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Karnataka kickstarts ambitious plan to migrate lakhs of irrigation pumps to solar power

Karnataka govt spends Rs 15,000 crore per year as power subsidy for over 34 lakh irrigation pump. It wants to transition 1 lakh pumps every year to solar and has started identifying plots for solar

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Shifting lakhs of irrigation pumps to solar power is expected to result in savings of thousands of crores (Image | P Jawahar)

By [Bosky Khanna](#)

Express News Service

BENGALURU: The Karnataka energy department has kickstarted the state's ambitious plan to transition lakhs of irrigation pumps to

solar energy to save substantial amounts of money spent as subsidy on solar panels.

Under the solarization scheme, it has now started identifying plots for setting up solar panels near sub-stations that supply power primarily to irrigation pumps. Revenue land will be acquired at Rs 1 an acre on lease basis and private land at market rate.

“The government is working on solarisation in two levels - one is standalone irrigation pump sets (IP) owned by farmers and the other is through the substations. Only those substations which supply 70-80% power to IP sets are being chosen for this,” a senior department official told The New Indian Express.

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There are over 34 lakh IP sets in the state on which the government spends Rs 15,000 crore every year as power subsidy. “The aim is to annually solarise one lakh IP sets. For this year, from December to March, the target is 30,000 IP sets. A dedicated software to monitor and manage the process is also being created,” the official added.

The second aim of the scheme is to decentralize solar power generation and reduce overall power generation costs by cutting the dependency on thermal plants. The effort will also shift the focus from Pavagada solar park.

Currently, the cost of generating thermal power is Rs 5 per unit, but as per Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC), solar power can be generated at only Rs 3.17 per unit.

Teams have been formed at district levels to identify land for acquisition, the official said. The criteria for selection is that revenue land should be free from incumbency and Akrama Sakrama, should be non-fertile and within 500 meters from the grid, he added.

The official said that as part of the first phase of the program, land is being procured within Bangalore Electricity Supply Company limits.

As such, the department has called for tenders to generate 1300 MW solar power for 240 sub-stations within Bescom limits and has set December as the target to install solar panels and start power generation.

For the first time, the department is also organizing a workshop for farmers to create awareness and to encourage them to set up independent solar enabled IP sets.

The workshop will be held in the first week of November at Gandhi Krishi Vignana Kendra (GKVK), Bengaluru. Farmers from Maharashtra have been invited to educate farmers in Karnataka on the concept of installing solar enabled IP sets with central government aid.

“Peer communication will help speed up the process of installing solar enabled IP sets, rather than government officials explaining. We are exploring all methods to increase power generation through other sources at the earliest,” the official added.

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