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## Village makes its own power

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**New Delhi:** While city dwellers face acute power shortage, the tribal village of Ranidhara in Kabirdharm district of Chhattisgarh has been generating its own power from the oil of wild jatropha seeds. The oil-based power plant provides four hours of light daily for the 106 households and six hours of power to the street-lights and not seen a power cut since it was commissioned about a year ago.

"The villagers are not only producing their own power but are also paying for it," said Somnath Bhattacharjee, vice-president of Delhi-based NGO Winrock International India, which undertook the project.

WII has applied for a patent for this successful village electrification project based on jatropha oil, in which no chemical processing is involved. The Rs 1 crore pilot project undertaken by WII is supported by the Global Opportunities Fund of the British High Commission and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

A local distribution grid has been set up with a total connected load of 5 kilowatts, which provides power from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. to the households and till midnight to the street lights.

When the project began in 2005, villagers were not keen. Everyone wanted "khambe ki bijli" (electricity from the pole). But gradually, the WII project volunteers convinced the people to adopt the alternative source of power.

The power plant consists of three 6 HP. Special Diesel Generating Sets and a 10 HP. set as an expelling unit and back-up which uses jatropha oil instead of diesel.

Jatropha seeds (a tonne is required a month) is procured at Rs 6 to Rs 10 a kg and crushed by villagers. "For about Rs 20 lakh you can run a plant to serve a village of 100 households," Bhattacharjee says.

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