

WHENEVER AND WHEREVER YOU PUT YOURSELF IN TOUCH WITH GOD, THAT IS THE STATE OF MEDITATION- Shree Sathya Sai Baba

FAST TRACK PROGRAMME TO LIGHT UP RUKUM

The government is all set to implement a programme to bring electricity within a year to all households in Rukum district, the one time hotbed of the Maoist insurgency, primarily through micro/mini hydropower projects and solar power. After translating the idea of ujyalo [lighted up] Rukum into practice, the same model will be applied to many other districts across the country, officials said. Finance Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, in this year's budget, announced a special programme with a view to provide electricity to every household in the district. He had also proposed to mark the current fiscal year as the "Year of Alternative Energy".

Energy Sector Assistance Programme (ESAP) under AEPC has identified about 50 potential micro hydro projects in Rukum. The programme can be implemented immediately at 30 of the identified sites, according to Bharat Raj Poudel, monitoring officer at AEPC. Technical teams will explore the possibility of additional such projects within a month. The majority of the projects will be completed by June, 2009 and the rest by the end of 2009, Poudel said. The government will provide electricity to some households through the solar power if the houses are isolated. As the programme to be executed in Rukum is a test case, the projects in the district will be completed on a fast track system, said Dr. Govind Raj Pokharel, executive director of AEPC.

The hydro projects under the programme will produce up 500 Kw power. More than 70 percent of the projects will generate from 5 to 70 kW each according to Poudel. The average cost of producing 1 Kw of electricity from a micro hydro project is estimated to be about Rs. 250,000 and this power can be distributed to 10 households, bringing the average cost for each household to around Rs. 25,000. Each household will get Rs. 10,000 as financial support from the government with the possibility of this being increased to Rs. 15,000 in the near future. Locals will make contributions worth Rs. 5,000 each through volunteer work. The consumers can arrange the remaining Rs. 5,000 through the budgets of their district development committees, VDCs or on their own," Poudel elaborated. The programme also has component for popularising the use of improved stoves and biogas plants so that the electric lights will be more bright in smokeless environment.

UNDP's OFFICERS IN PINTHALI, KAVRE

Miss Veronica Levi, Programme Support Officer working in UNDP Samoa visited to Pinthali on 26th October 2008. The visit was of one day with the objectives of observing Daunne Khola MHDS in Pinthali and interacting with community people. She highly appreciated the working modality of REDP for sustainability of the scheme and holistic development of the area. She felt the actual implementation of six basic principles formulated by the programme by taking micro-hydro as entry point. During the visit, she observed powerhouse, Improved Ghatta, Rural Carpentry, Improved Cooking Stove, Toilet attached Bio-Gas, Use of Tailrace water for Irrigation, road constructed by community people. She also took part in interaction with groups of male and female at community as well as DEES staffs at Dhulikhel. The visit was facilitated by EDO Mr. Ram Prasad Tiwari. According to her, these days, there are some pilot projects in Samoa for electricity generation by wind power and the experiences of Nepal could be used, as appropriate. She expressed that it was a truly eye opening experience and the constraints, hardships that the rural population endure but also gives key lessons in monitoring, and key issues to consider in programme formulation on how projects can really create sustainable livelihoods through employment creation initiatives on the ground that gives better opportunities and means to access them by the poorest of the poor. *(Based on information provided by Ram Prasad Tiwari, EDO Kavre)*

ASSESSING THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF RURAL ENERGY SERVICES

The World Bank Team led by been the Energy and Infrastructure Economist Ms. Sudeshna Ghosh Banerjee has arrived Kathmandu on 12 November 2008 to start up the ESMAP/ The World Bank funded study "Assessing the Social Impacts of Rural Energy Services" being undertaken by the PricewaterhouseCoopers (P) Limited, India with the cooperation of the Total Management Services (TMS), Nepal. The main objective of this one year long study is to undertake the in-depth assessment of the social impacts of the micro hydro village electrification projects (MHVEPs) supported by REDP/ AEPC under the World Bank funded Power Development Project (PDP), Nepal. Other objectives include (i) assessment of rural energy services, (ii) development of monitoring and evaluation framework for REDP/ AEPC, and (iii) formulation of business plan of REDP/ AEPC.