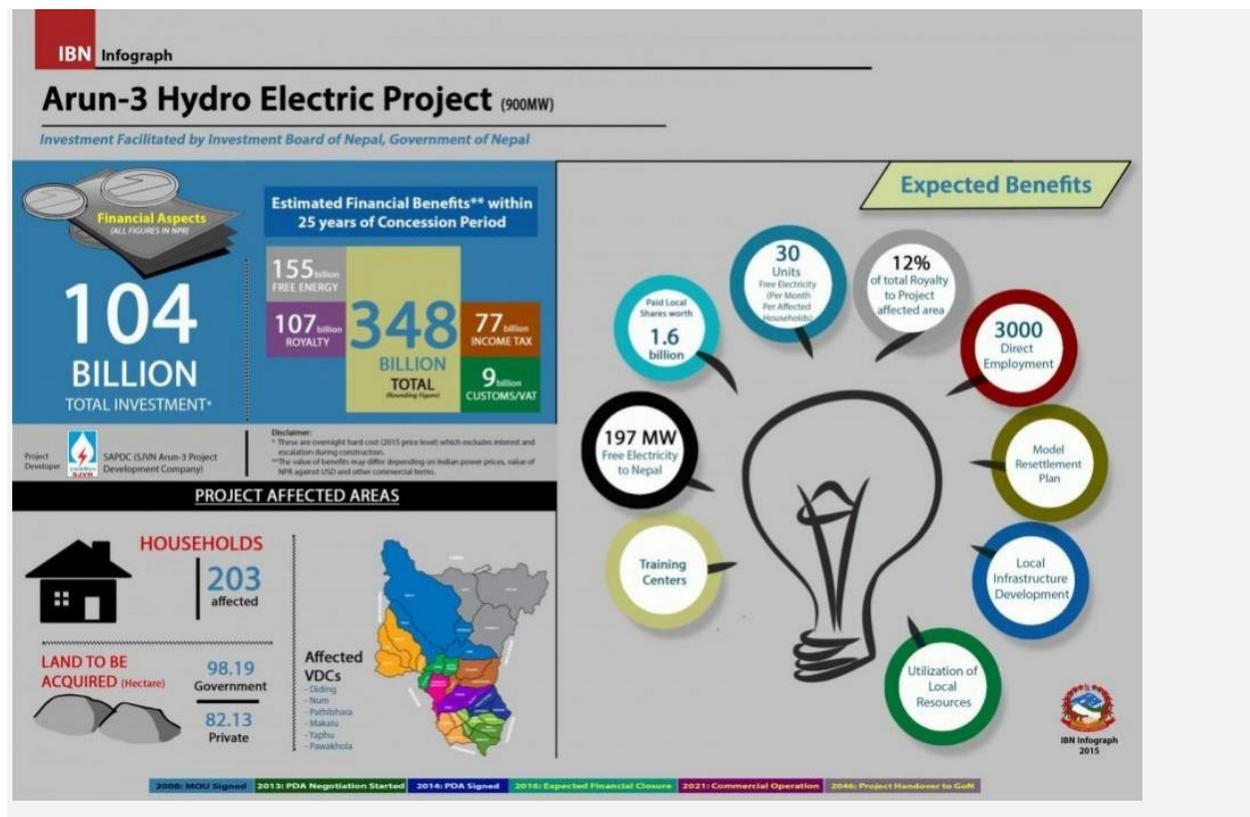


Source: The Kathmandu Post, May 11, 2019

# Arun III project, locals locked in land compensation dispute

- DIPENDRA SHAKYA, Sankhuwasabha



The Arun III Hydroelectric Project has reported 20 percent physical progress in the last two years, but land compensation issues remain unresolved.

According to locals, the project has not paid compensation for land acquired along a 24-km stretch from Chhyangkuti to the powerhouse in Diding.

A track from Chhyangkuti to Pakhuwa in Diding was opened in January to begin work on the powerhouse. The project has acquired 175 hectares of land, including 48.87 hectares of private land and 123 hectares of forest land, for the 900 MW scheme being built on the Arun River in eastern Nepal.

The project has distributed Rs1.22 billion in compensation to the private land owners. Locals said the project paid them compensation to build a 15-metre wide road, but it acquired land for a 30-metre wide road at some places.

They said they had not been paid for land on the Chhyangkuti-Pakhuwa road section, and want payment to be made at the earliest. The project took over land on the Chhyangkuti-Pakhuwa road section in 1988-89.

Speaking at an interaction organised by the Investment Board at the District Administration Office, struggle committee president Harka Singh Rai said locals were not against Arun III, but they would launch a protest if their demands were not met.

“A 2009 cadastral survey showed that the project acquired more land than shown in the initial surveys,” said Rai.

“Some of us have not received any compensation, and we are tired of attending meetings and listening to assurances. We want results.”

According to struggle committee member Jani Kumar Rai, the World Bank had initially disbursed compensation for 15 metres of land.

“Land acquisition is not consistent in some places because the project has revised its land requirement,” said Rai. “And at some places, landslides that occurred because of track-opening work have covered 100 metres of land. The land owners should be compensated for that.”

According to Rai, the project disbursed land compensation in 2016 at the rate of Rs800,000 to Rs1.2 million per ropani, and in 2017 it slashed the compensation rate for certain sections to Rs500,000 per ropani. But locals did not accept this and want compensation to be paid at the previous rate.

Maha Prasad Adhikari, chief executive officer of the Investment Board, said the project was making a satisfactory progress and the compensation dispute would be resolved soon. “We will resolve the issue by entering into an agreement with locals, the Indian contractor, SJVN and the local administration,” said Adhikari. “The dispute over this section has been going on for a long time, but we will end it.”

A five-member committee comprising land survey and revenue officials has been formed to sort out problems. “The compensation rate will be based on the committee’s study and report,” said Adhikari.

Investment Board Nepal and SJVN, an Indian government-owned entity, signed an agreement for the development of the Arun III project in November 2014. SJVN has been carrying out construction work at the plant at a fast pace after Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi jointly laid the foundation stone for the project remotely in May 2018 during Modi’s Nepal visit.

Nepal will receive Rs348 billion over 25 years from the project. The project developer will also provide 21.9 percent of the energy free of cost, which is worth Rs155 billion, plus another Rs107 billion in royalties.

Source: My Republica, May 12, 2019

## **Tunnel of Mistrikhola hydropower project completes**

MYAGDI, May 12: The construction of a 2,270 metres long tunnel of the Mistrikhola Hydroelectricity Project has been completed. The project is located at Narchyang of Annapurna rural municipality-4 in Myagdi district.

The 42-Megawatts-capacity project is being constructed by Robust Energy Pvt Ltd. Works on construction of the tunnel had started on June 13, 2016.

The tunnel is 926 metres from the dam site and 1,344.5 metres from the powerhouse outlet, said the project engineer Diwakar Khadka. According to him, 80 per cent of the construction of the dam and the powerhouse and installation of penstock pipe of the project has been completed. A 23 metres high dam has been constructed on the confluence of the Nilgiri and Ghalemdikhola streams.

Similarly, the project has constructed a six kilometers road from Narchyangbesi up to the dam site. It has also constructed three Bailey bridges.

The project is estimated to cost Rs 5.64 billion and it is being built through domestic investment. It is stated that the project was delayed nine years as the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) lingered in the construction of the 220-KV Kaligandaki electricity transmission line and the Dana sub-station.

Mistrikhola project is the largest of such projects constructed so far or which are under construction in Myagdi district.

Source: The Himalayan Times, May 12, 2019

## **NEA warns of blacklisting Kulekhani-3 contractor**

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has warned Hulas Engineering and Construction, one of the contractors of the 14-megawatt Kulekhani-3 hydropower project, that the firm could be blacklisted following the weak work performance of the company.

Earlier, NEA had awarded the contract related to the hydromechanical and electromechanical works of the hydel project to the company. However, Kul Man Ghising, managing director of NEA, warned Hulas Engineering and Construction today that the company could be blacklisted if it fails to accelerate the project works at the earliest.

NEA has concluded that the delay in works by Hulas Engineering and Construction was the major reason behind the delay in the completion of the Kulekhani-3 hydropower project.

Moreover, Ghising said that NEA will also scrap the contracts that the power utility has signed with Hulas Engineering and Construction for other projects if the company fails to rectify its mistakes and completes the tasks assigned to it as soon as possible.

“If Hulas Engineering and Construction still tries to delay project works citing any reason, the government will not only scrap its contract with Kulekhani-3 project but also with other transmission and sub-station development related projects. NEA will not entertain delays in projects, especially of national pride projects like Kulekhani-3 hydropower project,” stated Ghising.

Earlier, NEA had signed an agreement with Hulas Engineering and Construction to supply and instal hydromechanical and electromechanical equipment in the project. Meanwhile, NEA has already levied a fine of almost Rs 70 million on the contractor due to its negligence and delay in project construction.

Initially, construction cost of the project was expected to hover at Rs 2.43 billion but after perennial delays it has now escalated to around Rs five billion. Also, initial projection had estimated production cost per megawatt power to stand at Rs 173.6

million. However, as per revised estimate, it is now expected to cost above Rs 310 million per megawatt.

Source: My Republica, May 14, 2019

## Compensation distribution begins for Budhi Gandaki project

Narahari Sapkota

GORKHA, May 14: Budhi Gandaki Hydropower Plant has begun distribution of compensation for private land acquired. However, the decisions regarding the modality of the plant and the contractor of the project haven't been made yet.

Though the initial plan was to fix the capacity of the hydropower at 1200 MW, experts are still discussing on whether to decrease its capacity to 800 MW to avoid risk of inundation of Khahare, Aarughat and Arkhet market areas.

Project Chief of Reconstruction and Resettlement Unit Krishna Bahadur Karki said that authorities have reached the final stage of distribution of the compensation amount. Among the 85,153 hectare land to be acquired in Gorkha and Dhading, compensation for 42,700 hectare land has already been provided.

Karki stated the compensation distribution will be completed by the end of this fiscal year. Compensation for approximately 25,500 hectare land is yet to be given.

The works for handing over compensation, land evaluation, measurement, registration cancellation, and grievance handling have been hampered as the Ministry of Energy has failed to recruit staffers at the project office to carry out the responsibilities of Survey Office and Land Revenue Office.

"If the land compensation of market area is not fixed, the compensation distribution shall come to an end for the time being," the project chief stated, adding: "We have been

compiling list of houses and cowsheds as well as collecting complaints and addressing them.”

Except for Khahare in Dhading, compensation has already been distributed in Borlang, Dhawa, Tandrang, Ghyalchol, Durbung, Phujel, Namjung, and Bungkot. The project office is rapidly collecting details of houses and cowsheds along with distributing compensation and settling the 1000 registered complaints.

Project chief Karki said that they are also working on resettling the displaced villages. The project plans on resettling the displaced people in the same wards where they used to reside. As the project office hasn't fixed the markets area, locals are agitated. Banking services haven't been carried out for the past four years and business expansion hasn't taken place in the area. Locals claim this has decreased their income.

Source: The Kathmandu Post, May 16, 2019

# Darchula connected to national grid, eight more rural districts to go

- PRAHLAD RIJAL, Kathmandu

With Khalanga, headquarters of Darchula district in far western Nepal, connected to the national grid, only eight out of the country's 77 districts remain to be hooked up to the power transmission network.

On Wednesday, the Nepal Electricity Authority charged and brought into operation the 33 kV Balanch-Khalanga transmission line that will enable the utility to cut back on electricity imports from India.

“We were importing electricity from Uttarakhand across the border in India to supply to Khalanga. Now that it is connected to the national grid, it will get power produced domestically, and so imports can be reduced,” said Kulman Ghising, managing director of the Nepal Electricity Authority. “We have also built the necessary infrastructure enabling us to export energy to India via Khalanga, if there is a need to.”

The state-owned power utility purchases electricity from Lali, Jauljibi and Huti points in Uttarakhand via an 11 kV transmission line at a cost of Rs2.5 million monthly, and distributes it to around 8,000 consumers in the region.

The electricity authority has decided to keep the 11 kV transmission line live as a contingency measure to ensure regular supply. “The power line will not be taken down as we plan to use it in times of supply disruptions or when our lines break down,” said Ghising. Only eight districts—Bajura, Humla, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, Dolpa, Rukum (East) and Solukhumbu—now remain to be connected to the national grid. Among them, authorities plan to connect Bajura, Rukum (East) and Solukhumbu to the national grid by the end of this fiscal year. Currently, these districts get their power from small and isolated hydel plants.

Satish Karn, chief of the Nepal Electricity Authority's Attariya regional office, said that the construction of a 33/11 kV substation at Thaligad, Darchula, through which the Balanch-Khalanga power line runs, will be completed by mid-July.

"The 25-km Balanch-Khalanga transmission line has been charged at 11 kV, and we will relay power at 33 kV once construction work at the substation is completed," said Karn.

The transmission line project funded by the power utility and the government, which contributed Rs8.7 million, entered the construction phase in March 2016. A construction contract worth Rs68.9 million was signed in 2016 for setting up the substation at Thaligad.

The project faced multiple setbacks owing to forest clearance issues, local obstruction, difficult topography and geographical remoteness. The electricity authority plans to evacuate power from the 30 MW Chameliya hydel plant and other independent projects connected to the Balanch substation through the 33 kV line to Khalanga.

Electricity from the 85 MW Upper Chameliya, 16 MW Middle Chameliya, 65 MW Kalangagad, 25 MW Chatigad and other small projects will be relayed to the Balanch substation built by the Chameliya Hydropower Project. The power will then be evacuated to the national grid through the 131-km Balanch-Attariya transmission line, also built by the Chameliya Hydropower Project.

Source: The Himalayan Times, May 15, 2019

## **One-window service launched for investors**

The government has formally begun one-stop service for investors in the country from today.

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Matrika Prasad Yadav inaugurated the onepoint service centre, located inside the Department of Industry, for investors and businesses today.

Established with the objective to provide effective and quick services like approvals, registration and other administrative services to investors, Yadav said that the one-window service will be instrumental in addressing procedural hurdles for investors. “The service centre will ensure convenience for both domestic and foreign investors,” he said.

The one-window service centre has eight different units, namely registration, foreign currency exchange, visa facilitation, environment, infrastructure, land administration, customs and revenues, and administration and law. This will ensure that potential investors will not have to move to different government offices for various approvals to establish an industry.

The one-window service centre will provide all legal procedures at one place for investors.

“Investors can get services regarding project permit, project agreement, investment permission, labour permit and environment-related issues from this centre. We have brought 14 different government agencies involved while approving investments under a single roof,” said Binod Prasad Singh, director general of DoI, adding that the operation of one-window service centre for investors has ended the compulsion for investors to visit different government offices to register their businesses in the country.

As per him, the centre has representative offices from immigration, customs, labour, Nepal Rastra Bank, environment ministry, industry ministry and others.

The centre currently has 19 staffers and will be operated under the director general of DoI.

Meanwhile, country's private sector has welcomed the opening of one-window service centre for investors and has said that its effective operation will facilitate businesses and investments.

“At a time when procedural hurdles has been identified as one of the major bottlenecks for investment and business growth, effective operation of the one-window service centre will encourage investors to invest in Nepal,” reads a press statement issued by the Confederation of Nepalese Industries.

Source: The Rising Nepal, May 16, 2019

## NEA Tanahun Centre recovers outstanding dues of Rs 12.3 million

*Damauli, May 16:* Nepal Electricity Authority's Tanahun Transmission Centre has recovered outstanding dues of Rs 12.3 million in nine months of the current fiscal year.

The Centre recovered electricity tariff dues in the period from mid-July 2018 to mid-April 2019 by disconnecting power supply to consumers having huge pending bills.

It was found that 758 consumers did not clear their dues but 656 of them settled their payment dues after electricity supply disruption, shared Chief of the Centre Shiva Narayan Gaushali.

In order to ensure settlement of dues, the Centre has disconnected power supply to the consumer who did not pay electricity tariff for over 60 days.

According to the Electricity Tariff Collection Bi-law-2016, two percent discount amount of the bill will be offered to the consumers clearing the tariff within seven days from meter reading.

It also has a provision that tariff will be charged same if any consumer paid the bills within 22 days in maximum from meter reading.

As part of its drive to control electricity theft, the Centre has taken action against 117 consumers who adopted unauthorized measures to use electricity during the corresponding period.

So far the Centre has raised around Rs 588,812 after putting in place the punitive measures. *(RSS)*

Source: The Kathmandu Post, May 17, 2019

# Upper Trishuli 3A hydroelectric project starts churning out 30 MW

- PRAHLAD RIJAL, Kathmandu

Nine years after construction work began on the Upper Trishuli 3A Hydropower Project, the first of its two turbines roared into life on Thursday, injecting 30 MW into the national grid.

The 60 MW scheme located 95 km north of Kathmandu in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts is the largest hydel plant to come into operation this year. This brings the total amount of power delivered to the grid in the first 10 months of the current fiscal to 71 MW.

The addition of 30 MW to Kathmandu's distribution system during peak demand will resolve all fluctuation issues faced by valley denizens, officials of the Nepal Electricity Authority said.

Initially, authorities had planned to begin commercial operation of the hydel plant by May 1, but delays in structural and performance tests pushed back the deadline. The plant will add another 30 MW to the grid by switching on the second unit in June.

The Nepal Electricity Authority built the project with a concessional loan of \$114.7 million from the Export-Import Bank of China. The interest rate on the loan is 1.75 percent, and the repayment period is 20 years starting from the date of commercial operation.

The construction of a 220 kV Trishuli-Kathmandu double-circuit line to carry electricity from the plant to Matatirtha substation has also been completed, and the 45-km transmission line has started evacuating 30 MW to Kathmandu. The valley's electricity supply will now become more reliable as power will be conveyed over a relatively short distance compared to the existing Hetauda-Kulekhani-Syuchatar transmission line, said officials.

"In terms of distribution, electricity from the Trishuli corridor has made our system more reliable and robust," said Kulman Ghising, managing director of the Nepal Electricity Authority. "Also, we can now save water in the Kulekhani reservoir and use it to avert intermittent supply issues in other regions. The load centre is near Kathmandu, and the Upper Trishuli plant will produce around 45 MW even during the winter. This will help us to maintain the demand-supply equilibrium in Kathmandu," he said.

According to Ghising, once the plant runs at full capacity, it will fulfill 8 percent of Nepal's power requirement, and help the power utility to cut back on energy imports from India during the winter.

Apart from relaying the power produced by the Upper Trishuli 3A project, the Nepal Electricity Authority plans to use the facility at Matatirtha to transmit electricity produced by other hydropower schemes in the Trishuli corridor.

Initially, authorities had planned to finish the project in 2014.

But the project faced multiple setbacks. It sank into uncertainty after the contractor, China Gezhouba Group Company, halted work citing heavy damage to the access road and dam during the 2015 earthquake. Work resumed in 2017 after a two-year hiatus.

The electricity authority has commissioned six small and medium hydropower projects, including the 22 MW Bagmati Khola Small Hydropower Project and one solar plant built by independent power producers this fiscal year. The Upper Trishuli 3A is the first state-owned plant commissioned by the power utility and the largest this fiscal year.

Officials plan to launch another nine small and medium projects this fiscal year ending mid-July and add 160 MW to the grid. This will bring the number of independent power producer-owned projects in operation to 82 from 75 last year, accounting for a combined installed capacity of 554 MW.

In the next fiscal, the electricity authority plans to issue commercial operation dates to 43 hydropower projects including Upper Tamakoshi (456 MW), Rasuwagadhi (111 MW) and Lower Solu (82 MW).

Source: The Rising Nepal, May 17, 2019

## Environmentalists for electric vehicles

Lalitpur, May 17: Environmentalists have demanded a fast adoption of electric vehicles by converting the fossil fuel vehicles into electric ones.

This demand has been made with an objective of operating at least 20 per cent of electric vehicles by 2020 to reduce air pollution in the city area.

The government must lay emphasis on electric vehicles by introducing different promotional programmes to transfer the country's dependency from the fossil-fuel driven vehicles to electric vehicles, they said.

Though the Environment Friendly Transportation Policy, 2071 has included the provision of conversion of vehicles from the fossil to electric, it could not come into effect in lack of working procedure. As a result, air pollution has increased in the city area.

In recent years, a large number of people have been killed by non-communicable diseases, which is caused by increasing air pollution caused by vehicle emission in the city area. Therefore, the government must put its effort to introduce electric vehicles that produce zero pollution, the environmentalists said at a press conference jointly organised by Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists, (NEFEJ), Clean Energy Nepal and Nepal Electric Vehicles Association here on Thursday.

The participating environmentalists expressed serious concern for not introducing working procedures for the operation of the electric vehicle.

The environment-friendly electric vehicles could not come into operation due to the lack of working procedures though it already introduced environment friendly transportation policy five years ago. According to them, the electric vehicles could charge batteries during night time, when less amount of electricity will be consumed. The electric vehicles having new lithium-ion batteries could work for eight to twelve hours after getting charged once.

Bhushan Tuladhar, chairperson of the Clean Energy Nepal, demanded introduction of promotional programmes in upcoming budgets for the better performance of the electric vehicles.

He stressed on the requirement of the environment-friendly vehicles and transportation committees in all states, establishment of 10 charging stations in the Kathmandu Valley and outside.

Umesh Raj Shrestha, chairman of Nepal Electric vehicle Entrepreneur Association, said if the government exempted customs tariff on electric vehicles, many people would be motivated to use the electric vehicles.

Currently, public transportation vehicles have been contributing more to air pollution. Therefore, the conversion policy must be applied first in public transportation for a better result, he added.

Kosmas Bishworkarma, chairman of the NEFEJ, said if the government was positive for bringing about better changes in city environment, all government vehicles must be converted into electric ones..

If Nepal liberalises the use of new fossil fuel vehicles, it will not be able to replace them with electric vehicles even in the next 20 years. The authority must think about it, he added.

Source: My Republica, May 17, 2019

## Upper Trishuli III 'A' finally connected to national grid

KATHMANDU, May 16: The Upper Trishuli III 'A' has finally been connected to national grid on Thursday. With the production of 30 MW electricity from the first unit, the project got completion. The construction of project suffered numerous obstructions owing to earthquake and blockade.

Executive Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Kulman Ghising, switched the control room of switchyard at Simle, Kispang-5 in Nuwakot and announced that the project was now connected to the national grid. The NEA was waiting for the completion of the project since its launch a decade back.

The project powerhouse is connected to the substation at Matatirtha of Kathmandu via 220KV double circuit. For the test, the first unit of the project will produce electricity for 72 hours continuously from Friday.

On the occasion, Executive Director Ghising shared that with the operation of the Upper Trishuli III 'A', the water in the Kulekhani reservoir will be saved and help reduce the electricity import from India. According to him, the project was accomplished at the cost of some 125 million US dollars managed by Nepal government, NEA and the soft loan by the Chinese Import and Export Bank. RSS