

Roof top solar policy no longer rosy

The tapping of solar energy from the roof tops of all buildings in an area (dubbed roof top solar policy) came of age recently and appeared very attractive and obviously invited plenty of proposals of varying sizes and shapes. But now it seems to be hitting some speed breakers.

The Delhi government had formulated a roof-top solar policy under which consumers would set up solar panels on their roof-tops and feed extra power generated into the main grid. Government officials, however, felt the scheme could be exploited on several grounds, a major violation being production of power through cheaper means and selling it to discoms at higher rates. On the other hand, the 465 kilowatt of solar power generation under a ministry of new and renewable energy scheme that had been offered to BSES is not finding any taker.

The discom is asking for subsidies, which the government has refused. The environment department is now searching for other parties to take on this work. “The central government is no longer keen on roof-top solar projects either. Several loopholes were identified in it which could result in scams. It would be impossible to keep a tab on solar capacity on each roof-top and if someone produced power from cheap polluting diesel generator sets and fed that into the grid, we would never get to know. The difference in cost between solar power and that generated by fuel is massive. We will have to look at alternative schemes now,” said a senior government official.

The change in policy has also landed discom BSES in a soup. The power distribution company had planned solar power generation through roof-top panels and is now waiting for the government to come out with another policy. “We are ready to start a 1 MW project using the rooftops of the discom’s buildings. However, with the change in government policy we are stuck. If Delhi Electricity Regulatory Board announces the renewable power obligation for discoms this year, we will have to source our obligatory solar power from other states since there is not enough land mass available in Delhi to set up a big solar project,” said Gopal Saxena, CEO, BSES Rajdhani.

The government is miffed with the discom for not having taken up generation of 465 kW, which is part of Delhi’s 1 MW solar project under the MNRE (TOI 9-2-12).