

Source: The Rising Nepal, 6 March 2021

80 Pc Work On Rasuwagadhi Hydroelectric Project Completed

By Rasuwa Correspondent, Rasuwa, March 6: The work of connecting the equipment on the under construction 111 megawatt capacity Rasuwagadhi Hydroelectric Project (RGHEP) located at Timure, Gosaikunda Rural Municipality, has come on standstill because of lack of manpower.

The work of connecting power generation equipment has come on standstill because mechanical workers that were deployed by Voith India, the electrical company that has undertaken the contract and is in charge of connection have left the country on March 21, 2020.

Rasuwagadhi Hydroelectric Project said that project has repeatedly called over the company to complete the equipment connection but it has turned a deaf ears.

The project was started in 2014 aiming to produce the 111 megawatt capacity power generation. The 4,185 meters long tunnel was dug on August 21, 2019 but the project is yet to come into life and to generate electricity in stipulated time because of delay in equipment connection.

Although 95 per cent of the equipment, including three fancy turbines with a flow capacity of 80 cubic meters per second, has reached the project site, Voith India has been delaying it owing to COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite arranging all safety precautions and mobilizing workers midst the pandemic times and also speeding up the work from Chinese contractor CWE, which is constructing other structures including the ring, the cost of the project has given up because of the irresponsibility of the Voith India impeded the equipment connection work.

Stating that the latest work schedule has been prepared to generate electricity by end of Jestha 2079 BS, Chhabi Gaire, chief of the project said that they are repeatedly asking Voith Company to send manpower at the earliest.

It is estimated that it will take one year to connect the equipment of the power house.

Chief of the project, Gaire said that the 85 percent of the work is completion on the project which is being constructed at a cost of Rs. 13.65 billion excluding interest under the loan assistance of the Employees Provident Fund

Tej Saud, an environmentalist, said that the Rasuwagadhi Hydropower Project would be sustainable and reliable in terms of environment due to its underground structure. There are 30 technicians and 430 workers working in the construction.

Source: The Rising Nepal, 7 March 2021

Upper Junbesi Mini Hydropower To Be Built

Solukhumbu, Mar 7 : The Upper Junbesi Mini Hydropower, which remained stalled for five years, will be finally constructed. The project was finalised after an agreement was reached between the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre and Solududhkunda Municipality.

Mayor Namgel Jangbu Sherpa on behalf of Solududhkunda Municipality and Executive Director Madhusudan Adhikari on behalf of the Centre for Alternative Energy Promotion Centre signed an agreement to complete the remaining 250 kW hydropower project through Beni Power Consumers Committee with the funds received from Bill Gates Foundation and earlier Beni VDC. The construction work had been started in 2015.

The Alternative Energy Promotion Centre will do all the remaining work after the municipality takes ownership of the project at Rs. 55.55 million. The agreement states that the construction of the canal has been completed but the damaged roads need to be rebuilt.

Similarly, construction work on the desilting basin and spillway has been completed. The local government has collected data for the remaining work. So far, the work of the powerhouse and machine foundation has been completed while some work on the powerhouse is left.

Mayor Sherpa said that the municipality has reached an agreement to move ahead with the construction work of the abandoned hydropower plant.

The municipality is also working by giving priority to rural electrification.

Locals said there was hope that construction of the abandoned hydropower plant would be completed now though the consumer committee could not complete the work on time as per earlier estimates.

Source: The Kathmandu Post, 7 March 2021

Small hydro projects become eligible for refinance facility

The central bank said it expanded eligibility for refinance as there were few takers from among small and medium scale enterprises.

Developers of small hydropower projects now qualify for cheap loans under the central bank's refinance facility.

Nepal Rastra Bank has amended the working procedure for refinancing and categorised hydropower projects with a capacity of less than 10 megawatts as beneficiaries under the special refinance facility, making them eligible to borrow funds at a maximum of 3 percent interest.

Under the special refinance facility, the central bank issues matching loans at 1 percent interest to banks and financial institutions that have provided credit to targeted borrowers.

“The main reason behind categorisation of small hydropower projects as beneficiaries of special refinance facility is to help certain hydropower projects which are having a hard time repaying loans after facing various problems,” said a senior central bank official who wished to remain unnamed because a recent communication policy allows only spokespersons to speak to the media.

“We have received a list of 37 troubled hydropower projects with a capacity of less than 10 megawatts.”

According to the central bank official, the Independent Power Producers of Nepal submitted a list of the troubled schemes, and the Electricity Regulation Commission recommended providing them certain concessions.

“Some got into difficulty because of high production costs while others witnessed lower energy production than anticipated and some had high operating costs,” the official said.

The central bank has aimed to provide relief to a wider variety of small projects by amending the working procedure. Along with export industries, enterprises run by women and disabled people get refinance facilities at cheap interest rates.

Shailendra Guragain, former president of the Independent Power Producers of Nepal, said that the central bank’s move was a welcome development. “It will assist small hydropower projects to repay their loans although the interest rate in the market has also come down lately,” he said.

The central bank said it expanded eligibility for refinance as there were few takers from among small and medium scale enterprises affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In order to help small and medium scale enterprises with refinance facility, the central bank had introduced the policy of providing loans of up to Rs50 million to each enterprise in a bulk approval process.

Under this modality, 70 percent of the total planned funds should have been provided. The central bank said it approved refinancing amounting to less than half of the Rs200 billion set aside for refinance funding under the bulk category.

Applications for refinance from micro enterprises through micro finance institutions too amounted to less than half of the available funds under this category.

“While demand for refinance facility of more than Rs50 million, which is provided on a case to case basis, remains high, we have made it easier for them to get refinance by dipping into funds meant for other categories,” said the central bank official.

According to the central bank, it has provided Rs142 billion in refinance facilities so far.

Source: The Rising Nepal Daily, 9 March 2021

Singati Hydro Begins Test Generation

Charikot, Mar. 10 : The 25 MW Singati Hydropower Project built in the Singati River of Dolakha district has started test generation of power.

According to Sudip Khadka, account officer of the company, the project has started power generation test for the last one week after completing the entire construction work of the project.

According to him, all the structures of the project have been prepared and tested.

“Testing is done daily from 8 am to 12 noon and from 2 pm to 8 pm. If any problem is seen during the test, it needs to be repaired,” he said.

No major problem was reported during the test, said Khadka.

The dam of the project was tested a year ago. Equipment connected to the Desander Basin, tunnel, surge tank, penstock pipe and power house were tested in June last year.

Power generation has been delayed as the Chinese technicians did not come in time. "It's an internal test," he said.

After a test by a team of Nepal Electricity Authority, it is considered successful and electricity can be distributed.

"We are happy after the completion of other projects, but we are not excited as we have to close the power house as there is no place to sell the power even after the completion of the project," Khadka.

The power house has two generation units of 12.2 MW. Ten banks, led by Civil Bank,

have invested Rs. 3.30 billion in the project, which was completed at a cost of Rs. 4.63 billion.

It has a capital investment of Rs. 1.45 billion. The project has been delayed by one year due to lack of transmission line.

Even after the completion of the project and reaching the production stage, electricity has gone to waste due to delays in completing the Singati-Lamosanghu transmission line.

The NEA had started construction of the transmission line 11 years ago. Construction of seven out of 124 towers of the transmission line was halted due to dispute.

Source: My Republica, 10 March 2021

India working to promote sub-regional energy hub comprising Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and India

KATHMANDU, March 10: India is working to promote a sub-regional energy hub comprising Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and India to meet its energy needs, foreign secretary of India, Harsh Vardhan Shringla has said.

Delivering his remarks during the inauguration of the South Asia Group on Energy at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries in New Delhi on Wednesday, the Indian foreign secretary said that his country is taking the lead to promote a regional approach to meet its energy needs.

"Being the largest producer and consumer of energy in the region, it is natural for us to be the epicenter for any energy initiative in the region. We have to make energy affordable, accessible and clean," he said adding that India is promoting easier movement of hydrocarbons across the region.

Mentioning that South Asia's first cross-border petroleum products pipeline from Motihari in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal was remotely inaugurated by Indian and Nepali prime ministers in September 2019, the top Indian diplomat said that the pipeline has led to savings of Indian rupees 1 billion for Nepal Oil Corporation.

"We are now looking to expand this project to Chitwan, and also construct a new pipeline connecting Silguri and Jhapa in Nepal," he said.

Stating that India supplied about 700 MW of power in 2019 through more than 25 transmission interconnections, Shringla said that Nepal may also start exporting power in the near future.

"The first high capacity cross-border power transmission line, from Dhalkebar in Nepal to Muzaffarpur in India was completed with GoI-assistance and was upgraded to 400 KV capacity in November 2020. More cross-border high-capacity connections are envisaged," he said.

In the generation sector, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited is developing the 900 MW Arun-III hydroelectric project in northeast Nepal, he mentioned.

Shringla also recalled that the Lower Arun project of Nepal was awarded to SJVNL. "A consortium led by GMR is developing the 900 MW Upper Karnali hydroelectric project in western Nepal. Upper Karnali is an export-oriented project, where power is to be supplied to India and Bangladesh. Private sector participation in the hydropower sector holds enormous promise," he said.

Shringla also mentioned that there is a wide variation in energy resource endowments and energy demand in this region.

"While India and Bangladesh account for the major natural gas and coal resources, Bhutan and Nepal have large hydropower resources. Sri Lanka has great potential for solar and wind power production. All countries in fact have vast renewable energy potential. By harnessing complementarities in electricity demand, load curves and resource endowments, a mutually beneficial model of cooperation in South Asia could be developed," he said.

Source: The Rising Nepal, 11 March 2021

Imported Electric Vehicles Not In Use For Months In Lumbini

Bhairahawa, Mar. 11: Even three months after the electric vehicles were brought to Lumbini, they have not come into operation. The risk of damages to the imported taxis and buses is increasing due to the delay. Three buses had been introduced on November 25 last year. Likewise, two other buses and 14 taxis had been brought on Dec. 21 of the same year. Electric charging stations have also been installed in their parking stations. The Lumbini Development Trust claimed that they were still figuring out how to run the vehicles, that is why they were experiencing a delay. Planning chief at the Trust Saroj Bhattarai said that they failed to operate them and they were preparing to open a tender to allow others to operate them. Arrivals of the vehicles imported from China were also delayed by one and a half months. It has already been three months since they arrived in Lumbini. If they are kept idle for a couple of months more, they are bound to go dysfunctional. Experts say that if such vehicles are not operated for long, various problems may arise; the parts may get damaged and may fall apart. Further, the Tourism Ministry has not handed the vehicles over to the Trust yet. Member Secretary of the Trust, Sanu Raja Shakya, said that the delay was caused by technical inspection. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) officials also visited Lumbini to inspect the imported electric vehicles. The vehicles were brought to Lumbini with the financial assistance of Rs. 130 million from ADB-funded Clean Energy Project. Nepal government paid Rs. 35 million as the customs duty of the vehicles.

These electric vehicles will be used to ferry the tourists to Lumbini from the Gautam Buddha International Airport, Bhairahawa. These vehicles shall help tourists navigate important Buddhist sites like Tilaurakot, Ramgram and Devdaha. The buses have 19 seats for passengers and space for 35 others to stand whereas the taxis have five seats each. These environment-friendly buses are also People with Disability (PwD)-friendly. Likewise, they are also installed with automatic entrances and exits. They can run up to 400 kilometres once charged fully. Big industries around Lumbini have caused pollution around the world heritage site. To reduce this and convey a positive message, the buses have been introduced, said Shakya. The construction of the charging station has completed. Over 150 KW of electricity is generated by the powerhouse. Altogether 33 charging booths have been made. Among these, three are quick chargers. A bus with 80 KW capacity, and two minibuses with 40 KW capacity each can be charged at the same time. It takes 30 minutes to charge the batteries fully from a quick charger.

The remaining normal chargers take up to an hour to charge the batteries fully. These normal chargers are mainly for jeeps and cars. The charging station made by a Japanese company, Isaka Electric Company, can charge up to 13 vehicles simultaneously. Besides, 75 rickshaw charging points too shall be installed there. With the aim to replace the petroleum-driven vehicles with electric ones, Lumbini has invested Rs. 130 million for the construction of the charging station.