Unresolved burning issues hindering small hydropower industry

Small Hydro Power Developers Association (SHPDA)
President Eng. Prabath Wickramasinghe recently warned that a host of unresolved burning issues is hindering the industry, which is catering to 8% of national demand of electricity generation. The plethora of challenges faced as well as initiatives to further enhance the industry was highlighted by Wickramasinghe during his address at the SHPDA’s 11th Annual General Meeting, here are excerpts of the address:

BHISI’s official collective voice of small hydropower developers in Sri Lanka, it is a fact that the year 2017 and 2018 had been one of the most challenging years for the sector. I wish to thank the members of this association, who have been present before the Executive Committee and assuredly take office for another year to continue fighting for the burning issues which remained unresolved.

Our membership now crosses 75% of the overall population of small hydropower developers in Sri Lanka, there are 219 individual plants with a combined capacity of 360MW. We cater for approximately 8% of the annual national demand of electricity generation in Sri Lanka with annual energy delivery of close to 1,160 million units. This is slightly more than what Vittura and Randeniage power stations produce every year.

The year 2017 and 2018 had been one of the most challenging years for our sector. Under the guise of transparency, we are hindering the development of the industry, not only by obstructing the government from following through with the implementation of non-conventional energy projects, but also by obstructing the sector itself. Therefore, and a Cabinet Paper on this issue.

Considering the utmost importance of the sector, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and Ministry of Finance and Mass Media to current some of the parameters and recommendations of the tariff committee. The Cabinet Paper was finally approved and presently the Ministry of Power and Renewable Energy has forwarded the approval to the CEB for implementation. The CEB Board paper is presently under preparation for approval by the Board of Directors of CEB. We are of the view that first SPPA could be tied by the end of next month.

We welcome the leadership he gave for this sector. We have come a long way since the inception of the sector. Our association would like to mention Premasiri, who was the pioneer and father of our industry in Sri Lanka. It is an honor to note that in the year, an engineer and a young visionary who has helped many early developers understand its unique landscape and taught us lessons for life and work, to strengthen our industry. Following the understanding and acceptance of the sector, the association wishes to invite all those who are engaged in the field of small hydropower development to team up with us to support the above projects. The support from the members of the association will be either by active participation by utilizing the time and effort for the projects or by donating financial support.

As a voluntarily driven body, the only way the above association could embark on the projects listed above is only through the support of the members. The association offers to provide us with the requisite documentation to achieve our common goals. This is the only way the sector can move away from this burning issue.

Due to subsidized cost of electricity special in the sector, the general public has no or very little sense about the actual cost of electricity. This is another problem faced by the industry in Sri Lanka. It is the real cost of electricity and the reciprocal effect it has. This is further bringing wider the balance of payment and the cost of electricity. This is the reason why we have to fall back against the students who try to do our work.