

Himachal to distribute CFLs as part of power-saving scheme

A power-saving scheme was Sunday launched in this picturesque town where compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) would be distributed among families across Himachal Pradesh. Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal said it was an innovative energy conservation drive for saving 115 MW of power daily and earning carbon credits.

The scheme - Atal Bijli Bachat Yojana - named after former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, will help conserve electricity worth Rs.1 billion (Rs.100 crore) every year.

Under the initiative, a pack of four CFLs - two each of 15 watt and 20 watt - will be provided to 1.65 million families free of cost across the state. For acquiring a CFL pack, the consumer will have to provide two 60 watt and two 100 watt incandescent lamps.

Two leading CFL manufacturers - HPL Socomec and Phoenix - have been shortlisted by the government for supplying 7.2 million lamps.

'The energy saved from domestic purposes under the scheme will in turn be used for fuelling economic growth of the state,' Dhumal told IANS.

'With climatic changes around the globe posing a serious threat, it's our duty to protect natural resources. It (the scheme) will not only make the state eligible for earning carbon credits under clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, but also benefit the consumers with reduced (power) bills of 25-30 percent,' the chief minister said.

However, there is economics at work behind the launch of the scheme.

'The government is spending more than Rs.80 crore (Rs.800 million) for implementing the scheme, but the use of CFLs will save 115 MW of electricity daily. The power saved can make the government richer by over Rs.100 crore,' said M.P. Sood, secretary of the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.

The government has decided to distribute CFLs by Dec 25, Vajpayee's birthday. Kullu town was specifically selected for launching the scheme as Vajpayee's house at Prini village is located near here.

Earlier, the government was embroiled in a controversy over allotting a contract to four companies - Phoenix, Surya Bulbs, Asian Electronics and Havells - for the scheme.

Philips and HPL Somonec, whose bids were rejected at that time, had alleged irregularities in allotment of the contracts.

With allegations of the formation of a cartel being levelled in the award of contract, the government had cancelled the tenders and invited fresh bids.

After dilly-dallying for over three months, the government last month placed an order with HPL Socomec and Phoenix to supply the CFLs.

The hill state has already taken various initiatives towards earning carbon credits and saving the environment. As part of its first micro-level 'green' drive, residents across the state planted 1.5 million saplings on Aug 3.

Saplings of 57 indigenous species like neem, banyan, jamun and peepul were planted on that particular day during the drive, called the Jan Jan Sanjivani programme.

Himachal has also imposed a voluntary 'green tax' on vehicle users with cabinet ministers deciding to contribute Rs.100 per month towards creating the corpus.

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