

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 27 May, 2018

## **Gongor-Khimti transmission line 80pc completed**

Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Company, a subsidiary of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and developer of much-talked about Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project, has completed construction of over 80 percent of the 220kV Gongor-Khimti Transmission Line Project. The 47km transmission line—crucial to evacuate hydroelectricity generated by 456MW Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project—is slated to come online well before the deadline of December 2018. KEC International, the Indian contractor hired for the construction of the power line has installed electricity cables on 26km stretch of the transmission line project. Similarly, out of 127 power transmission towers that are needed, 105 have been erected. The contractor is installing 18 other towers and foundations of remaining towers will be ready within a month, according to the company.

Currently, the contractor, according to the company, is prioritising the installation of electricity cable over the towers that have already been erected. Also, the construction of the foundation to erect the tower has also been prioritised, according to Ganesh Raj Neupane, spokesperson at the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Company.

The contractor has also started construction of a substation at Khimti where electricity produced by the project will be evacuated. At present, the contractor is leveling the ground to lay the foundation of the substation. The company is planning to complete the construction of both power line and substation before December 2018.

Although the construction of the transmission line is going at satisfactory speed, the hydropower project is likely to miss its completion deadline as the Indian contractor assigned to execute the hydro-mechanical works has been going very slowly. At least one of the six turbines of the 456 MW plant should be churning out power by December 2018 as per the deadline set by the government. The entire project should come online by April 2019. But that does not look like happening. The NEA's subsidiary has said there is only a slim chance of the project being ready by the government deadline due to the dillydallying by the Indian contractor Texmaco Limited which was assigned for the job.

As part of the hydro-mechanical works, the Indian company needs to build gates at the intake of the dam and fit the penstock pipe in the tunnel. Although the contractor is constructing the gates at the intake, it has yet to start installing the penstock pipes. The penstock pipes deliver water from the dam into the turbines in the powerhouse to generate electricity. Although Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Company has been putting pressure on the Indian contractor to speed up construction, its performance has not improved.

Work began at the 456 MW project in Dolakha before the 2015 earthquakes, and 79 percent of the civil works had been completed before the disaster struck. The quake and subsequent Indian trade blockade held up tunnel construction works.

The national pride project was originally scheduled to be completed in mid-July 2016, but it was delayed due to various technical and social issues. It faced cost overruns due to the delays. The project has spent Rs37.71 billion and completed 95 percent of the work so far.

According to NEA sources, the total cost of the project is likely to exceed Rs50 billion, significantly higher than the initial estimate of Rs35.3 billion. Nevertheless, the project is considered to be a role model project which is being developed with domestic resources and a high level of participation by project-affected locals and the general public.

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 28 May, 2018

## **Country's electricity generation surges by 7.4 per cent**

Electricity generation in the country surged by 7.4 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal 2017-18 as compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal 2016-17. The 'Economic Survey 2017-18' released by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) today reveals that 1044.6 megawatts of electricity was generated in the review period. Similarly, 3,496 kilometres of transmission lines were constructed and 3.5 million households have access to electricity till date. In the current fiscal, the demand for electricity has increased to 1,508.2 MW and the difference between demand and supply stands at 463.6 MW.

Hydropower projects built by the private sector have contributed 39.5 megawatts of electricity this year including the four-megawatt Puwa Khola, 5.1MW Upper Mai C, four-megawatt Sardi Khola, 2.8MW Chake Khola, four-megawatt Sabha Khola, 13.6MW Thapa Khola and 4.9MW Fawa Khola.

According to the survey, a total of 1044.6 megawatts of electricity was generated in the first eight months of this fiscal of which 990.5 MW was generated through hydropower projects, 53.4 MW through diesel thermal plants and 0.7 MW of electricity was generated through alternative energy resources. At present, three out of 10 households in the country do not have access to electricity.

Likewise, 1,348 kilometres of roads were constructed in the first eight months of the current fiscal. All district headquarters in the country except Dolpa and Humla districts have access to roads at present.

As per the survey report, of the total length of roads constructed in the country in the review period, the highest percentage was in Province 3. Out of 1,348 kilometres of roads already completed, 25.5 per cent lies in Province 3; 20.4 per cent in Province 1; 18.8 per cent in Province 4; 14.7 per cent in Province 5; 6.4 per cent in Province 7 and 4.5 per cent in Province 6 (Karnali).

According to the survey, out of 58,398 kilometres of roads being constructed, 4.6 per cent of the roads was blacktopped, 22 per cent was gravelled and 73.4 per cent was fair-weather roads.

Similarly, in the review period, 268,969 units of vehicles were added, which has increased the total number of vehicles to above three million. In between fiscal 1990-91 and fiscal 2016-17, 2.7 million vehicles were registered at the Department of Transport Management.

Source: The Himalayan Times; 28 May, 2018

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Source: The Himalayan Times; 30 May, 2018

## **Nepal to build 750 megawatt West Seti hydroelectric project**

Nepal's government said on Tuesday it will build a 750 megawatt hydroelectric plant that was earlier cleared to be developed by China's state-owned Three Gorges International Corp, in a surprise announcement made while laying out the annual budget.

"We will mobilise Nepal's internal resources and build the West Seti hydroelectric project," the country's Finance Minister Yubaraj Khatiwada said while unveiling a \$12.18 billion annual budget in parliament on Tuesday. The announcement effectively scraps a \$1.6 billion plan by the Chinese firm to build the plant on West Seti river in the west of the Himalayan nation, the second such plant to be withdrawn from Chinese builders in six months.

Three Gorges, China's biggest hydropower developer and the operator of the world's largest hydropower plant at the Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze river, could not be immediately contacted for comments on Nepal's decision.

In 2015, Nepal cleared the Chinese firm to build the long-delayed West Seti hydropower project that was scheduled for completion by 2021-22. Power from the facility was to be sold to Nepal which now imports nearly 500 megawatts of electricity from India to offset crippling shortages.

According to Nepali officials, work had yet to begin as the Chinese company was haggling with the government for better terms on construction and tariffs.

In November last year, Nepal scrapped a \$2.5 billion deal with another Chinese company, Gezhouba Group, to build a 1,200 MW hydroelectric plant on the Budhi Gandaki river also in west Nepal.

One of the world's poorest countries, Nepal is opening up its vast hydropower potential to help ease chronic power shortages and develop an economy still emerging from a decade-long civil war and a devastating earthquake that killed 9,000 people in 2015.

That has prompted a rush by China and India to invest billions exploiting their neighbour's rivers.

This month, India began the construction of a 900 MW hydro-power project to be built in east Nepal by state-run Indian firm Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Limited at a cost \$1.04 billion during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Nepal.

Nepal is estimated to have the potential to generate some 42,000 MW of hydropower, but it currently produces 1,000 MW — less than the demand of about 1,500 MW.