

Battery-swapping policy by month-end, design standardisation to be voluntary

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The central government is likely to come up with a battery-swapping policy by the end of this month, albeit with a voluntary design standardisation. The decision was taken at the electric vehicle (EV) battery stakeholders' meeting with the NITI Aayog on Tuesday, headed by the Union Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal.

According to industry representatives present at the meeting, Goyal agreed to make the standardisation norms optional for battery manufacturers after receiving a request from

stakeholders. The decision was taken after the industry raised worries about the absence of any mechanism to check the performance of batteries.

Debi Prasad Dash, executive director, India Energy Storage Alliance, and secretary, India Electric Mobility Council (IEMC), said if all batteries are of similar size, weight, and design, unprofessional manufacturers will fill the market with substandard alternatives. "Standardisation will make it difficult for serious battery players to analyse their batteries' performance and will halt their research and development," said Dash.

According to the proposed policy,

the outer dimensions of battery packs need to be fixed. But industry players also had concerns over fixed dimensions since they have already deployed assets and infrastructure in line with their dimensions.

At the meeting, the government also decided to make safety and performance its key focus areas in the proposed policy rather than interoperability and standardisation. It asked the Bureau of Indian Standards to formulate quality norms for the safety and performance of batteries, informed sources.

However, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said,

"More consultations are required to be held with all stakeholders before a final decision can be arrived at on issues involved." The next round of the stakeholders' meeting to address various sticking points will be held soon, said a government official.

While mentioning that battery swapping will be one of the commercially feasible solutions for the Indian EV market, Dash said the industry also expects the government to reduce the goods and services tax (GST) for swappable batteries, from 18 per cent to 5 per cent, in the next Budget session. The minister agreed to take the matter to the GST Council, said sources.