

ENVIRONMENTALISTS CRY FOUL

Pumped Storage Hydro Projects get Freedom from Green Scrutiny

MEANWHILE, STUBBLE BURNING IN AMRITSAR ON FRIDAY



Power ministry had identified 'green clearance' as a barrier

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New Delhi: The environment ministry has exempted all pumped storage hydropower (PSHP) projects from environment impact assessment regime, citing 'lesser' impact on the environment and their 'critical' role in ensuring India's growing energy storage and infrastructure development needs.

PSHPs are essentially a combination of two different water reservoirs placed at different elevations and with a turbine in between which allows generation of power as water rushes down from one reservoir to the other. It is considered more efficient and often termed a 'giant battery' as this system can store power and release it when required.

The move comes three months after the power ministry announced an 18 Giga Watt target for PSHP to meet India's growing energy and development needs. It also pitched for tax breaks for PSHP besides a 'rationalised' green clearance regime for them in the draft norms issued for PSHPs in February.

So far, all PSHPs have been considered as conventional hydro-power projects and the full scrutiny of the environmental clearance process is applied to them. The ministry has now held that the environmental impact of these are 'less as compared to classical hydro projects as well as irrigation and water supply projects' and hence there is now a 'need to rationalise environmental clearance process for Pump Storage projects'.

The MoEF has said in a notification issued on Friday that in view of commitment for 'low carbon pathway of

development', it is necessary to have a smooth integration of renewable energy in the grid and to have greater grid safety and stability.

"There is a growing need for energy storage and thereby the development of pumped storage projects is critical," it has stated.

It has, accordingly, notified River Valley hydro electric projects with pump storage and standalone pump storage projects as 'B2 category' irrespective of their power generation capacity.



Move comes 3 months after power ministry announced 18 Giga Watt target for PSHP

minimised and mitigated.

Environmentalists, however, have pointed out that even though these are not conventional hydro power projects, there will still be considerable environmental impact where the reservoirs come up

as some degree of submergence will be involved affecting the flora, fauna and inhabitants in the vicinity.

The power ministry in its February 2023 draft guidelines had termed the process of environmental clearance and forest clearance as one of the key

'barriers in the development of pumped storage projects'. It had said that the process was 'cumbersome' since these projects are treated at par with the conventional hydro projects for the purpose of grant of EC and FC.



Ministry says environmental impact of these are 'less as compared to classical hydro projects'