

# FROM DEPTHS OF DARKNESS, INTO LIGHT

As The Nation Celebrates **National Renewable Energy Day**, TOI Takes A look At Green Energy Initiatives Across The State

## 'Lantern Amma' lights up homes in Kanpur villages

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As the sun sets and darkness descends over Bairi Dariyav and its adjoining villages near Kanpur, 55-year-old Noor Jehan switches on her solar lanterns and begins to lend them to local shopkeepers and small vendors.

Not long ago, there were no business activities in Bairi Dariyav and its neighbouring villages after dusk. But now, thanks to Noor Jehan's solar-powered lamps, the area remains abuzz with activity till late into the



**LADY WITH THE LAMP:** Noor Jehan displays a solar lantern she lends to needy villagers

dark hours of the night.

"The solar lantern has changed our lives," says Maya Devi, village head of Bairi Dariyav. "People here can earn their living even in the night and make enough to make both ends meet." And it's all because of Noor Jehan, who has now come to be known as "Lantern Amma". Noor Jehan was trained and helped by an NGO to help spread the benefits of solar energy.

Irshad, 45, a tailor in the village, is enjoying the benefits of solar energy. The lantern he hires from Noor Jehan has allowed him to sew clothes till late night hours. Earlier, the villagers used to depend on kerosene as a primary source of lighting.

"Not only do our womenfolk use solar lamps for household chores, but these portable light also help us a lot in irrigating our farm land at night," said Naresh, another local.

In neighbouring Bairi Sujampur village, Ganga Singh's family hires solar lanterns from Noor Jehan to study. Singh recognizes the benefit his children derive from having better light to study an extra two to three hours in the evening. "As per her name Noor Jehan has been spreading light in the lives of our children. It's irony how a poor illiterate woman's effort is going into enlightening the future of our children," says Singh.

Noor Jehan says she charges a monthly rent of Rs 100 a lantern and earns around Rs 5,000 each month for the 50 lanterns given to her by the NGO. "Earlier, I used to earn Rs 10 to Rs 15 by working agricultural fields. But after my husband's death, it was nearly impossible as I didn't have a source of income to raise five sons and a daughter. However, after support from the NGO, not only I have started meeting my expenses, but I have started sending my grandson to school," she said.

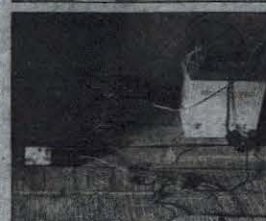
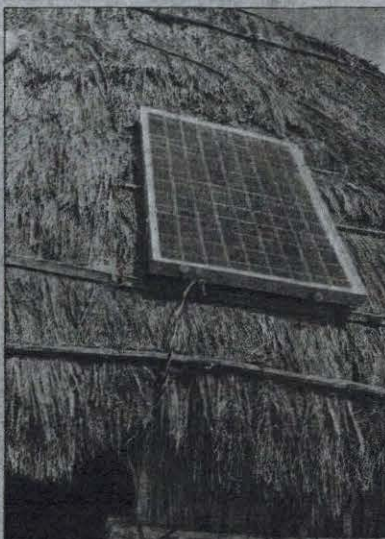
On November 29, 2015, the entire region celebrated when Noor Jehan was praised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 'Mann Ki Baat'.

Kishan, a villager said, "We feel proud and overjoyed that the Prime Minister took the name of Noor Jehan and praised her work. It is a morale booster."

Noor Jehan's customers are increasing with each passing day, as half of the villagers have no access to electricity, and the others get only sporadic power.

"The solar lamp is very useful and better than other options," says Hanif, a medicine shop owner in Bairi Asayi village. He has access to electricity in his village, but uses the solar lantern when there is a power breakdown.

Noor Jehan's son Shamshad told TOI that many teachers were also hiring solar lanterns every day to run coaching classes in their village in the evenings.



**NEW DAWN:** Solar installations in Rangdhar Tola (left) and in Kannauj district have ushered in a change



## Solar power helps villagers keep their cool in Kannauj district

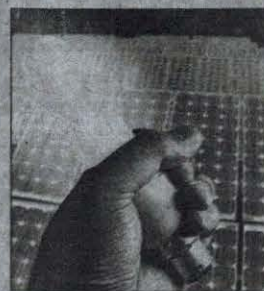
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It may be a case of owner's pride, neighbours' envy, but residents of Fakirpur and Chanduhar hardly seem annoyed these days by the frequent disruptions in power supply, unlike their counterparts in neighbouring villages. A mini-solar power grid put up by the SP government in their villages is helping them keep their cool in all kinds of weather.

The mini-solar power grid, with a capacity of 250 kilowatt, had started functioning after Missile Man and former president of India APJ Abdul Kalam Azad inaugurated the first-ever such state project in Uttar Pradesh on July 7, 2015.

"Since then, things are going smoothly in our village. Our electricity consumption through conventional sources has reduced considerably," says Dildar Ali, a daily wage labourer in Fakirpur village.

The power plant installed in the fields of Rajendra has 1,000 solar panels. A dual power converter,



**A year down, locals beam with joy after installation of first-ever solar state project, which has reduced the dependency on exhaustible energy reserves**

along with 10 batteries of 100 ampere-hours (AH) capacity each, man-

ages the power supply tapped from the solar panels. The converter, on the one hand, distributes power to the equipment and, on the other, charges the batteries from the solar panels.

During the day, the power plant feeds houses. During the night, the converter takes over and energizes houses by drawing power from the batteries.

There's palpable excitement among the villagers since the solar panels arrived a year ago. Not just for Dildar Ali, life has been transformed for the 2,500-odd residents of Chanduhar and Fakirpur of Bahosi Gram Sabha with the installation of the solar-powered micro-grid, bringing them light - and power for all their daily needs after years sans electricity.

"We now have LED lights and bulbs, which reduces our total consumption, thereby helping us financially," beams Sajib Ali. "Now my house is fully solar powered and energy is available 24 hours."

## East UP villages tap solar power to beat the dark

Arjumand Bano | TNN

Bereft of electricity for years, a few villages in Siddharthnagar district of eastern Uttar Pradesh are using solar energy to join the mainstream modern world, charging their mobile phones with small solar batteries in a bid to be part of the new connected global village.

Raju Prasad (32), a mason of Bagahiya a small village of Ajjigara Gram Panchayat in the district, says, "We waited for years for electricity, but now solar energy has brought a new wave of life in the village. Almost 90% of the villagers have at least one mobile phone. Earlier, we use to get our phones charged at our workplaces, but now most of the people have bought solar lanterns with batteries to do it."

Says Sunita (16) of Laoo Kaoo village of Ajjigara Gram Panchayat, "Electric bulbs were a dream for us once, but today

## Most of the villagers in Rangdhar Tola, however, have mobile phones and use solar batteries to charge them

no more - I can light up my house with LED bulbs using solar energy. I wanted to study, but my parents couldn't send me to school. Now, I'm learning the Hindi alphabet with the help of my mobile phone which I charge using solar batteries."

"I want to write stories of my village, take photographs of our houses and make them available for others see them through the Internet," says Sunita. Her village, Laoo Khaoo, is dominated by the Pasi community. Many of them are farmers, and are still waiting for regular power supply.

In Rangdhar Tola village of Uska Bazar town area in Siddharthnagar, all the people run "buggis" (horse carts) to ferry bricks for kilns in the area. Although electric poles were installed in the village one-and-a-half-years ago, there is still no power supply in the village. The people of the village work for six months and rest at home for the other six months as the kiln runs for only six months.

Most of the villagers in Rangdhar Tola, however, have mobile phones and use solar batteries to charge them. Nooruddin (35) says, "Earlier, we use to light our village with kerosene oil, but now solar lights have become common in the village."