

## ONE CHILD, ONE LIGHT

# Prof brings light to poor students' lives

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Chetan Singh Solanki, a professor in the energy science and engineering department of IIT-B, took a sabbatical last year. He spent the time at his village Bhikangaon in Khargone district of MP amid long power cuts, something he is used to since childhood, giving finishing touches to his ambitious project 'one child, one light'.

Now, 21,000 students aged below 14 in two tehsils of Khargone district have a solar-powered LED lamp at home. Developed by Solanki in the IIT-B lab, it emits 150 lux. Charged during the day, it can be used for four hours at night.

Parents think the lamp, which costs Rs200 (50% subsidised by the government) is worth it as their children now focus on studies.

Solanki said, "The government is running several programmes to



**A student studies by the light of a solar-powered LED lamp, developed by Chetan Singh Solanki (right), an IIT-B professor**



educate children to make them employable. But how can they study if there is no power? A majority of rural children are always less privileged than their urban counterparts due to various reasons. Erratic power supply is one."

The project aims to reach 1 lakh students in the district by 2013-end.

Six months after the launch, Solanki is happy and satisfied,

mainly because he is following the Gandhian way of empowering rural India by the "Gram swaraj" model.

"The lamps are being manufactured and repaired locally. We have trained technicians from the local electronics repair shop to assemble the lamp and solar charger. This has helped raise the lamp's acceptability as people know that they need not rush to city if some-

thing goes wrong," said Solanki.

In India, over 12 crore children depend upon crude kerosene lamps for study which emit three to five lux. They also emit carbon monoxide. The LED provides safety from health and fire hazards.

A similar project will now be rolled out in four to five districts of MP, Maharashtra and Rajasthan each for which Solanki is seeking help from NGOs for local manufacturing. A proposal to fund the project has been submitted to the Union ministries of new and renewable energy, and finance. They will each bear one-third of the cost, while the rest Solanki aims to raise from corporates. His target is to reach 300 million children aged below 14 across India in the next 20 years.

He has opened a school in his village which is designed in such a way that it doesn't require power. Nearly 650 children are currently studying there.