121	128	150	151	172
Capital expenditures	9	8	17	7	9
Total assets	5,044	5,203	5,917	5,830	5,730
Adjusted debt	2,194	2,399	2,657	2,811	2,496
Adjusted equity	1,749	1,808	1,637	1,590	1,615
Adjusted Ratios					
EBITDA margin (%)	26.37	29.16	24.70	26.55	28.82
Pretax return on permanent capital (%)	12.36	11.22	9.78	10.44	11.19
EBITDA interest coverage (times)	6.61	6.41	5.06	5.23	4.74
Debt to EBITDA (times)	2.74	2.92	3.50	3.55	3.07
FFO to debt (%)	26.69	27.43	22.74	22.62	25.68
Debt to capitalization (%)	55.65	57.02	61.87	63.88	60.72

RELATED CRITERIA

- Group Rating Methodology, 7 September 2022
- Corporate Rating Methodology, 15 July 2022
- Key Financial Ratios and Adjustments for Corporate Issuers, 11 January 2022

Amata B.Grimm Power 3 Ltd. (ABP3)

Company Rating:	A-
Rating Outlook:	Stable

TRIS Rating Co., Ltd.

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