

Govt plans offshore facility to tap wind energy

CHENNAI: The Centre for Wind Energy Technology (CWET) plans to conduct a feasibility study in Dhanushkodi near Rameswaram to set up offshore windmills, following problems of land acquisition for onshore wind power projects.

Sources said wind velocity at 100 metres from ground level would be measured and data collected. "It will be set up in a lagoon. If there is enough wind flow, we will set up a wind farm and start power generation," said a CWET source.

A machine will be installed at the erected tower and the velocity, direction and duration of wind recorded. The data will then be sent to the CWET. "At least one acre of land will be required to erect the tower in Dhanushkodi," the source said. It would take at least two years to study and gather data on the potential for offshore wind energy.

The study will take some years to complete. "We conducted a study in Rameswaram too, but that was not for offshore windmills. We studied the velocity at 20 metres from ground level," said the source. Many countries have started opting for offshore windmills. Many European countries, the US and China have started setting up such windmills. But in India the concept is yet to catch on.

The country's wind energy generation capacity is around 14,000MW, of which Tamil Nadu accounts for 6,547MW. Between April and October last year, nearly 660MW was added. However, a major problem in both onshore and offshore windmills is the evacuation problem. "There is a need for proper evacuation facilities. The ministry of new and renewable energy (MNRE) said an exclusive corridor for renewable energy will be set up soon," said Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA) chairman and managing director Sudeep Jain.

He said there were no offshore windmills in the country. "Tamil Nadu has a huge potential and it would be good if some are set up in the state," said Jain. TNEB officials on the other hand said laying transmission lines for evacuating wind power would not happen in a short time. "Wind energy producers claim the state has a capacity to produce an additional 10,000MW. This would need a strong transmission network," said a TNEB official.

He said they sought funds from the MNRE for an exclusive corridor for evacuating wind energy. "We will need at least Rs 5,000 crore," said the official.