

**GOVT PLANNING TO TRAIN 50,000 PEOPLE TO MEET THE DEMAND IN SOLAR SECTOR**

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## Govt planning to train 50,000 people to meet the demand in solar sector

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The government is planning to train around 50,000 people in areas related to solar power—a so-called solar army that would help India achieve ambitious targets in harnessing the power of the sun. The workforce will be trained through organizations such as the industrial training institutes (ITIs) under the government's national skill development mission. While India has a solar generation capacity of 2,900 MW, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has substantially revised an earlier target of achieving 20,000 MW capacity by 2022 to 1,00,000 MW. This would require an investment of around Rs.6.5 trillion over five years. "For us to achieve this ambitious target, there will be a requirement of land, labour and capital. This 50,000-strong solar army will be provided three to six months training in the solar energy related areas, which will also prepare them for the job opportunities that the sector will have to offer," a government official said, requesting anonymity. "On the other hand, they will help meet the sector's demand for a workforce."

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Skill development is a focus area of the government and the Skilling India mission plans to train 500 million people by 2022 that the government believes would provide a job-ready workforce to several industries. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Rajiv Pratap Rudy took charge of the ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship as minister of state on 11 November.

Queries emailed to a spokesperson for the ministry of new and renewable energy on 9 November remained unanswered. India launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission in 2010, which earlier had plans to add 20,000MW of grid-connected solar power to the country's energy mix by 2022 in three phases.

The BJP made energy security a part of its campaign for the general election. To be sure, an industry executive said creating a solar army is not an immediate concern. "From an on-ground execution point of view, we don't see any immediate manpower concern. Here manpower requirement with respect to setting up of a solar plant, utility or rooftop is largely an amalgamation of fabrication, electrical and masonry skills. The skill upgradation needed is minimal and can be quickly achieved, mostly through on-the-job training. However, at project management level, we feel there is a growing need for qualified manpower, owing to its requirement for specialized knowledge and training," said Ajay Goel, chief executive officer, Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd. "There is an industry need for stronger focus on identifying the talent and equipping them with project management skills and global best practices."

This comes at a time when India's per capita power sector consumption, about 940 kilowatt-hour (kWh), is among the lowest in the world. In comparison, China has a per capita consumption of 4,000 kWh, and developed countries average around 15,000 kWh of per capita consumption. The centre is trying to increase power generation to meet demand and boost economic growth. "It saddens us that 67 years after independence, a quarter of our people are still deprived of as basic a need as electricity," Piyush Goyal, minister for power, coal and new and renewable energy, said at recent India Economic Summit in New Delhi.