

MHA Guidelines for Renewable Energy Projects Near Borders

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Why in the News? : The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued new national security guidelines for solar, wind and hybrid renewable energy projects in border areas. The guidelines prohibit new projects within 1 km of the border and require security clearances for projects proposed up to 50 km from sensitive borders.

MHA Guidelines for Renewable Energy Projects Near Borders

Background

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) had received increasing queries about setting up renewable energy projects near border areas because of their possible national security implications. The MHA framed the guidelines after consultations with stakeholders to create a uniform and transparent approval process while also maintaining ease of doing business.

Key Guidelines for Renewable Energy Projects Near Borders

The MHA guidelines for renewable energy projects near border areas divide border areas into different security zones and prescribe specific restrictions, clearances and security requirements according to the distance from the border.

Zonal Restrictions

- **Within 1 km:** Areas along the **Line of Control** (LoC), Line of Actual Control (LAC) and International Border are treated as restricted areas, where no new project activity is permitted.
- **1-50 km:** Solar, wind and hybrid projects require security clearance from the MHA, which will assess proposals on a case-by-case basis.
- **1-20 km:** Projects also require a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- **Clearance timeline:** The MHA will endeavour to decide proposals within 60 days.

Application Process

- Developers cannot apply directly to the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** or **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** for clearance.
- Applications must be submitted to the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** after obtaining in-principle approval for land allotment from the State government.
- The **MNRE** will forward the proposal to the **MHA** for security clearance and the **MoD** for a **No Objection Certificate (NOC)**.
- The **MNRE** will convey the final decision to the developer after receiving the required clearances.

Foreign Participation

- Engineers, employees, staff and labour from Pakistan, Bangladesh and China cannot be engaged for project implementation without MHA permission.
- Project developers cannot transfer project land to a foreign company without prior approval of the Central government and security clearance from the MHA.
- Where foreign investment is involved, a separate application is required under the **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI) Policy through the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Security Requirements

- Developers must install comprehensive security infrastructure, including anti-drone systems, at their own cost.
- These systems may be operated by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) or State police.
- Employees and construction workers must undergo prior verification before entering project areas.
- Foreign nationals entering project sites must be monitored.
- Project staff must follow instructions issued by the local police and the **Border Security Force** (BSF).

Project Design and Roads

- Project layouts should avoid long stretches of construction running parallel to the international border.
- Roads within projects should be sufficiently wide and designed so that they can be used by armed forces and border security personnel during emergencies.
- Projects should also have a dedicated police post for monitoring construction activities.

Accommodation and Height Restrictions

- Hotels, housing and other facilities likely to attract large crowds are discouraged in sensitive areas.
- Accommodation and hotels must be located at least 5 km from the border, while cafeterias should remain within the plant premises.
- Height limits apply to administrative buildings, control rooms, staff housing and other civil infrastructure, but not to core infrastructure such as wind turbines.
 - 1-8 km: Maximum height of 3 metres.
 - 8-20 km: Maximum height of 5 metres.
 - 20-50 km: Maximum height of 15 metres.

Existing Projects

- Projects that had already received MHA security clearance before the guidelines were issued do not need to apply again.
- Similarly, projects that had already obtained an MoD NOC are not required to reapply.

Significance of MHA Guidelines for Renewable Energy Projects Near Borders

- **National security:** Protect sensitive border areas from surveillance, unauthorised access and security threats.
- **Safe renewable expansion:** Enable clean-energy projects while addressing border-security concerns.
- **Border preparedness:** Ensure project roads and infrastructure can support security forces during emergencies.
- **Emerging threats:** Strengthen protection through anti-drone systems and worker verification.
- **Clear approvals:** Create a uniform framework involving the MNRE, MHA and MoD.
- **Ease of doing business:** Provide defined clearance requirements and a proposed 60-day timeline.

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