

Energy independence thimphu

After a decade of dormancy, Bhutan's ambitious Begana Hydropower Project is poised for resurrection, promising not just energy security but also a significant boost to Thimphu's drinking water supply. Originally shelved in 2010 by the first elected government due to environmental concerns and perceived alternatives, the project's revival comes at a critical juncture for Bhutan's energy landscape.

Initially conceived as a 20 MW venture, the project has since evolved, with its capacity upgraded to 25 MW in the Detailed Project Report finalized in August 2023. This integrated multipurpose power plant, located near Thimphu, aims to generate 104 GWh annually, addressing both energy security and drinking water needs for Thimphu and surrounding areas.

The project's estimated cost, pegged at Nu. 2.694 billion, underscores its strategic importance in bolstering Bhutan's energy independence and reducing winter energy imports. With its location strategically chosen near the BPC Training Center in Begana, the project will harness water from the Thimchhu, ensuring a reliable source of power throughout the year.

Significantly, the integration of the existing drinking water system for Thimphu downstream of the project's intake promises to enhance water supply reliability. Additional water extraction points are planned for peripheral areas such as Kabesa, Begana, and Kuzhugchen, underscoring the project's comprehensive approach to addressing urban water demands.

Environmental and social impact assessments have been rigorously conducted as part of the Detailed Project Report, emphasizing sustainable development practices. Funds have been earmarked for mitigation measures, reflecting a conscientious effort to balance development with environmental conservation.

Scheduled to commence in October 2024 and conclude by May 2027, pending statutory clearances, the project represents a crucial step towards fulfilling Bhutan's energy goals amidst shifting regional dynamics. Financing discussions, predominantly revolving around a 70:30 debt-equity ratio, highlight the project's financial viability and strategic importance.

As Bhutan navigates away from the unrealized vision of 10,000 MW by 2020 towards more immediate solutions, the Begana Hydropower Project emerges as a beacon of practicality and necessity. It not only promises to mitigate Thimphu's energy deficits but also offers a substantial remedy to its persistent water shortages, surpassing the earlier Nu. 400 million Dodena water project in scope and potential impact.

While challenges remain, including ongoing studies to address environmental and operational concerns, the renewed commitment towards Begana signals a forward-looking approach by Bhutan's energy sector.



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As stakeholders collaborate to usher in a new era of sustainable growth, the project stands poised to redefine Thimphu's future, ensuring both energy resilience and water security for generations to come.

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