

## PRE-PAID METER PROJECT TO START IN AUGUST

# HPL plans Rs 100 cr unit in Himachal

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**H**PL India Ltd, a Rs 150-crore company manufacturing electrical protection equipment, switchgears, energy meters, and energy management and UPS systems, is setting up a Rs 100-crore plant for manufacturing pre-paid electricity meters in Himachal Pradesh. The plant will be a joint venture with Socomec SA of France.

"It will be a 50:50 joint venture called Socomec HPL Pre-paid Meters & Meters. The plant would be built on an area of four acres at Jabli in the Solan district of Himachal Pradesh and would be functional in August 2005. We have set ourselves a

turnover target of more than Rs 20 crore in the first year," said Lalit Seth, managing director, HPL-Socomec.

The company is in talks with several states, including Delhi, for supply of pre-paid meters. From the Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board, the company has already bagged an order of 1 million tamper-proof meters with anti-theft features and LCD display. Pre-paid meters, which allow users to insert a smart card and access electricity, have been introduced in some areas of Delhi by North Delhi Power Ltd (NDPL).

The meters are ideal for household use, and not meant for bulk users. Their capacities range from 0-40 amps and from 0-60 amps. With additional re-

search and development, it will also be possible to develop software to allow consumers to recharge their smart cards via credit cards, said Seth.

The single-phase meter will cost about Rs 1,000-1100 against Rs 400-500 for existing meters. With volumes, a 15-20 per cent reduction in price is possible, he added. The HPL group has collaborations with three European companies-LK of Denmark, Elektra Tailfingen, Germany, and Socomec SA, France.

The company has 20 marketing offices with 450 authorised dealers and over 3000 retailers in India. HPL has a presence in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, the UAE and other Southeast Asian and European countries.