

HT EDITORIAL

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Energy incl. Renewable & Non-renewable

Feb 20, 2020-Thursday

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asserted that his government is ensuring that growth happens without harming the environment. While this is heartening, there are apprehensions about the sustainability of a sector that is key to clean development. According to the Centre for Science and Environment's *State of India's Environment Annual report 2020*, India's renewable energy (RE) sector is losing steam. By December 2019, India's total RE installed capacity was only 86 gigawatts (GW), while the target is 175 (GW) capacity by 2022.

There has been a slowdown due to a combination of factors, from delays in auctions and renegotiation of power purchase agreements to rising costs and payment delays. Inadequate land infrastructure and poor financial health of discoms are worsening the situation. The government has maintained that it is confident of reaching its goals. But this will be a challenge. Between 2014 and 2018, the RE sector grew from 2.6 GW to 28 GW. India will now have to install 37.8 GW of solar rooftop, 32.1 GW of solar utility and 23.3 GW of wind power capacity in just two and half years to meet the target. To do this, there must be a mega push to restore the sanctity of auctions, and new mechanisms should be explored to manage discom risks. To tackle land acquisition, the government could think of placing RE infrastructure on degraded lands. Mr Modi recognises the centrality of renewables. It is important to translate that on the ground.

END

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