Construction of Shuakhevi power station launched

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Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili and Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze participated in a ceremony to launch the construction of a new Shuakhevi HPP in Adjara on September 16. The Prime minister claims that the new HPPs will provide energy independence for the country.

Georgian energy ministry reported that the installed capacity of the Shuakhevi HPP is 178 megawatts and has an annual electricity output of 445.1 million kilowatt hour.

The installed capacity of this HPP will be 5.8 megawatts and annual electricity output will be 20.8 million kilowatts hours.

The investment value of both projects is $300 million. Construction of the power plant is to be completed in the second half of 2016.

Construction of a cascade on the Acharistskali River is being carried out by the Indian company Tata Power (40 percent stake), Norwegian Clean Energy Invest (40 percent) and IFC InfraVentures (20 percent).

The prime minister stated that the construction of the HPPs is vitally important for the state's development.

"We do not have the export means to purchase electro-energy from the outside... energy independence will be one of the basis' for state energy independence. We should manage and construct as many HPPs as possible," Ivanishvili stated, adding that there might be some effects regarding nature and the environment. However, the risks will be minimal and the profit for the state economy and the local population will be significant.

The patriarch was even asked to appeal to Ivanishvili to cancel the construction of two HPPs in Khta gorge and the Khudoni Hydro Power station.

"I explained to the patriarch and he knew the importance of constructing HPPs," Ivanishvili stated. He said that discussions over the construction of Khudon HPP will be launched from September 17 and he expressed hope that locals of Svaneti region will take the issue with understanding as the locals did in the Adjara region.

"The number of investments will be up to $700 million. We are very glad that in a short period of time, we managed to solve all bureaucratic issues that hastened the launching of the construction," Minister of Economy, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, stated.

Minister of Energy, Kakhi Kaladze, spoke on the achievements reached by the new administration of Georgia. Kaladze emphasized that the Georgian Dream government managed to release business from governmental pressure and make the country more attractive for foreign investors.

The investors claimed during their speeches that the Hydro Power Stations built by them will be free from risks in relation to the environment and will create more benefits and jobs for locals.

However, local people expressed dissatisfaction with the investors. They stated several months ago they...
were retrained to work on the HPP. However, out of 600 retrained locals only 10 were employed. Local residents told Ivanishvili that the investors brought foreign staff instead of hiring local people.

The Prime minister told the locals that during the construction of the HPP and after the conclusion of the Hydro Electro Power station, all the locals that are appropriately trained should be employed there.

NGOs working in the field of environment protection state that the current government of Georgia is following the path of the previous one and has not suspended the construction of the large hydroelectric power stations being constructed. NGOs say that this is an unreasonable strategy and according to them, “it will cause an environmental disaster, affect people, nature and the country’s tourism potential.”

Green Alternative claims that the appropriate studies have not been carried out prior to starting the construction.

The organization states that in the case that the construction of Khudom Hydro Electric Power station is successful, the villages of Khaishi and Chuberi in Svaneti will be in the flooding area, as well as agricultural lands, forests, cemeteries, important historical buildings and nearly 2,000 men will have to leave the area.

“All this will cause increase of political risks in the long-term perspective of the country,” the organization states.

Co-chair of the Green Movement, Nino Chkhobadze, told The Messenger, that systemic changes are required by the state in order to regulate situations in all fields, including energy. She stressed that first of all the country should have an economic strategy and then decide for what and how much energy it needs. Chkhobadze stressed that on the other hand state administration should not think only about electro-energy, when it can use solar and wind in the energy field, or simply rehabilitate already existing power stations and power lines.