

PRESS RELEASE

Solar roof top programme to transform the energy landscape of Varanasi

Varanasi can generate 676 MW of solar energy, reveals CEED's report

Varanasi, 20 May, 2017: Centre for Environment and Energy Development (CEED) organised a national conference on solar energy in the city on Saturday. During the conference, CEED released an exhaustive report titled 'Vibrant Varanasi: Transformation through Solar Rooftop'. The report highlights the holy city's energy infrastructure and unveils its solar rooftop potential of 676 megawatt (MW), which can be generated by using only 8.3% of Varanasi's roof-space (1). The report was released by the Vice-Chancellor of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Prof. Girish Chandra Tripathi and eminent journalist, Ram Dutt Tripathi. The conference that was jointly organised by CEED and ASSOCHAM UP, and was also attended by representatives from government departments, industries, think-tanks, academicians and civil societies.

Highlighting the importance of solar rooftops for the city, CEED's CEO, Mr. Ramapati Kumar said that "Transforming Varanasi through solar roof top programme is a vision to realize Varanasi as a green capital powered by clean and sustainable sources of energy like solar. This report comes at a time when the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government has signed "Power for All" scheme with the Government of India. The solar roof top programme in Varanasi shall bridge the gap between the ever-increasing electricity crisis and the rising tariffs. The fact that solar energy prices are lower than the conventional sources of energy, is the perfect solution to bring about an energy transformation in the entire Indo-Gangetic region, starting with Varanasi,"

As per the report, the suitable solar rooftop space is calculated to be around 8.01 sq. km, which includes unobstructed and shadow-free rooftop space receiving optimal sunlight for solar power generation. This area is capable of generating 676 MW of solar power. The report proposed the solar rooftop implementation for Varanasi in a phased manner. The first phase entails to achieve a solar rooftop potential of 300 MW by 2025. This shall not only reduce the burgeoning gap between demand and supply of energy, but shall also discourage the electricity generation through coal and diesel that is unsustainable, unreliable, expensive and pollution-inducing. By adopting solar, Varanasi will also be able to improve its air quality that has been deteriorating severely for the past few years.

Elaborating the findings of the report further, Mr. Abhishek Pratap, Director-Programmes, CEED and lead author of the report, elucidated that "A gradual transformation is underway in Varanasi, and it is not the question of 'when' but 'how'. The 'Vibrant Varanasi' report falls in sync with the city's liveliness and presents a compelling roadmap to make its energy supply secure and sustainable, ensuring 24X7 electricity to its citizens; and making it a 'Smart' city in the real sense of the term,"

The report reveals that residential buildings cover 2/3rd of the solar rooftop potential in Varanasi, followed by public and semi-public buildings which attribute to 17% of this potential. The transport sector, including the areas under airports, railway stations, bus depots and bridges, account for less than 1% of the capacity. The report presents a detailed

plan for early adoption of solar roof top projects in Varanasi and recommends various scenario including business models and tariff structure.

The report further presents a compelling economic case for the government, commercial and industrial consumers and because of grid parity in this category, they can save anywhere between Rs. 0.80 to Rs. 1.45/unit. It has been suggested that the governments need to provide fiscal support to residential consumers until it reaches the grid parity by 2020. Government buildings must be among the first movers and early adopters of solar roof top project in Varanasi because of geographic proximity to each other and the availability of large roof space for such projects.

“Switching to solar is a more economical option for consumers considering its constant fall in prices. Investing in solar energy will not just be beneficial for the environment by reducing pollution, but is also cost-beneficial. Furthermore, solar rooftops will evolve as the ultimate urban energy solution and in turn, will also accelerate industrial growth in Varanasi,” said V.N. Gupta, Secretary General of ASSOCHAM UP.

For catalyzing solar transformation in Varanasi and other cities of Uttar Pradesh which are facing acute power shortage, the state needs to adopt a new solar energy policy with effective and rational financing framework and incentive structure in sync with market realities. Further, the state also needs to improve on its metering and grid-connectivity guidelines to facilitate high amount of solar power through distributed sources. Above all the state needs to support new age ideas like setting up of solar aggregators and roof-banks to incentivize innovation and exploration in the field of clean energy in Uttar Pradesh.

The conference was attended by several dignitaries including Vikas Chandra Agarwal, Director (Distribution) Uttar Pradesh Energy regulatory Commission (UPERC); Dr. S.P. Singh, Professor from IIT-BHU; Ashish Asthana, Superintendent Engineer from local DISCOMs PuVVNL; Vivek Mishra, CEO of Meghraj Capital; Rajiv Dinesh, Co-founder of SUN FUND; Nitin Malhotra, MD of Mahavir Heights; Anil Jajodia, Vice President of ASSOCHAM UP.

Note to Editor:

1: Vibrant Varanasi report: http://ceedindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Varanasi-Solar-Rooftop_final_low-res.pdf

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