

Source: The Rising Nepal; 22 March 2015

Suggestions to Set Up Hydropower Training Centre

The hydropower experts have suggested the concerned authority to set up a hydropower training centre for the repair of equipments and durable management of the hydropower projects.

A study visit made by 14-member team led by Dr Dambar Bahadur Nepali, founder of the Chilime Hydropower Company, furnished such suggestions.

Chief of the Rasuwagadhi Hydropower Project, Kiran Kumar Shrestha, said the study team suggested the hydropower companies to set up a training centre reasoning huge human resources was needed for the repair and installation of the equipments.

Such training centres help produce technical human resource which is frequently needed.

Similarly, the experts' team member Santa Bahadur Pun said all projects under the Chilime Company were constructed maintaining standard. And once construction of the ongoing projects is over, load shedding hours in the country would obviously decrease, he added. RSS

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 23 March, 2015

Upper Tamakoshi stoppage end likely as tempers cool

RAJENDRA MANANDHARSANJEEV GIRI

The work stoppage at the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Project is likely to be called off on Monday as locals have ended their protest while a talks committee has been formed to negotiate with agitating workers, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) said.

Locals of Singati in particular had been campaigning for a greater stake in the project while the workers staged a walkout demanding shares for them too as locals and employees of the financing institutions had been given a piece of the project.

The construction work at the project has been at a complete standstill for the last 10 days due to the standoff.

Mukesh Raj Kafle, managing director of the NEA, said they expected work to resume at the project from Monday as Dolkha residents had withdrawn their demo and the project had formed a committee to talk with the workers. "Both the sides are committed to resolving the issue through dialogue," Kafle added.

Work at the 456 MW national pride project had come to a halt after locals agitated for more shares. On Saturday, the project announced that no shares would be issued to locals as it needed to get the go-ahead from the Securities Board of Nepal (Sebon) first. The project had planned to receive share applications from Sunday.

The project said that it had submitted a proposal to Sebon for a fresh approval in line with the decision made by the district-level political coordination committee in February to enlarge the share allotment for locals.

Upper Tamakoshi has already issued primary shares to the employees of the NEA, Citizen Investment Trust, Employees Provident Fund and its contributors.

With the agitating locals putting off their demo and clearing off the blockage at Singati bazaar, project vehicles have been going to the site from Sunday. The people had halted the movement of the project's vehicles used to transport construction materials to press their demand. Vehicles carrying project employees too have started moving.

"We welcome the move to halt the issuance of shares to locals of Dolkha," said Padam Raj Pathak, coordinator of the struggle committee from Singati, in a statement. He also said that the share issuance to the people of the project affected area needed to be implemented as per the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report.

As of Sunday evening, the agitating workers who had demanded 500 shares each had not agreed to return to work. Their leader Sonam Dorje Sherpa, however, said that they would give up their agitation and return to work if the authorities give them a written assurance.

While the Nepali workers at the project have stopped work, the Chinese workers said that they would be willing to resume work if the authorities provided security.

According to Ganesh Neupane, the spokesperson of the project, Chinese company Shino Hydro has stated that around 300 Chinese employees have been pressurizing them to resume the construction work at the earliest possible. The Chinese workers have not gone to work fearing a confrontation with the Nepali workers.

More than 70 percent of the overall construction work at the Upper Tamakoshi project has been completed so far. Around 82 percent of the civil works and 30 percent of the hydro mechanical works have been finished. The project is expected to be completed by July 2016.

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 23 March, 2015

Middle Marsyangdi project impaired by high siltation

- AASH GURUNG

A build-up of sand at the dam of the Middle Marsyangdi Hydropower Project has resulted in damage to its civil and mechanical structures, project engineers said. They have blamed the problem, which emerged barely six years after the project was completed, on inadequate attention paid during the construction. The 70 MW project located in [Lamjung](#) district was finished in 2008. The issue of sand build-up was revealed after the project chief Rajesh Kumar Pandey submitted a report to visiting Energy Minister Radha Gyawali on Saturday mentioning the problem.

The report states that the sand that piles up at the dam during the monsoon has harmed the civil and mechanical structures forcing the project to carry out repeated maintenance.

Pandey informed the minister that because of the damage, the project has to repair all the three spillway gates on the dam through which the water is let out, the concrete underneath the gates and one of its two turbines every year.

“Other technical problems have also been emerging regularly,” he said.

Minister Gyawali, who is on an inspection visit to the project site, said that a team of experts would soon be formed to solve the problem.

“We have to be careful not to allow the same problem to occur in other projects,” said the minister who is also the chairman of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the developer of the project.

The project said that it had planned to ask its consultant Fichtner JV to identify the problem. “We have urged the NEA to make a board decision so that we can follow this course of action,” said Krishna Chandra Joshi, administrative officer of the project centre.

The dam of the Middle Marsyangdi Hydropower Project is located at Udipur while the powerhouse is situated at Siudibar, Bhotewodar. The construction of the project started in 2002 and it cost Rs29 billion, way above the initial estimate of Rs13 billion.

The project said that it had been spending around Rs10 million on repair and maintenance annually. The inspection team led by Gyawali also examined the 69 MW Marsyangdi Hydropower Project at Abu Khaireni, Tanahun.

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 23 March, 2015

Pancheswar to get staffers in a month

- SANJEEV GIRI

The much-awaited 5,600MW Pancheswar Multipurpose Project is likely to take off, with the [Pancheswar Development Authority](#) (PDA) all set to get [staff](#) ers.

While the Indian Ministry of Water Resources has already appointed two officials, the Nepali side is preparing to appoint officials at the possible earliest. Government officials said the authority would be functional within a month after the [staff](#) ing is completed.

In September 2014, Nepal and India had endorsed the authority's statute. Apart from producing hydroelectricity, the project will irrigate 93,000 hectares of land in Nepal and 1.6 million hectares on the Indian side. Experts have been claiming the project is in favor of Nepal as the inundation area is larger on the Indian side.

Of the eight [staff](#) members at the authority, Nepal will appoint four, including the chief executive officer (CEO). The Indian side, which has already appointed an additional CEO and a technical director, will appoint rest of the two members soon.

“We had been waiting for the Indian side to make appointment first. The authority will get all members within one month,” said Keshav Dhowj Adhikari, joint secretary and spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy.

Adhikari said the two countries are also working on issues like salaries and allowances of the members of the authority. “They (the Indian side) have asked us to work out the issues. We will come up with a common understanding soon,” he said.

According to the authority's statute, the CEO will be appointed every three years on a rotational basis between Nepal and India.

The additional CEO will be arranged in such a way that if the CEO is from Nepal, the additional CEO and finance director will be from India, and vice versa. As per the agreement between the two countries, the authority will be governed by seven members from each country which will be co-chaired by the energy secretary of Nepal and the Water Resource Secretary of India.

The executive committee of the authority will be headed by the chief executive. The governing committee will have periodic meetings and discussions for shorting out issues that come in the course of time.

According to Adhikari, setting up a office is also among the key agendas. Nepal and India have agreed on setting up the office in Mahendranagar.

During a meeting in September, 2014, officials had agreed to assign India's Wapcos Limited to upgrade data for the integration of the detailed project reports (DPR) prepared by Nepal and India separately.

Once the authority becomes functional, it will first get the report from Wapcos, and then prepare a concrete DPR. The DPR will make it easier for the officials to analyse costs and benefits of the project.

The development of the Pancheswar Multipurpose Project, which was envisioned by Nepal and India 18 years ago, started gaining momentum after the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kathmandu in August last year. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for establishing the authority was exchanged between the two countries during Modi's visit.

Source: The Kathmandu Post; 27 March 2015

Transmission line project hits snag in final stretch

- *RAJ KUMAR KARKI*

The Khimti-Dhalkebar transmission line project has encountered a setback as it enters the final stretch with locals preventing work from being done to press their demand for a larger land compensation. The construction of the 220 kV transmission line started a decade ago, and 180 of the planned 188 towers have been erected.

The project hit a snag with 3.5 km to go where the remaining eight electricity pylons are to be built. Locals have rejected the compensation payment offered to them and have vowed not to allow the construction of the World Bank-funded project until their demands are met.

Government officials have said that the compensation payment demanded by the people is too high. On March 24 last year, joint secretary at the Finance Ministry Madhu Marasini had expressed his frustration at the hefty sum demanded by Sindhuli locals for 3.6 hectares of land by posting a tweet.

“Extremely disheartened. Rs100 million has been sought from the World Bank as compensation for 3.6 hectares of land in Sindhuli for transmission line. How can I ask for assistance,” Marasini wrote.

Since then, various World Bank teams have visited the project site, but there has been no breakthrough. Locals said that the visiting teams had assured them of including their position in their reports and reaching a decision accordingly.

A local Krishna Thapa said that they would deal with any situation that arises if their demand was not fulfilled. Another local Utpal Khadka criticised the World Bank for delaying publishing its report. Locals said that a World Bank team had assured them that their demands would be fulfilled after the report was prepared. The team had pledged to issue the report within three months.

Meanwhile, Sindhuli CDO Bishnu Pokharel said lack of coordination at the local level had delayed the installation work. Surendraswar Moktan, chairman of the struggle committee, said they would not back down and continue their protest until their demand was fulfilled.

The locals have opposed the aboveground power line saying it would affect the schools, historical and religious monuments and urban settlements in the area. They want the cables to be laid underground or over an alternate route bypassing populated places.

They have presented a number of demands including relocation of the residents, payment of benefits to locals by the hydropower projects that will be using the power line and freedom from load-shedding if the transmission line is to be laid along the present route. The government had acquired land 15 metres in width along the route of the planned power line by paying compensation to the landowners.

According to the District Administration Office, 80 percent of the compensation payment has been released to the project affected people. The office said payment remained to be made to only 29 families.

Meanwhile, political parties said the government should address the appropriate demands of the people. They also urged the government to complete the project soon.

The people have been conducting protest for the last two years. Last year, the government had ended load-shedding in the district as demanded by locals. However, the power cuts were resumed after the people obstructed the transmission line project.