

# Kerala drops Kasaragod solar farm, loses Rs 900 crore central assistance

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by Renji Kuriakose



The cabinet decided last week to downgrade the planned 200 megawatt plant to 50 megawatt due to local reasons.

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Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government's decision to reduce the capacity of a proposed solar energy park in Kasaragod will deny the project central assistance to the tune of Rs 900 crore. The Kerala State Electricity Board has already spent Rs 70 crore to build a 220 kV substation in Kasaragod in anticipation of the project.

The cabinet decided last week to downgrade the planned 200 megawatt plant to 50 megawatt due to local reasons.

The state government had originally planned to install a 400 megawatt solar park in Kasaragod in two phases, while Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat had set a target of 4,000 megawatts. A plant needs at least 200 megawatt capacity to be recognized as a solar park by the central government.

The central government offers up to Rs 50 lakh per megawatt to every recognized solar park. The Kerala government could have availed of about Rs 200 crore in this regard. The center had also allotted Rs 700 crore to build a "green energy corridor" to supply the electricity generated in Kasaragod. The 400 kV line would have cost Rs 1,200 crore.

A 50 megawatt project does not need such a massive line or the 220 kV substation the board has already built.

A solar park needs five acres of land to produce 1 megawatt of electricity. The originally proposed park would take 2,000 acres in two stages. The government had identified a barren stretch of land for the project.

The first-phase 50 megawatt plant was built by the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency. The government had signed a contract with the public sector Tehri Hydro Power Corporation to build a 50 megawatt plant in the second phase. The cabinet decision has nixed the project and subsequent phases which were all set for the bidding process.

Kerala sought to move towards solar energy as the small state could not launch any hydel or coal power station due to the environmental impact.

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