

# Solar Developers Seek More Time To Finish Govt Rooftop Projects

Claim delay caused by 'lack of awareness & interest in scheme by concerned ministries'

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**Bengaluru:** Solar rooftop developers, who won bids in an ambitious project to cover government buildings across the country with solar plants, have pleaded for more time to complete the work. They have cited several reasons for doing so, among them claiming they were delayed by the indifference of the ministries concerned to their efforts.

In two letters to the ministry of new and renewable energy (MNRE), on April 24 and again on May 11, the Distributed Solar Power Association (DISPA) has sought extension of the deadline for completion from June-end 2018 to December-end, noting in both the "lack of awareness and interest in the scheme by concerned ministries". Other reasons given included "non-feasibility of the identified roofs for setting up the projects", "loss of considerable man hours in accessing the above identified roofs", "significant delays in securing internal approvals within government departments for the power purchase agreements (PPAs)", and "state-specific hurdles in implementing the scheme". MNRE did not respond to queries about the letters.

The reverse auction for the 500 MW project, tendered by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) – which also identified the specific government building roofs in every state across the country – was held in September 2017. While the bulk of the roofs were of central government organizations, some state government roofs were included, too. The project carried the incentive of a 30% capital subsidy in the majority of states and 70% subsidy in the north-eastern and certain other hilly states.

Ultimately, only 226 MW were

awarded to around 40 developers at tariffs ranging from ₹2.42 to ₹4.16 per unit, with the completion deadline set for June 30, 2018.

Though letters of allocation were issued in September-October last year, so far only around 95 MW of PPAs have been signed, while another 100-120 MW are in the pipeline. "Even when we had the allocation we had to approach various government departments to get the PPAs signed and they took their own time to do so," said one of the winning developers. "In different regions, the reasons given for the delay were different."

While India's solar energy programme has been progressing rapidly,



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reaching a cumulative capacity of 21,651.46 MW by end-March 2018, of which 9,362.64 MW were added in FY18, its solar rooftop effort has been foundering. Of the target of 40,000 MW set for 2022, only 1063.63 MW had been achieved by end-March, with 352.83 MW added in FY18.

"Commissioning of the allocated capacity will be extremely difficult within the current timelines," the May 11 letter from DISPA adds. "Developers had requested SECI to extend timelines but no response has been received yet... Implementation of the projects is a key challenge. The large clients are majorly colleges and organisations which have multiple roofs and multiple processes for implementation. Also, most of the PPAs have been signed in the last two months."

Most developers, however, remained keen to make a success of the project. "We've made good progress to date on signing PPAs," said Andrew Hines, co-founder of leading rooftop solar developer Clean-Max Solar. "At the same time, it does take time to bring individual government entities on board. With continued support from the government, we believe 100% achievement of the allocated capacity is very much within reach."