

Impact Of Covid-19 On Renewable Industry

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This is the time to start the manufacturing of wafers or polysilicon in the country.

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by Ashish Khanna

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COVID 19 is a pandemic of an unprecedented scale. We really appreciate the efforts put in by the central and state governments in handling the crisis. Almost all industries have been impacted by the outbreak including the Indian renewable industry.

The renewable industry is vital for the energy security of a country. Evaluation of the current situation brought by COVID -19 induced disruptions, calls for a larger perspective. The last 7 to 8 weeks have reinforced the need to be prepared for conditions that have no parallel in recent history. It has become imperative to invest in technology that enables us to respond to the rapidly changing business environment in a planned manner.

Renewable energy sector witnesses technology advancement every two to three years. Currently, we develop 2-3GW of cells and manufacture modules up to 10GW in the country. This is the time to start the manufacturing of wafers or polysilicon in the country. When we develop a product, parameters such as support services, infrastructure, logistics, and availability of raw materials; along with extensive R&D skills, should be taken into consideration. Currently, we are largely dependent on imports, especially from China, for panels, modules, and inverters as they contribute to 80% of our industry. The present disruption serves as a wake-up call to look at all constituents of the manufacturing segment and expand our horizon.

In the renewable segment, returns are generated after years of gradual investment in manufacturing ecosystem; it is not transactional like rooftop or utility projects. Investing in technology will enable us to create an industry which is self-dependent when it comes to execution of any renewable project. Our country has been investing in technology, however, the need of the hour is to provide solutions which are pertinent to our requirements. Due to the current issues in cash flow, cost and liquidity, we need to invest in new manufacturing and solutions with an appetite to manage risks. We require support from the government to enact policies where a manufacturer is convinced that their off-take is within the country and we are not competing on an uneven level. With correct policies and government support the COVID 19 phase can encourage investments in self-sustainability that goes beyond the previous practice of depending upon imports.

As an EPC contractor and manufacturer with more than 31 years of experience, we have taken advantage of our past investments in technology. Our investments in robotics, remote monitoring centres and technology enabling telecommuting or "Work from Home" has paid a huge dividend during this time. Today these new norms are part of our "Business as Usual" practice.

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