

CUTS PRESS RELEASE

Knowledge Exchange Workshop on NET METERING Based Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) Systems in West Bengal. 16th January, 2015, Vidyut Bhavan, Salt Lake, Kolkata

The Potential is there, the question is of investment, we have a policy in place, we have to have a very bold public awareness programme, people must know what are the benefits of Net Metering. Those who are involved need to exchange ideas on technological applications , said Manish Gupta, Minister in Charge of the Department of Power, Government of West Bengal, speaking at a Knowledge Exchange Workshop on NET METERING Based Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) Systems in West Bengal organised by CUTS International on 16th January, 2015 at Vidyut Bhavan, Kolkata. He was also of the opinion that, *The Net Metering Project is very important in Calcutta and we are going to launch it in a very big way, we intend to provide subsidy to this. We look forward to provide 20% subsidy. We are looking forward to add 100 MWs by 2017 and thereafter another 500 MWs by 2022.*

The minister also pointed out that West Bengal can deal with the issue of land availability by implementing Net Meter based SPV systems which do not require free land, area rather would utilize the unused roof top area.

It is evident that the DISCOMs fail to meet the Demand during Peak Period. Moreover the current Reserve to Production rate suggests that Fossil Fuels are about to get extinct much before the commencement of the next century. Thus, it is the need of the hour to shift constantly but consciously towards clean & green energy technologies. The Net Meter based Solar Energy Technology is one of the best suited options to be implemented now. It eliminates the use of batteries, thus eliminating the extra cost and maintenance issues that the battery operated systems face often. In this system the SPV systems are grid tied and the power produced from the Solar generators are utilized by the consumer and the excess energy is fed into the grid. A Net Energy Meter is used to measure the import and export of Energy from the household. At the end of the month a simple arithmetic calculation (Net Energy Imported from Grid - Net Energy Exported from the system to the Grid) would help settle the bills of the consumer with the Utilities. This Net Meter based SPV systems would help to address all the issues including meeting the Demand by the Power Utilities during Peak period, reducing the load on the DISCOMs by offering them an option of purchasing power from RE sources, earning an extra revenue for the System Owner, reducing Carbon Emission and thereby contributing towards addressing issues of Climate Change. Various states of India, including Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, have successfully implemented this concept. It was in west Bengal that the country's first MW level Solar Power Plant was implemented at Jamuria in Asansol. Thus there is no reason why the utilities cannot replicate this already successful model within the state.

Keeping in mind the socio-economic benefits that could be obtained, very recently (on 16 January, 2015) CUTS International organized **the Knowledge Exchange workshop** with support from WBSEDCL and CESC and in partnership with WBREDA. There were about hundred participants from various spheres, which included the DISCOMS, Civil Society Organizations, Private Project Developers, Educational and Research institutes, Notable Consultants, End Users and Media. Among the notable guests were Mr. N.S. Nigam, IAS, Chairman and Managing Director, WBSEDCL; Mr. Sujan Pandit, Member, Governing Body, WBREDA; Mr. Abhijit Bose, Executive Director, CESC Limited; Dr. S.P Gon Choudhury, President NBIRT and Chairman Ashden India Collective; Mr. Toine Van Megen, Co-founder, Auroville Consulting, Puducherry; Dr. Omkar Jani, Principal Research Scientist, GERMI-RIIC, Gujarat; Professor Dr. Bernard Wagemann, Institute for Decentralized Electrification, Entrepreneurship and Education GmbH & Co.KG, Germany; Mr. Suman Lahiri, Regional Director (Kolkata), European Business & Technology Centre (EBTC); Dr. B.K. Choudhury, Professor, Indian Institute of Social Welfare & Business Management (IISWBM) and others.

Mr. N S Nigam pointed out that India is an energy hungry nation and the nation has a lot of potential with Solar Power. He also said that through Net Metering based SPV systems both the consumers as well as the DISCOMs gain, which leads towards a Socio-Economic upliftment of the society.

Mr. Abhijit Bose remarked that Solar Power can be utilized to meet the demand during Peak periods. He also correctly pointed out that the SPV based systems would also address and minimize the issue of high Transmission & Distribution (T&D) losses that West Bengal rather India face today.

Mr. Sujan Pandit rightly said that in West Bengal the Grid Parity is expected to occur within next 3-4 years as the Retail Tariff Rates as well as the Solar Insolation of West Bengal both are pretty low in West Bengal. Smart Meters and Time of Day (ToD) tariffs can provide solution to some of the teething problems that the utilities face now.

Dr. Gon Choudhury informed the audience that Ashden India Collective has been working on formulating a policy for connecting the rooftop SPV systems of size 5-25 kW for the cities of Kolkata, Salt Lake and New Town through Net Meter. The same is expected to be published by next week.

2013 saw many states taking baby steps towards conceptualizing and implementing the Net Metering policies in different states. However as West Bengal stands at a very important moment of releasing the net-metering policy, it will be important to learn from other states who have been ahead in terms of implementing such policies , said Dr. Keya Ghosh, CUTS International.

After a very intriguing technical presentation and experience sharing by Mr. Toine, a one line prescription from his end, for the successful implementation of the Net Meter connected rooftop SPV systems was, the issue should not be whether to do it but how to do it !

At the close of the event Dr. Bernard Wagemann, HNU University, Germany, also revealed that a MoU has been signed between European Business and Technology Council, HNU, CUTS International, IISWBM and Institute for Decentralized Electrification, Entrepreneurship and Education. Very soon a research work would commence on the feasibility of setting up Mini Grids in 10 villages in the Sunderbans.

Mr. A.N. Biswas, Joint Secretary, Department of Power & NES, Government of West Bengal concluded by saying that *The New Policy on Roof Top SPV systems is going to come up. The kind of workshop which has taken place today by the initiative of CUTS is the need of the hour and it has been done at the right time . He signed off by saying This workshop will help us in setting a stronger foot for the Policy .*

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