

Business Standard

Punjab inks pacts worth Rs 13,500 cr for solar projects

Biggest project is worth Rs 6,000 crores and it is with CVC India Infrastructure for establishment of five bio-ethanol based refineries

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi presents a award to Non-Conventional Energy Minister Punjab, Bikram Singh Majithia during the inauguration of Re-Invest 2015, the first Renewable Energy Global Investors Meet & Expo, in New Delhi

Punjab on Monday inked memorandums of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 13,500 crore for investment in solar projects. It also signed pacts for setting up five bio-ethanol plants worth Rs 6,000 crore in Punjab. The deals were signed at the first Renewable Energy Global Investors Meet and Expo in New Delhi.

Among the MoUs signed included one for 500-Mw ground-based power plants with an investment of Rs 4,000 crore by 8-Minute Energy, California, 100-Mw solar power projects with an investment of Rs 800 crore by Progetika-SRC, Italy, 300-Mw canal-based solar power plants with an investment of

Rs 2,400 crore by Lightsource Renewable Development Ltd, UK, 200-Mw solar power projects with an investment of Rs 1400 crore by PLG Energy Systems, Rs 900 crore solar/biomass complex by Spray Engineers, Mohali, and R&D/training/technological development collaboration between British Photovoltaic Association, UK, and PEDDA.

Punjab's New and Renewable Energy Minister Bikram Singh Majithia also finalised a MoU with CVC India Infrastructure for establishment of five bio-ethanol based refineries based on paddy straw, napier grass and cotton stalks at a cost of Rs 6,000 crore. CVC officials said they intend to start commercial production by December 2017 for the first bio-refinery.

Majithia appreciated the commitment of Lightsource Renewable Development to come up with appropriate technology for a canal-based solar project utilising the space available on canals. He said there was a huge potential for canal-based projects as the canal length in the state was 5,000 km.

He also mooted a proposal to set up floating solar panels on 22,000 acres of reservoir of the Ranjit Sagar dam. He said this project alone could result in harnessing of 2000 Mw of solar power. Lightsource officials said they had established a floating solar park in England and would undertake a study to replicate the same at Ranjit Sagar. To encourage net metering, the minister also discussed with investors establishing pilot net metering projects to demonstrate to individual household owners the profitability of establishing rooftop solar panels.

The minister also stressed on the need to lay more stress on bio-mass power. Stating that this potential had not been harnessed at all, the minister said in Punjab alone, 20 million tonnes of agriculture residue were being burnt every year.

Urging the policymakers to come up with a revised tariff for bio-mass projects, Majithia said this was important so that farmers could also earn an additional income. "Economies of scale will reduce the tariff rates progressively as has happened in the case of solar power," he added.