

MINISTER DELIGHTS INDIAN EXPO WITH 100 GW EIGHT-YEAR AIM
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Minister delights Indian expo with 100 GW eight-year aim

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Jaw-dropping figure, mentioned 24 hours before Intersolar India opened, divided opinion between those who see it as a pipe dream and Narendra Modi's enthusiastic solar supporters.

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News of a proposed 100 GW target for the JNNSM was the focus of attention at this week's Intersolar India expo.

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Optimism is in the air. That summed up the mood at the Intersolar India 2014 Expo which closed on Thursday.

The three-day Mumbai event attracted a much larger number of visitors than last year's expo and the euphoria following the election of a new government led by Indian solar champion Narendra Modi was visible.

'The worst is behind us' was the sentiment expressed by several industry stakeholders, including developers, manufacturers, balance-of-system (BoS) suppliers and service providers.

The industry had a lot to cheer about as three states – Karnataka, Telengana and Andhra Pradesh – had allotted 500 MW of solar PV projects each in the previous three weeks.

That came in addition to the 750 MW of solar projects allotted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) under the first batch of Phase 2 of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM).

The new deals follow a year of drought in 2014 which saw annual solar installations hit a three-year low, according to analysts Mercom Capital.

If all the new projects materialize, India will see record installations of close to 2.5 GW next year.

Intersolar India was inaugurated by Nobel Prize winner Dr. Rajendra Pachauri who, in his address, said around 35% of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come as a result of energy production and that renewable energy can play a huge role in bringing down GHG emissions.

90 GW of diesel gensets

In India, the installed capacity of diesel gensets is about 90 GW and the amount of diesel consumed by agricultural pump sets is also high. Close to 300 million people in India do not have access to electricity and it is in these areas decentralized and rooftop solar, as well as solar water heaters, can make a big impact.

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Prestigious projects executed by Larsen & Toubro, Sterling & Wilson, Vikram Solar, and Waare Energies made it to the finals with Bosch Solar, Tata Power Solar and Trojan Batteries named winners.

The event took place a day after the minister of new and renewable energy had spoken about ways to increase the JNNSM targets from 22 GW to 100 GW by 2022.

Is 100 GW feasible within eight years?

Subsequent discussions centered on that jaw-dropping number with many industry insiders considering it a pipe dream after India took five years to reach the 3 GW mark.

Others were cautiously optimistic and of the view that if the challenges related to power evacuation, financing and policy challenges are addressed, the target is achievable. More optimistic figures said Modi's track record of introducing 1 GW of capacity in one state within two years meant 100 GW is a realistic prospect.

Tarun Kapoor, joint secretary of the MNRE, mentioned plans are being prepared to see how best the target can be achieved and hinted around 60% of the hoped-for 100 GW capacity addition is likely to come from utility-scale projects with the remainder from rooftop systems and other distributed PV generation.

He added subsidies for off-grid PV will be gradually phased out as generation in segments like industrial and commercial rooftops is economical without them.

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Indian manufacturers expressed relief, in the belief a long project pipeline ensures the pie will be big enough for everyone.

They also felt a 100 GW aim will avert conflict over domestic content requirements.

A few of the PV manufacturing equipment vendors **pv magazine** spoke to mentioned they have seen more enquiries from India and they expect cell manufacturing capacity to expand this year as the expo ended up an upbeat note.