

Source: The Kathmandu Post, January 19, 2020

Nuwakot, Rasuwa turning into hydro, solar hubs as investors pour money

Manorath Shrestha of Bidur had access to electricity five decades ago after the Trishuli hydropower project was constructed. The 21 MW project not only lit Nuwakot and its surrounding areas, but also the Kathmandu Valley.

Built in 1983, the Trishuli project capacity increased to 35 MW after the 14 MW Devghat project was added as its cascade project. It was followed by the Chilime Hydropower Project in Syabrubesi of Rasuwa, over a decade later. The 22 MW project was jointly funded by the Nepal Electricity Authority and the private sector and started commercial production in 2001.

Since 2005, the Trishuli river has been attracting hordes of investors. The river has seen more than a dozen new hydropower projects which are under construction.

The hydro development from Trishuli river has changed the scenario of both Nuwakot and Rasuwa. According to the available data, 1,093 MW of electricity is being generated from Trishuli river alone.

The 30 MW Trishuli 3A started commercial production in 2018. Funded by Chilime, another 111 MW Rasuwagadhi Hydropower Project is at its final phase of completion.

Similarly, the 120 MW Rasuwa Bhotekoshi Hydropower Project is under construction near Timure and the 52 MW Chilime Bhotekoshi is also under active construction. The 4.8 MW Timure hydro is also being constructed in Ghatte River located in the eastern part of Rasuwagadhi.

Similarly, 78 MW capacity from Sanjen River is also under construction. Below the Chilime Hydropower Production Centre, two projects are being constructed, the 102 MW Upper Trishuli II and 216 MW Upper Trishuli I.

“Upper Trishuli I project has completed the power purchase agreement and has constructed a concrete bridge above Mailung River to connect the powerhouse. Another bridge connecting the dam site is under-construction,” said Giri Raj Adhikari, the chief of the project.

There are three hydropower projects in Mailung River—5 MW Mailung River Hydropower Project, 14.3 MW Upper Mailung and 6.5 MW Upper Mailung 3A.

Mailung River is formed from the snow melted from Mt Ganesh. Below the Mailung river, there is 60 MW Upper Trishuli A in Trishuli river while the 37 MW Upper Trishuli 3B is under construction on the same river.

The Trishuli corridor is also home to solar projects. In 2018, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of a 25MW solar plant at Devighat Hydropower Station in Nuwakot. Once complete, it will become Nepal's largest solar power plant at a single location.

Nepal Electricity Authority said once the plant starts producing power, hydro projects such as Kulekhani, Kali Gandaki A, Mid Marshyangdi, Marshyangdi and Chilime will not need to operate during the daytime, saving the reservoir water for later use. The power produced by the solar plant will be fed directly into the national grid to supply it to the Kathmandu Valley during the day time.

In February 2015, the World Bank agreed to provide \$130 million to the government to build solar stations to supply electricity to the Kathmandu Valley and reduce electricity leakage. Out of that amount, \$37 million was earmarked for the installation of solar plants at Devighat and Trishuli in Nuwakot district.

Source: Rising Nepal Daily, January 20, 2020

Investment Board, Power China Sign MoU On Tamor Hydel Power

Kathmandu, Jan 19: Investment Board Nepal and the Chinese company Power China have signed a memorandum of understanding in regard with the implementation of Tamor Hydroelectric Project known as the 'gem' of the east.

Board Chief Executive Officer Maha Prasad Adhikari, Hydro Electricity Investment and Development Company Limited's chief executive officer Chhabi Raj Pokhrel and Power China's Vice Chair Pan signed the MoU concerning the 756-megawatt reservoir-based project

As per the understanding, the detailed project report (DPR) about it shall be prepared within the two years of acquiring a survey license which will take at least six months.

Following the signing in ceremony, Board CEO Adhikari said it paved the way for the implementation of the project.

Source: My Republica, January 20, 2020

Five hydroelectricity projects under construction in Lamjung

LAMJUNG, Jan 20: Five hydropower projects are under construction in the district at the total cost of Rs 23 billion. These hydel projects are based in Dordikhola and Dordi corridor.

The under-construction hydro projects include 54 megawatts Super Dordi 'B' by People's Hydropower Company, 27 megawatts Dordikhola by Himalayan Power Partner, 25 megawatts Dordi 'A' by Liberty Energy Limited, 12.1 megawatts Dordi 1 by Dordikhola Hydropower Company and four megawatts Dordi corridor by Chhangdi Khola Hydropower Company. Most of them have seen 55 to 90 percent construction completion.

All the projects have been funded jointly by private sector and local people. Of them, Dordi Khola and Dordi 'A' are scheduled to complete in one year. Likewise, 55 percent of the construction of Super Dordi 'B' has been completed, and 70 percent of the construction of Dordi 1.

The construction cost of Super Dordi 'B' is estimated to be Rs 8.8 billion. Likewise, Dordi Khola is estimated to cost Rs 3.8 billion funded jointly by Non-Resident Nepali Association (36 percent), local people (30 percent) and IME group (34 percent). Dordi 'A' is estimated to cost Rs 4.6 billion, Dordi 1 Rs 2.3 billion and Dordi corridor Rs 800 million.

Source: My Republica, January 21, 2020

NEA requests locals to accept new right of way

KATHMANDU, Jan 21: Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has taken initiative to resolve differences with locals of Gorkha who have been obstructing construction of 220 kV double-circuit Marsyangdi Corridor Electricity Transmission Line.

The locals obstructed the project after the NEA changed the transmission line's right of way. Earlier, NEA had planned to build the transmission line along the banks of Marsyangdi River. However, it was forced to change the route after Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) stated that construction of transmission line along the river would affect take off and landing of aircraft at Palungtar airstrip.

As per the new design, 16 towers will be built on 5.6-kilometer stretch between Garambesi of Lamjung to Palungtar of Gorkha. Locals have been protesting the decision to take transmission line through their villages and farmland.

There, however, is no problem in construction of transmission line in Lamjung side.

After the locals objected to the new design, a committee has been formed under lawmaker Chudamani Khadka in the initiation of Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barshaman Pun to resolve the differences with the locals. The committee consists of provincial assembly members, mayors and deputy mayors of Palungtar Municipality as well as a representative of Ministry of Urban Development.

Speaking at an interaction program, former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, who is also the member of parliament from the area, said needful studies should be carried out to find the best alternative. "If there is no option, the transmission line project should be implemented by minimizing its impact," he added.

Similarly, Managing Director of NEA Kulman Ghising requested the locals to help the project arguing that the route has been designed after detailed technical study for minimizing social and environmental impacts. "The earlier route was the best one. But we had to change it due to CAAN's objection," he said, adding: "If we do not want to obstruct operation of the airport, we have to accept the new design."

Also speaking at the interaction, Sarita Maskey, deputy secretary at the Ministry of Urban Development, said both the routes in discussion will not affect the plan to develop Palungtar into a smart city.

A CAAN official, however, said that construction of transmission line on the Marsyangdi River banks will affect the airport. "We are starting work to upgrade the airport from the current fiscal year. Transmission towers will make operation of flights from the airport difficult," Krishna Prasad Poudel, deputy manager of CAAN, said.

NEA is building the 113-km transmission line for evacuating energy generated by hydropower projects being built in the Marsyangdi River basin.

Source: Himalayan Post, January 22, 2020

Hotel construction mishap may lead to forced load-shedding

The construction of a hotel near the transmission line tower of Iccha Kamana Village Municipality in Chitwan has raised the chances of disrupting the 132 kVA Marshyangdi-Syuchatar transmission line. If that happens, Kathmandu Valley will have to face forced load-shedding as the transmission line is one of the backbone supply lines for electricity to the capital city.

The construction of a hotel in the Iccha Kamana area by Parshuram Ghimire, the land owner, has caused landslides in the vicinity where the tower is located while clearing the site.

“About 100 megawatts of electricity generated by various projects is currently transmitted through the Marshyangdi corridor to Kathmandu,” informed Kul Man Ghising, managing director at Nepal Electricity Authority. “Should the tower be damaged, Kathmandu Valley will face some power cuts.”

As per Ghising, the owner has not taken any measures to prevent further erosion of soil in the tower area. “The tower is at risk of collapsing with the onset of the monsoon season,” Ghising said.

The NEA team has already held discussions with the land owner and suggested him to build protective walls on the site. The authority has even warned Ghimire that he will be liable to rebuild the tower and face other penalties if the structure collapses.

Over the phone, Ghimire dismissed the concerns of NEA and said he was cashstrapped to comply with the given direction of building a protective wall. “At a time when I am worried that the funds I have borrowed from the bank to build the hotel may be insufficient, from where will I get the money to build a protective wall?” he questioned, adding that the scenario painted by the NEA of the tower collapsing was ‘highly unlikely’.

In January last year, NEA had written to Ghimire, saying that the tower could be damaged if the land underneath it was dug up and had requested him to take necessary protective measures to ensure it did not happen.

“But Ghimire has paid no heed to our repeated warnings and we are worried about a major mishap because no security measure has been taken,” said Ghising, adding that if the land owner continued to ignore NEA’s direction, the authority will be forced to take legal course of action.

Source: My Republica, January 22, 2020

Marsyangdi-Syuchatar transmission line tower faces risk of landslide

KATHMANDU, Jan 22: A tower of 132 kV Marsyangdi-Syuchatar transmission line, is at high risk of getting swept away by a landslide due to the construction of a hotel nearby.

Tower number 205 is on the verge of falling off as Parshuram Ghimire, a landowner of the nearby land around Ikchyakamana Rural Municipality-5, Chitwan has begun construction work for his hotel. Ghimire had dug the area linked with the Prithivi Highway to build a hotel. Landslide had incurred in the area after the construction work began.

About 100 MW electricity generated from the hydroelectricity project built in the Marsyangdi River basin is being evacuated to Kathmandu through the Marsyangdu-Syuchatar 132 kV transmission line. If the tower falls off then the demand of Kathmandu will not be met and obligatory load shedding will follow while the electricity generated from the hydroelectricity projects will go into waste.

Kulman Ghising, the managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), while inspecting the site, requested to halt the digging work until security measures were adopted stating that the risk of tower falling down has intensified.

“The digging is taking place in steep land and no security measures have been adopted, there will be landslide as soon as it rains in the area,” Ghising said in

a telephone conversation with Ghimire, “The careless digging of the area has made the area too risky. The landslide cannot be prevented even if the protection wall is built.” He also said that the person who has started the construction work will have to be responsible regarding the damage and will have to bear the expenses of shifting the tower.

Ghimire in response said that he had not thought of such risk would occur when he began the construction work. NEA had written to Ghimire last year requesting to adopt security measures and stop the work citing the risk factor for the tower. But the tower is on the verge of falling down as he did not comply with the request.

The NEA on Tuesday sent the letter for the second time requesting halt in the work that is being carried out in the area.

Source: My Republica, January 22, 2020

1 MW solar plant to be built in Jumla

JUMLA, Jan 22: Karnali Province Government has unveiled plan to install solar plant of one megawatt capacity in Jumla district headquarters Khalanga.

Minister for Internal Affairs and Law, Karnali Province, Naresh Bhandari said on Tuesday that all preparations have been made to install solar plant in Jumla. "We will be able to distribute energy generated by the plant in Khalanga within six months. The plant will supply electricity to Khalanga and surrounding areas till Jumla is connected to national electricity grid," he added.

Chief Minister of Karnali province Mahendra Bahadur Shahi, Law minister Naresh Bhandari, Head of District Coordination Committee Jumla Lal Bahadur Sarki, executive director of Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) have already held discussion with the company that has been selected to install and operate the solar plant.

The company will get 60% of the total cost as subsidy, while government agencies are arranging 20% concessional loan to it.

A technical team of the company has already conducted needful study to install solar plant in Khalanga. Similarly, a technical team of APC is visiting Jumla again to finalize the detailed project report of the plant.

Jumla is reeling under acute power shortage as the micro hydel project that has been supplying power to Khalanga is in a sorry state. Gajendra Bahadur Mahat, lawmaker of Jumla had purchased a diesel plant with an investment of Rs 5

million from constituency development fund, as an alternative arrangement. But the plant is no longer in use.

The provincial government has asked the company building solar plant to use high quality battery and equipment to ensure uninterrupted power supply.

According to Lal Bahadur Sarki, chief of District Coordination Committee, Jumla, a Chinese technical team has already conducted necessary study in Jumla to install the plant. Industrialist Shekhar Golchha had also accompanied the team to Jumla.

Along with the solar plant, the provincial government has expedited construction of Chukeni Khola Mini Hydroelectricity Project. Similarly, a hydel project is also being built Tila Rural Municipality. Likewise, Nepal Electricity Authority has also started work on connecting Jumla to national electricity grid.

Source: The Kathmandu Post, January 23, 2020

Solu hydro project hamstrung by lack of transmission line

Solu Hydroelectric Project in Solukhumbu district completed a trial run in November and is set to operate commercially, but the 23.5 megawatts of energy it churns out is going to waste for lack of a transmission line connecting it to consumers.

“The plant will begin commercial production after technicians from the Nepal Electricity Authority finish conducting tests,” said Sashi Sagar Rajbhandari, executive director of the project.

“We are worried that the electricity will go to waste. The transmission line has not been completed,” he said. The project has been working to evacuate some of the electricity

over the 33 kV Tingla-Okhaldhunga-Jaljale-Lahan transmission line. “But as this power line is too long, it may not be able to handle the extra load,” he said.

When the country was suffering from an acute energy crisis during the years 2010-11, with power cuts of almost 16 hours daily, the government had announced an 'energy emergency' which lasted four and a half years.

At that time, the government had planned to generate 2,500 megawatts. The private sector was tasked to generate electricity through six hydropower projects on the Solu River, and they were named the 'Super Six' projects.

The state-owned power utility had contracted Mohan Energy Corporation of New Delhi, India to build the 132 kV transmission line which will feed the electricity generated by the six hydropower projects into the national grid.

The power line project is being executed by the Nepal Electricity Authority with a \$29 million soft loan from India.

The Nepal Electricity Authority is constructing the 90-km Mirchaiya-Tingla 132 kV double-circuit transmission line and a substation at Tingla in Solukhumbu district. The transmission line will pass through 22 villages in Mirchaiya, Siraha district to Tingla in Solu through Okhaldhunga district.

The Nepal Electricity Authority has signed power purchase agreements with the Super Six projects which have a combined installed capacity of 217.5 megawatts. As per the pacts, the power utility has to pay a penalty if it fails to feed the power generated by the 82 megawatt Lower Solu and 18 megawatt Upper Solu projects into the national grid through the new transmission line.

Lower Solu is close to begin producing energy. According to Rajbhandari, the project started in 2014 was scheduled to be completed by 2018, but it was delayed by a year due to lack of a transmission line. Upper Solu was built at a cost of Rs4.40 billion.

The Nepal Electricity Authority had warned the contractor for the Solu Corridor Transmission Line Project that it would be fined if the power line and substation were not completed within the stipulated time. But the contractor failed to complete the project within its March 2019 deadline.

The Lower Solu project has completed 85 percent of the physical works, said Kabiraj Poudel, the project managing official.

“The project was scheduled to be completed by December last year, but due to the delay in the construction of the transmission line, the pace of construction at the project site has been slowed down.”

According to him, the project costing Rs16 billion will be completed by July.
Construction

work on the 86 megawatt Solu Khola (Dudh Koshi) Hydroelectric Project has been expedited. The scheme is expected to cost Rs11.86 billion. The 18 megawatt Upper Solu is also in the final state of completion, according to Ganesh Karki, manager of the project. The project cost is Rs3.27 billion.

Shree Ram Raj Pandey, chief of the Nepal Electricity Authority in Province 1, said that due to delays in constructing the transmission line, they had planned to release 10-15 megawatts of electricity to consumers near the project site.

“We will first evacuate 10-15 megawatts via the 33 kV Tingla-Okhaldhunga-Jaljala-Lahan transmission line,” he said. “The excess energy will be distributed locally.” Pandey said that the transmission line project would be completed next year.

Janardan Prasad Gautam, chief of the Solu Corridor Transmission Line Project, said 303 pylons would be erected. “So far, 146 towers have been erected, and 23.5 km of cable has been installed,” he said.

Source: My Republica, January 23, 2020

Load flow test to be conducted within a month

RASUWA, Jan 23: Nepal and China are conducting load flow test within third week of February as part of preparation to build the first cross-border transmission line.

Komalnath Atreya, chief of Ratamate-Rasuwegadhi-Kerung 400 kV Transmission Line Project, said that power utility of both the countries have started a study to conduct load flow test. "The technical team will first evaluate the flow all over Nepal and will look into the amount of energy that can be flowed in the transmission line," he added.

After the load flow test, design of the substation will be prepared accordingly and necessary equipment will be imported, according to Atreya.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and State Grid of China are studying the load flow in their respective distribution systems.

After completing study in both countries, a joint test will be conducted before preparing detailed project report (DPR). The project has stated that the transmission line will have the capacity to transmit 5,000 MW of electricity.

China plans to procure electricity generated in Nepal after construction of the transmission line. Nepal can also use this key infrastructure to sell electricity to power hungry Bangladesh, say officials.

The two sides have already completed pre-feasibility study of the transmission line that will stretch between Ratamate in Nepal to Kerung of China. As per the

study report, a total of 214 pylons will have to be erected. The distance between Ratamate and Kerung is 70 kilometers.

Atreya said that the two sides have agreed to complete feasibility study and the environmental study within two years. The pre-feasibility study report was submitted to concerned authorities of the two countries on March 17, 2019. The transmission line is expected to be completed in six years.

"The pre-feasibility study has covered issues like location to install towers, right of way of the project, necessary land to be acquisitioned and number of towers to be erected," Atreya added. The substation will be built at Ratamate in Nepali side and Kerung in China.

This will be Nepal's first cross-border transmission line with China. Nepal has cross-border transmission line with India at 11 locations. China, under the Belt and Road Initiative, is aiming at building connectivity with all seven continents within 2030. Upon completion, the transmission line will connect China with not only Nepal but also with India and other Asian countries.

Source: My Republica, January 24, 2020

Sunkoshi-Marin project gets national pride status

KATHMANDU, Jan 24: The government has decided to enlist Sunkoshi-Marin Diversion Multipurpose Project as a 'national pride project'.

Along with Sunkoshi-Marin, the government has also been planning to add the Prime Minister's Agriculture Modernization Project, Madan Bhandari Technical University and construction of Dodhara Chandani bridge, 410-megawatt Nalsing Gad Storage Project, 756-MW Tamor Storage Hydroelectric Project and Madan Bhandari Highway in the list, officials of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

The government has been allocating over Rs 130 billion annually for the national pride projects. However, as the performance of these projects has remained dismal despite getting hefty budgetary allocation, the government is also mulling over diverting the fund to other projects that need to be constructed immediately.

Speaking at a press meet on Thursday, Minister for Communications and Information Technology Gokul Prasad Baskota said that the cabinet meeting held on Monday had decided to incorporate the multipurpose project in the list of national pride projects. According to Baskota, preparation of detailed project report (DPR) of the diversion project is at the final stage. "Construction work will begin once the DPR is finalized," he added.

In the budget for FY2019/20, the government has about designating the multipurpose project as a national pride project. The government has

earmarked Rs 2.5 billion for the project in the current fiscal year. Likewise, the ruling Nepal Communist Party, in its election manifesto, had also underscored giving priority to the multipurpose.

According to Baskota, the Sunkoshi-Marin Diversion Multipurpose Project will irrigate 125,000 hectares of land in Province 2. It intends to provide round-the-year irrigation facility to five drought-prone districts of the province – Rautahat, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi and Bara. These districts in the southern plains face recurring problem of insufficient rainfall that affect agricultural productions from the region.

The project with an estimated cost of more than Rs 83 billion is located in Sindhuli and Ramechhap districts. It will divert water from the Sunkoshi River to the Marin Khola, a tributary of the Bagmati River, and augment discharge into the Bagmati Irrigation Canal. The project will also generate 28.62 MW of electricity.

“The project will be one of the game changers at a time when the government has sped up construction of infrastructure to achieve the macroeconomic goals,” Baskota added.

Sunkoshi-Marin will be the second inter-basin infrastructure project to make use of a tunnel boring machine after the Bheri Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project in Surkhet. The cost of the irrigation component of the multipurpose project is estimated to be Rs 37.2 billion, while the hydropower is expected to cost Rs 46.19 billion.

Source: My Republica, January 24, 2020

Govt asks Sajha to return Rs 3b meant for buying 300 electric buses

KATHMANDU, Jan 24: The government has decided to retrieve the Rs 3 billion it had provided to Sajha Yatayat six months ago to purchase 300 electric buses.

A cabinet meeting held last week decided to ask the cooperative that runs public transportation to return Rs 3 billion along with the interest accrued on the fund.

Minister for Communication and Information Gokul Prasad Baskota said that the government decided to get the money back from Sajha Yatayat after the cooperative could not operate the electric buses within the stipulated time. Earlier in May last year, the government had injected Rs 3 billion in Sajha Yatayat Sahakari Sanstha Ltd as share capital to purchase 300 electric buses for the capital city. The government has over 50 percent of stake in the cooperative.

“Though the government provided Rs 3 billion to Sajha Yatayat in the form of share investment to purchase 300 electric buses and operate them, the organization could not operate such buses within the stipulated time,” said Baskota, who is also the government spokesperson. “So, the government has decided to take back Rs 3 billion along with the interest accrued on the fund from the date when the money was provided to the organization,” he added.

The decision to retrieve the money provided to Sajha Yatayat comes nearly after three months of an intervention made by the Ministry of Physical

Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT) to block the process initiated by Sajha Yatayat to procure a fleet of clean-mode vehicles.

Minister Baskota also said that the MoPIT will be provided the fund for the procurement of the electric buses. However, the government's decision to retrieve the fund from Sajha Yatayat will end the process that the cooperative has started to purchase the electric buses.

Back in September, the MoPIT had asked Sajha Yatayat to put on hold the process of procuring the electric buses claiming that the cooperative had altered the specifications that the government had provided to the cooperative to procure the electric buses. However, the government has not offered any specific plan on how the electric buses purchased by the ministry will be operated, raising questions on the government's own commitment to promoting clean transportation.

Sajha Yatayat's Chairman Kanak Mani Dixit said that he was 'disheartened' by the government's decision. "It was an encouraging move by the government to go for electric public transportation. However, I am disheartened by the fact that the government gave no plausible reason on why it is backtracking on its own decision," Dixit told Republica. He dismissed the government's reasoning that Sajha Yatayat had delayed the process.

He said that it was the MoPIT's letter of September 18 to put all the process of procurement on 'status quo' which had delayed the process even after an expert team comprising the representatives of the government had finalized all preparations for the procurement.

“We have made it clear that it was not possible to have the electric buses as quickly as some government officials wanted to have as the organization with the government’s majority shares need to follow procurement-related rules,” he said. “It was the prime minister’s push to have the electric buses operated through Sajha Yatayat. So, I wrote to the prime minister and tried to reach out to him but to no avail. Even if Sajha Yatayat won’t be buying the electric buses now, we wish the government a success in bringing such buses as soon as possible.”