

Press Release

West Bengal has the potential to be India's renewable energy powerhouse, reveals the latest report from iFOREST

Kolkata, September 20, 2024: iFOREST, a leading environment research organisation in India, released three crucial reports today highlighting the tremendous potential of renewable energy (RE) growth in West Bengal. The report also lists actionable policy recommendations.

The reports were released at a stakeholder dialogue titled 'Enabling Renewable Energy Growth in West Bengal' hosted at the Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI), Kolkata, in collaboration with Environment Governed Integrated Organisation (EnGIO), a Kolkata-based civil society organisation. Representatives from the state government, utilities, RE industry, civil society, and other sector experts participated in the dialogue.

This comes at a time when West Bengal is facing the twin challenges of a growing electricity demand along with an increased national mandate on RE use in the form of revised Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs). iFOREST's estimate shows that to meet the national RE target, the demand for RE capacity for West Bengal will be over 24,000 MW by 2032. Currently, only about 640 MW of RE capacity is installed in the state.

At present, West Bengal's RE sector is lagging compared to other states. The East Indian state accounts for only 0.4% of the national RE capacity. In the last five years, while the national RE capacity has increased by 64,232 MW, the capacity addition in West Bengal was only 132 MW. However, iFOREST's assessment shows that West Bengal has very high RE potential.

“Our research, based on latest datasets and updated methodologies, shows that West Bengal's RE potential is three to four times higher than those previously assessed by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) agencies. The state can easily meet its current and future RE energy needs and promote green growth and jobs,” said Dr Chandra Bhushan, CEO of iFOREST in his opening remarks at the event.

Chief Guest, Mr. Debasish Kumar, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Government of West Bengal, who is also Chairman, Climate & Solar Committee, Kolkata Municipal Corporation said, “A number of Renewable Energy projects are in the pipeline in West Bengal. However, there is a need for a policy for giving it a structured approach.”

“Renewable energy demand should be created by making it a people's movement. A strong state policy is crucial for achieving it,” said S Suresh Kumar, chairman of Damodar Valley Corporation and former additional Chief Secretary, West Bengal government, who spoke as a special guest.

The iFOREST study reveals:

- Potential for solar ground-mounted is over 19,000 MW, three times the MNRE estimated potential. About 56% of the potential is in Puruliya district.
- Across the 30 major dams in the state, the floating solar PV potential is estimated to be 3,567 MW. Kangsabati dam provides the largest individual potential of 1,790 MW.
- For wind power projects, a theoretical potential of close to 20,000 MW is identified at a hub height of 100 m above ground level (AGL), and about 23,000 MW at 150 m AGL (at 100% utilisation).
- Biomass potential is estimated at 2,864 MW, double the MNRE assessment. Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Parganas and Purba Bardhaman districts account for half of the assessed potential.

At present, West Bengal depends heavily on RE imports from other states to meet its RPO requirements. The state's distribution companies imported 8,396.7 million kWh of RE power in 2022-23, which is about 87% of the total RE purchase. However, the RE imports are scheduled to become significantly expensive in the coming years as the waiver available on transmission cost on inter-state RE procurements is phased out between 2025 and 2028. iFOREST estimates the current Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) charges waiver to be as high as 90 paise/unit. Once these charges are accounted for in the procurement costs, it will be cheaper to procure power from RE plants located within West Bengal. It would, therefore, be economically prudent for West Bengal to install RE plants within the state, finds iFOREST's report.

However, the state requires a more ambitious renewable energy policy to attract investments and build a vibrant RE sector. "With the current RE policy now over a decade old, this is a timely opportunity for West Bengal to develop a new RE policy that offers tailored solutions for promoting RE and build strong state-level institutions," said Ms Mandvi Singh, Programme Director, iFOREST.

The reports can be accessed here: <https://iforest.global/research/west-bengal-renewable-energy-potential-re-assessment-request-download/>

About iFOREST

The International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) is an independent non-profit research and innovation organisation which was established in 2019 to identify, promote and scale-up solutions for pressing environment-development challenges in India and other developing countries in Asia and Africa. Our work is guided by a commitment to sustainability and equity, ensuring that our solutions are socially just and environmentally responsible.

iFOREST's work is rooted in regional priorities to accelerate environmental actions at the sub-national level and to improve national policies and plans to support it,. At our core, we are a regional organisation with a national focus and an international reach. Our mission is to address the unique needs of regions by leveraging our resources and expertise to scale up national action and make a global impact. We use our regional knowledge to inform national policy and plans and strengthen international collaboration.

To achieve our goals, we conduct independent evidence-based research, develop new knowledge and innovative solutions, convene stakeholders to increase awareness and build consensus, and partner with think tanks, civil society, government agencies, philanthropies and industry to scale up solutions

For more details contact

Shriya Mohan

Communications Lead, iFOREST

shriya@iforest.global | +91 7042144726