

# Gurgaon Co Promises Cheaper Solar Power

ACME claims technology involves storing solar power in lithium-ion batteries that can be priced 10%–15% cheaper than normal tariff

**Debjoy.Sengupta**  
@timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** A Gurgaon-based company claims to have developed a solution that can generate solar power, store it batteries and supply to consumers in an entire city at rates that are 10-15% cheaper than what they pay for electricity. If achieved, this could turn out to be a major breakthrough in power storage and also help reduce greenhouse emissions, though some experts express doubts over the claim and want the company to first demonstrate the technology.

Power storage systems – essentially batteries – on megawatt level are extremely costly. Generation of solar power is erratic as it depends on the sun and even a patch of cloud can cut down generation. There are no cost-effective solutions to store this power that can be delivered to customers at commercially competitive rates 24x7.

The Gurgaon company's invention assumes significance also since world leaders have just agreed to cut down on greenhouse emissions considerably at the recently concluded Paris climate talks. This meant bringing down thermal power generation and increasing solar power installations.

Manoj Kumar Upadhyay, founder of ACME Cleantech Solutions, says his company is ready to sell power to Indian homes at as low as Rs 7 per unit.

Upadhyay, with over 19 years of experience in clean energy, is a former technical head at Telecom Power Company, Benning GmbH.

A senior analyst from a large consultancy firm said: "Battery



REUTERS

## LOOKING WEST

**ACME claims to have recently signed a MoU with an European power utility for supplying the solution on a larger scale**

costs have not declined so much to produce power at discounts of 10-15% of discom tariffs. However, if this company has developed a technology that can store and supply solar power at such discounts, it is definitely a major breakthrough that can change equations of solar vis-à-vis thermal power."

According to Samir Sharan, chief executive of the ACME group, the system involves installing lithium-ion batteries – the ones used in cell phones – on a much larger scale and setting up solar power plants that will store the power generated from the solar plant in these batteries. During day time, power would be supplied to homes as well as used for charging the batteries, while at night, these batteries would provide power to homes. These batteries can store large volume of power, enough to power cities.

The business model involves

operating on a build-own-and-operate model, under which the company will set up its own storage and generation systems. It would sell power at a predefined price.

"Cost of lithium-ion batteries has been on the decline in the last few years. With global lithium-ion battery manufacturers declaring large expansion plans, the cost of these batteries are expected to decline further in the next few years as demand for such batteries," said Sharan. "The prices at which we would sell power would depend on the cost of setting up solar plants at these states and it is a scalable model. We can set up more batteries if need be and match it up with larger solar power generation capacity as and when demand rises."

SP Gon Choudhury, former secretary for renewable energy in West Bengal, said: "They need to demonstrate their claims through a project either in India or abroad. At this stage we are not convinced, but if they can demonstrate it, it is indeed a major development because battery costs have not reduced so much to support such low power prices."

ACME claims to have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with a European power utility for supplying the solution on a large scale. "We are at the last leg to the negotiations for supplying the solution to the utility. We hope to conclude negotiations by January and start installing out solution thereafter," Sharan said.

Back in India, latest auctions for solar power plants conducted by the government attracted bids for supplying power at as low as Rs 4.6 per unit.