**Status of Renewable Energy in Karnataka**

The recent reports of massive natural disasters and unprecedented numbers of people dying from pollution calls for quick action in the nation’s energy sector. According to a model designed by Lancet Planetary Health, more than 2.1 million people die annually in the country from air pollution, making India reach second highest in the list surpassed only by China. The model also highlights the number of deaths in various cities, with Bengaluru also in the top ten list with 4.8% (1,04,640) of the deaths, and Delhi topping the board with 11.5% (2,50,704).

It must also be noted that the report only analyses reported deaths caused by air pollution. Combining water and soil, the total number of reported deaths is much higher. Not to mention the innumerable rural villages where people are dying every day without any medical authority to examine and report such fatalities.

As such, transitioning to a power grid fed by renewable energy is the need of the hour. It will help reduce reliance on fossil fuels and imports to meet the current energy requirements. At the same time, more charging stations and massive subsidies in EVs shall result in an increased share on the road when compared to IC vehicles.

While Karnataka has been among the top five states in India when it comes to renewable energy, drastic measures are required to meet the goal of 500 GW from RE by 2030 as highlighted in the Karnataka Renewable Energy Policy 2022-2027. As per Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Limited, the current allotted capacity (including ISTS) is 34,165.675 MW, with an additional 6,624.155 MW commissioned. However, there is also mention of a cancelled capacity of 12,591 MW in the past three years without any official reason. The report is as recent as 31st of July, 2024 and includes solar, wind, small hydro, biomass, co-gen, and hybrid projects.

The solution to the problems in quality introduces a Bill to maximize the harnessing potential of Karnataka from renewable energy. It prevents the commissioning to be cancelled without any valid reason while introducing incentives for new projects to ensure that renewable energy goals of the state are met within due time.

# **The Issue at Hand:** The renewable energy potential of Karnataka is vast but not fully realised with adequate RE infrastructure. For instance, the district of Vijayapura has a wind energy potential of 12,946.2 MW, but only 2,468.85 MW has been allotted with a commissioned capacity of just 1055.6 MW. In addition, many of the previously commissioned projects have been cancelled without official reason.

# **Proposed Solution:** We propose the establishment of a statewide body of qualified engineers, scientists, and researchers. It would examine each and every RE project tender before it is declared cancelled to ensure that adequate transparency persists between the government and the citizens. Moreover, they shall be responsible to explore further avenues of renewable energy which have not yet been commissioned, such as geothermal energy, tidal energy, and green hydrogen production.

# **Legal Route to Address the Issue:** According to clauses (d) through (f) under section 15 of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, the state has the power to, with consultation from the Energy Efficiency Bureau, create and maintain such an organisation. Furthermore, section 16 of the same act allows the state to create specific funds for such an organisation. The members of the body shall also have the power of inspecting officers as per section 17 of the same act.

# **Benefits to the Public:** Implementing this Bill will benefit not just public health, but also encourage other states to transition into renewable energy. It will reduce the concentration of PM 10 and PM 2.5 in the atmosphere, which are generated when burning fossil fuels. Lower pollution-related illnesses will also mean less stress on the state’s medical infrastructure, while improved air quality may allow for safe development of other large scale industries. As per a report by the IISc, there is no economic case for coal power plants in India. The faster we transition to renewable energy, the quicker we can ensure that all energy demands are met at a fair price. It will also reduce the likelihood of scams and concentration of wealth to a few wealthy families in the future.

# **Why hasn't there been action so far?** While the Government of Karnataka has set up a Renewable Energy Development Board to monitor and promote various projects, the state is still relying on coal and other fossil fuel imports from other states to meet its energy needs. So far, Karnataka has met its minimum requirements for RE generation, which has been covered intensively by the media. However, there has never been a discussion on the increasing energy needs as major industrial hubs grow in the state. Additionally, the KREDL has never cited a firm reason for the cancellation of nearly 12,600 MW of RE generation projects in the last 3 years, nor has it clarified why there is discrepancy in commissioning more projects in certain districts over others.

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**Sources**

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