

Goa's 100MW solar project very important to us, says CESL's Acharya

Goans are seeing new projects in solar energy, electric bikes, etc. after the state entered into an agreement for 100 MW of decentralized solar power with Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL). Here **Mahua Acharya**, CEO and managing director, CESL, explains the project details to **Shoma Patnaik**

Amidst the tediousness of the pandemic the bright spot for the state this year is the pickup in green energy with one MW solar power project commissioned in January followed by the setting up of the first EV charging station after which came initiatives by the government to encourage electric mobility.

The coming months promise to be equally exciting for green energy as Convergence Energy



The 1MW solar generation project at Cuncolim sub-station

Services Limited (CESL), the company that signed the deal for generation of 100 MW of solar power for Goa completes some of its ongoing works and sets the state on the road to self-sufficiency in power.

In the pipeline is 18 MW of solar power scheduled for commissioning in mid-April 2021 together with green energy agriculture pumps, electrification of rural households, LED bulbs, EVs and host of initiatives in clean energy included in the CESL project, according to Mahua Acharya, CEO and managing director, CESL.

Acharya who made a brief visit to the state last week says that the 100 MW project involves setting up small, decentralized solar plants of one MW capacity each across the state.

The plants will provide solar energy to electric sub-stations and pumping systems of the water resource department (WRD). Villages in nearby areas will also benefit from clean, solar power.

"We will work in parallel teams to keep to the timeline. We are not going to displace people who are living in the vicinity. We do not want to cut trees but will be looking at land which is actually feasible, viz. land which is basically unused or vacant and located near the electricity sub-stations. CESL has stiff criteria for selecting land," says Acharya, an expert in green finance, renewables, and carbon markets who

was assistant director-general, Global Green Growth Institute, Seoul, during her career.

She reveals that, each one MW of solar power needs about four acres of land. "Land is a constraint so we are thinking innovatively and creatively. Plans are to try out floating solar panels by utilizing the unused water bodies. The solar panels will be placed on water. It will be tried out for the first time in Goa."

CESL's target for the completion of the 100 MW project in the state is the year-end.

"The Goa project is very important to us because it is the first order of our company and fits truly in the convergent model. For the first time one single provider will be delivering clean energy and also delivering clean appliances to homes. It is an integrated model that is being tried out for the first time in India."

Acharya adds that, Goa can become a 100 per cent renewable energy state. "Goa is buying power in the open market. Renewable energy is cheap besides being clean. By going fully on renewable the state can cut down its power cost," says Acharya.

She points out that, Goa can follow the example of smaller countries like Costa Rica which meets its entire power requirement from renewables. "Costa Rica is about the size of Goa. You can also look at a country like Denmark which has taken one of its coal company

and transformed it into 100 per cent renewable.

"Going cent per cent on renewable energy is doable but also difficult. The difficulty is because of the variability of renewable energy. Going fully renewable in any grid without battery storage will not be possible," explains Acharya.

She adds that, CESL will be maintaining all



Malua Acharya

the projects it implements in Goa for a period of 25 years. "We will be setting up our local team as soon as we get the land agreement signed up with the state. We are here for next 25 years. The company is going to be distributing energy efficient agriculture pump sets for free and maintaining them for the next 25 years. We will also be providing energy for lighting domestic appliances for about 200 rural homes in the interiors that have no grid connection. We are committed to set up full

operation."

The CEO, says that the company's project will enable the state to greatly reduce power consumption as well as T&D losses. It will enable the state to achieve multiple energy goals and earn carbon credits.

"For CESL the Goa project will generate revenues as soon as we start billing the government. The company will be signing the power purchase agreement with the state," disclosed Acharya.

CESL focused on clean energy

Convergence Energy Services Ltd., is a 100% subsidiary of Delhi based Energy Efficiency Services Ltd, a joint venture company of four public sector undertakings. NTPC, Power Finance Corporation Ltd., Rural Electrification Corporation and Power Grid Corporation of India, set up under Ministry of Power. Primarily an energy consultancy company, EESL is implementing the largest energy efficiency portfolio in the world through energy efficient appliances and technologies.

CESL was incorporated in November 2020. The company's focus is on delivering clean, affordable and reliable energy solutions that lie at the confluence of renewable

energy, electric mobility and climate change. CESL's other projects in India are in Maharashtra and Leh-Ladhak.

As per the terms of the MOU between the state and CESL, the 100MW de-centralised solar convergence project on government land will provide electricity to the state at Rs 3.60 per unit.

The total investment in the project is about Rs 450 crore.

Under the terms of the agreement, CESL will replace 7,000 agriculture pumps with five-star rated pumps at its own cost and supply 16 lakh LED bulbs at own cost for rural and domestic households.