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Private shove to Nitish vow - Bhagalpur, Gaya hope to get better power supply

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Patna, Dec. 14: The year, 2014, promises to be dazzling for residents of Gaya and Bhagalpur.

The credit could go to the handing over of power distribution work for Bhagalpur to a private distribution franchisee from January 1, 2014, and another for Gaya from February 1.

SPML Infra Ltd and India Power Company Ltd have been selected as successful bidders to take over the job of the power distribution network of Bhagalpur and Gaya respectively. This would imply that these private players, selected by Bihar State Power (Holding) Company Ltd through competitive bidding, would look after the power supply, billing and maintenance. The distribution company's move is expected to improve the power supply situation in these two cities.

The franchisee's appointment is expected to improve power supply and maintenance work of lines, power sub-stations, transformers as a whole lot of things, which are presently undertaken by the North Bihar Power Distribution Company Limited.

The franchisee's job would entail distribution of bills, noting down meter readings, revenue collection, and maintenance of low-tension lines and attending fuse-off calls among other things.

"We are all set to hand over the distribution franchise **to SPML for Bhagalpur from January 1** and to India Power Company Limited for Gaya from February 1. We hope that the power distribution work would significantly improve in the two cities and customers would get better facilities," North Bihar Power Distribution Company Ltd and South Bihar Power Distribution Company Ltd managing director Sanjay Kumar Agarwal told **The Telegraph**.

Agarwal said the distribution company would help the private firm's officials for the next two to three months to ensure smooth transition of the takeover if the private company desires so.

The power situation is slowly but steadily improving in Muzaffarpur, the commercial hub of north Bihar, after Essel took over its

power supply system on November 1 though the overall availability of power increased by up to 2,300MW over the past two months across the state.

“It is right that the state’s overall power availability has gone up across the state but it is also a fact that Essel is working hard to put things on the right track. It has taken several consumer-friendly steps such as opening of more bill collection centres, introducing a helpline, consumer centres, text message alerts apart from taking up capacity augmentation of transformers and feeders,” said Sujeet Kumar, a resident of Kamra Mohalla of the town.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar has been saying that the power supply scenario would certainly improve before the next Assembly elections due in October-November, 2015. Else, he would not seek votes in the Assembly polls.

Sources said handing over of the power distribution networks of Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Bhagalpur to private players may yield better results by the end of 2015 and be able to garner some votes for Nitish’s JD(U) after the break-up of its 17-year-old alliance with BJP.