

Renewable Energy Sector Can Create 3 Lakh Jobs in 5 Yrs

GENERATION NEXT Potential for 34,600 jobs in wind and for 2,96,600 in solar projects: study



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New Delhi: India's rapidly growing renewable energy sector will generate a significant number of new jobs apart from giving the country cleaner environment, a new study has forecast.

Around 3,00,000 such jobs in this sector will be created in the next five years, according to a study done by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). The eventual job potential of the sector, according to the study, is 34,600 in wind power, 58,600 in ground mounted solar projects and 238,000 in rooftop solar projects.

Solar and wind energy employed more than 21,000 people in India in 2016-2017, and this is expected to more than double this year with 25,000 more jobs, it said.

Interestingly, setting up rooftop solar projects provides far more jobs than similar projects on the ground. The study estimated that installing 1 MW of rooftop solar would create 25 jobs, while on ground each MW would require only three people. "The focus has been on ground-mounted solar and the push to reduce tariffs although it is the rooftop sector which generates more jobs. So, the government will have to decide where it wants to focus," said Kanika Chawla, senior programme lead at CEEW.

The government has set a rooftop target of 40 GW by 2022 but so far less than 2 GW has been achieved.

"As more renewable capacity is added, the demand for maintenance, scheduling and forecasting too will increase. This means still more jobs

in those areas. Rooftop is not only creating jobs but entrepreneurs too. But if they are serious about rooftop, proper contracts and sound legal framework will need to be put in place. Otherwise, it could lead to NPAs, as a result of which, people will lose jobs," said Sunil Jain, CEO, Hero Future Energies.

There is currently a sizeable skill shortage in the sector. The ministry of new and renewable energy has set up the Skill Council for Green Jobs to address the problem.

The study said solar module manufacturing currently employs close to 2,900 people and that it could employ an additional 45,000 people if demand is met domestically. At present, barely 10% of solar modules used in India are locally made, the rest being imported from China, Taiwan and Malaysia.

"The opportunity lies at the unskilled worker end. There are lots of people required for OEM, installations etc, which need only one week to three months training. This is where 90% potential is. It can be done easily by the government through specialized courses wherein there is a quick turnaround of people," said Vinay Rustagi, managing director at solar consultancy Bridge To India.

Although these are simple, low tech jobs, they are important to ensure that the project life is maintained. "You can have the best cables and inverters but if the operator is not trained well then all the investment will go waste," he said.

Besides 40 GW of rooftop solar, India has also set itself a utility solar target of 60 GW by 2022, of which, in all 12.2GW has been achieved. The segment is thus poised for immense expansion and thereby job creation.