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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Naushachapada residents can finally see a bright future ahead

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MUMBAI: Jaanu Umbarsadhe, a village elder from Naushachapada, goes around telling his neighbours that he is the only person of his generation to have witnessed the arrival of electricity to the hamlet at Aarey Milk Colony.

Yesterday for the first time, residents of the Warli hamlet in Aarey Milk Colony, had lunch together under lights and fans after 37 electricity meters were inaugurated by officials from the state government, electricity provider and the donor who paid for the connection.

"It feels like Diwali for us; all these years we would look at other padas and wonder what we did wrong that our kids have to study without electricity. Now, we are already planning to start some kind of stitching or tailoring activity at home at night to get additional income," said Madhura Umbarsadhe, a house-



Residents of Naushachapada celebrate the inauguration of electricity meters in their hamlet on Sunday. SATYABRATA TRIPATHY/HT

wife from the pada.

However, 20 houses in the hamlet are yet to be provided connections. Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited (AEML) said it would start the connections once all the documents were submitted. "Once the applications are received, we will diligently complete the electrification of the rest of the hamlet," said the company spokesperson.

The development comes almost a month after HT reported that the Bombay Veterinary College (BVC), under whose jurisdiction Naushachapada falls, finally issued a no-objection letter on June 3, for the locals to apply for the power connection.

Even with the letter in hand, residents had another hurdle to jump—collecting money to pay for the new connections.

NO LONGER IN THE DARK

- On June 3, the Bombay Veterinary College (BVC) – Naushachapada comes under its jurisdiction – finally issued a no objection letter that will let locals get an electricity connection
- The approval for electricity was raised in Mantralaya in 1995 and previous applications by the locals have not received any response from the college, whose headquarters are in Nagpur.

They would have to pay around ₹5 lakh for the connections to 67 houses.

To help these villagers have a brighter future, a donor, who wished to remain anonymous, stepped up and agreed to pay an initial amount of ₹2 lakh for the connections.

Around a year back, an online petition was started by activists and supported by

Naushachapada residents demanding electricity. They had initially started the process to obtain electricity in 2009 after the approval for electricity for the pada was raised in Mantralaya in 1995.

Supriya Chauhan, additional project officer of Mumbai, said that the electricity provider was not able to provide electricity to the hamlet till now because the village did not receive a no-objection certificate (NOC) for the project.

"We have now asked them to start the process of income declaration and provide us with their caste certificate, so that we can disburse financial help that is due to them," said Supriya.

"We had staged protests and were firm that we have to get electricity this time. We had also mentioned that not providing electricity to us is in violation of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Act, 1989," said Dinesh Habale, president of Adivasi Hakkh Savardhan Samiti.