

Source: My Republica, March 15, 2020

## Coronavirus affects construction work at Tanahun Hydropower project

TANAHUN, March 15: The widespread outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected the construction work at Tanahun Hydropower Project. According to the project officials, the construction of the tunnel has been affected as Chinese workers who had gone back home to celebrate the Chinese New Year are not able to return to Nepal.

According to Bidur Adhikari, vice manager of the project, the Chinese company Sino Hydro Corporation had started the work to excavate cable tunnel under the second package but the lack of Chinese workers has affected further works. “Chinese workers and technicians who went to celebrate the Chinese New Year have still not returned,” said Adhikari.

The project had hired 20 Chinese workers for the tunnel work. “15 Chinese technicians went to China to celebrate the Chinese New Year but the outbreak of the coronavirus has affected their return,” said Adhikari. Two Chinese workers who had returned after celebrating the Chinese New Year were kept in quarantine for two weeks.

According to the project officials, although the work has not stopped completely, required materials for the construction work cannot be imported from China at the moment. The progress of the work is likely to be affected as the widespread outbreak of coronavirus continues to hamper smooth supply of the materials. Currently, Sino Hydro Corporation is constructing the cable tunnel under the second package of the project. Under the second package, Sino is constructing

two types of tunnel, power house and will install hydro and electro mechanical equipment.

The hydropower project has investments of Rs 180.4 million from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Rs 150 million from the Asian Development Bank, Rs 180.8 million from European investment and Rs 87 million from the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Source: My Republica, March 16, 2020

## Technical assessment of Upper Tamakoshi dam site begins

DOLAKHA, March 16: The technical assessment at the dam site of the under-construction national pride project, Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project at Lamabagar of Dolakha is scheduled from today. The openings of the dam will be sealed and the water of Tamakoshi River will be collected at the sand sedimentation reservoir.

The water of Tamakoshi River will be gradually released in the reservoir with the capacity of holding 2 million cubic water and later will emptied till April 4. Stating that the procedure might result in water level fluctuation, the project officials have requested the locals residing in the banks to not go near the river and adopt preventive measures.

The 456 MW Upper Tamakoshi Project is being built at Bigu Rural Municipality-1, Gongar of Lamabagar village with domestic investment. The water of Tamakoshi River reserved in the dam and flowed through the 8 kilometers tunnel way and penstock will spin six turbines installed in the underground power house.

The construction of the project has not gained momentum as per the target because of delay by the contractor company Indian firm, Texmaco Rail and Engineering, which is responsible for the installation of iron gates and penstock pipe. Currently, the installation of penstock pipe is going on. Project officials have informed that most of the works have been completed in the dam site.

Bimal Gurung, senior engineer of the project, said that the construction work is almost complete, and the functionality of dam site structures is scheduled to be tested individually. "We will be meticulously testing the functionality of dam, intake, sedimentation reservoir, iron gates and other civil structures from Monday to April 4," he told Republica, "It is an important work for the project." According to Gurung, the water in the dam will not be sealed and let out at once. "The filling and letting out the water from the tank will be done step by step," he said, "Though the water will be let out little by little, the level of water will fluctuate in the river bank side."

The project issuing a notice about the possible fluctuation in the water level on Saturday, has asked the locals to be careful. Similarly, the project has asked people to be careful in the section from Singati to the meeting point of Sunkoshi and Tamakoshi at Khurkot, Sindhuli of BP highway citing water level fluctuation during the assessment period. Ganesh Neupane, spokesperson of the project, said that, during the assessment period, activities like fishing, bathing, swimming, washing clothes, letting cattle in the river or going to the river for any reason have been prohibited. He informed that the information in the offshore areas of the river has been flowed through the District Administration Office of Ramechhap and Dolakha, local level and police units.

Source: The Himalayan Times, March 16, 2020

## Upper Tamakoshi starts headworks tests

Aiming to meet the latest completion deadline of July 15, the 456-megawatt Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project (UTHP) has started to test its headworks and semi-reservoir from today.

Taking into account that the completion deadline is nearing, the project developer has initiated the tests of headworks and descending, informed Bigyan Shrestha, project chief of UTHP.

“We have started filling the reservoir from today and it will take at least seven days to fully fill it and conduct the final test,” he informed, adding that almost 99.3 per cent of works of the project has been completed so far.

He said that the project developer had massively accelerated construction activities to disprove the widespread buzz that the project was going to miss its completion deadline yet again.

As of now, Texmaco Railway Engineering of India, which is responsible to instal penstock pipes along 373 metres of the vertical tunnel has installed a total of 145 metres of the pipes. Similarly, Andritz Hydro, an Austria-based contractor, which is responsible to instal the pipes along 310 metres of the tunnel, has completed installing 250 metres of the pipes so far.

This means a total of 395 metres of penstock pipes have been installed in the tunnel out of 683 metres, while both contractors are yet to instal pipes along 288 metres of the vertical tunnel.

Considering the slow pace of work, Andritz Hydro was brought in, in January of last year to take on part of installing the penstock pipes.

Shrestha further said the additional penstock pipes are close to being delivered at the project site.

Stating that the project has not been affected due to the coronavirus outbreak, he added, “Our staffers and contractors are working on a full-fledged manner by utilising the available resources.”

As per Shrestha, the works related to civil, electromechanical, transmission lines have almost completed.

“We have been putting pressure on the contractors to complete the project on time at any cost,” he said, adding that the developer was mulling over carrying out installing the penstock pipes round the clock by hiring additional workers.

Kul Man Ghising, managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority, had recently visited the project site and instructed the project developer to accelerate works while assuring to facilitate in removing any hurdle faced by the contractors.

A few months ago, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barsha Man Pun, along with Dinesh Ghimire, secretary at the ministry, had also visited the site and directed the concerned stakeholders to complete the works within the stipulated deadline.

In accordance with the revised deadline, which was extended for the fourth time in November, the project is scheduled to produce 76 megawatts of power from the first unit of its six units by mid-July.

Source: The Himalayan Times, March 18, 2020

## NEA halts power supply to industries with dues

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has started halting power supply to the industries that have large outstanding dues.

Today, NEA cut the supply to Raghupati Jute Mill and Reliance Spinning Mills stating they have not cleared their pending bills totalling nearly Rs 1.70 billion for electricity supplied through dedicated feeder and trunk lines.

Rajiv Kumar Singh, distribution head of Biratnagar office of NEA, said Raghupati Jute Mill has not paid Rs 155 million, while Reliance Spinning Mills has Rs 1.5 billion in outstanding dues.

“Earlier, both the mills had agreed to pay their remaining dues in instalment basis, but as they have not paid any amount since the last four months, we have cut their power supply.”

NEA has said that the electricity will be supplied to the errant mills once they clear their dues.

Earlier, the NEA board had decided to collect existing dues from 250 dedicated feeder and trunk line users.

NEA had asked the industries to clear their accumulated dues since fiscal year 2016-17, which has amounted to around Rs 11 billion.

NEA had issued the bills to enterprises for energy consumed through dedicated lines when the country was facing rolling blackouts.

On May 6, the private sector umbrella organisations — Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Nepalese Industries and Nepal Chamber of Commerce — had said that they would not pay the additional fee that NEA had imposed on industries for the use of dedicated feeder and trunk lines.

They had filed petitions at various higher courts, but the verdicts were in favour of the NEA.

Source: My Republica, March 20, 2020

## ADB, UNDP join hands with AEPC to promote renewable energy

KATHMANDU, March 20: The Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC), the focal agency for renewable energy promotion in the country under the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation (MoEWRI), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) signed a US\$ 1.5 million agreement to promote renewable energy in Nepal.

The grant, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), will be used to provide technical assistance under the off-grid component of South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Power Extension Project, according to a joint press statement issued on Thursday.

Under this partnership, UNDP will also provide additional co-financing of \$800,000 and technical support to AEPC through its Renewable Energy for Rural Livelihood (RERL) project. The agreement was signed on Thursday by AEPC Executive Director Madhusudhan Adhikari and the UNDP Resident Representative Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe in the presence of ADB Country Director Mukhtor Khamudkhanov, according to the statement.

The SASEC project is supporting rural communities to develop nine mini hydropower sub-projects in Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Rukum East, Rukum West, Dolpa, Jumla and Mugu districts, and 10 solar mini grids in Panchthar, Morang, Okhaldhunga, Sindhuli, Rolpa, Surkhet, Kailali, and Baitadi districts with

cumulative capacity of 4.8 MW. "After completion of these sub-projects, 30,500 additional households will have access to reliable, affordable and quality electricity," the statement quoted AEPC Executive Director Madhusudhan Adhikari as saying.

Speaking on the occasion, UNDP Resident Representative Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe said the project will help convert mini hydro and solar mini grids into livelihoods opportunities for the local communities with important technological upgrades being introduced. "We value this partnership among AEPC, ADB and UNDP and need to work together, particularly at this time of crisis, as renewable energy has a great potential to give jobs to those who will be socially and economically affected due to the corona virus outbreak," she said.

SASEC has also been providing support to communities in Nepal to establish cooperatives and a company that are responsible for both developing and operating their sub-projects. The SASEC program also promotes local employment generation, especially targeting women and members of marginalized communities, by skills training and providing access to electricity. The project intends to support the rural population to utilize 20% of the generated power in productive end-use applications.

ADB Country Director for Nepal Khamudkhanov said adequate technical and managerial training support to the targeted communities will be the key for successful operation of the community managed rural energy systems. "The partnership will further strengthen the project efforts to bring important benefits and improve the quality of life of the communities in rural areas by

proving affordable and reliable energy, and promoting productive use of electricity, " the statement quoted him as saying.

