

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Energy minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav on Wednesday sought to assure the people of quality power by 2015 as well as a perceptible change in the sector every six months.

Speaking at the inaugural session of "Powering Bihar — approaches to distribution reforms", Yadav vowed that the next fiscal (2014-15) would be a milestone for the state's power sector. He stressed that the focus was on supplying power to farmers in a bid to turn around Bihar's fortunes.

"The state would be able to receive 5,000MW of power through our own generation, joint venture with NTPC, central sector allocation or through purchase from the open market by the end of 2015. We are also working on various projects and schemes to build the state's transmission and

# Power pledge in seminar

distribution infrastructure to supply quality power to the people by 2015," he said.

The seminar he was addressing was organised by the department and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

On the government's focus, Yadav said power would be provided to farmlands to spur agricultural growth. "Agriculture is our core competence. Farmers must get power whether or not domestic households get it," he stressed.

The minister said the government needs financial assistance to fund big projects in

the generation and transmission sector for which it was approaching financial institutions. "We are trying our best to improve the power situation on our own and in joint venture, especially with NTPC. We have to strengthen our transmission network for which we have formed a joint venture company with Power Grid (Corporation of India). We would require Rs 16,000 crore by 2020. For that we are approaching World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other institutions," he said.

The chief minister had

said he won't ask for votes in 2015 if he cannot provide quality power.

Energy secretary Sandeep Poudrik acknowledged that transmission and distribution were major challenges for the government. Stressing that the government was focused on improving the power situation by 2015, Poudrik said: "In the first step, we carved up the Bihar State Electricity Board into power companies according to the Electricity Act, 2003. This would bring professionalism and efficiency. By 2015, we will have more than adequate power to cater to the needs of the people. In two years' time, the constraints in the transmission sector will also be removed. Cent per cent metering, billing, revenue collection, theft prevention are the major concerns which we have to achieve on the distribution front."