

Only 5% consumers in Karachi use solar option - M. Zakir Ali

Exclusive interview of CEO Inverex Solar Energy



Only five per cent of power consumers in Karachi use the solar option while in comparison the use of solar technology has been much more common in other cities and towns of Sindh.”, CEO Inverex Solar Energy, the leading solar-based company in Pakistan-M. Zakir Ali stated this during an exclusive interview session for the Energy Update. Following are the important excerpts of his interview for our readers:

■ By Mustafa Tahir

Energy Update: When your company commenced the operation?

M. Zakir Ali (MZA): We started the company in 2007. Initially, we were dealing in stabilizers. Then we ventured into the business of UPS. Finally, we started the business of solar inverters. The solar inverters are similar to UPS as the latter also required an off-grid system and a back-up. We also deal in batteries, solar panels, solar street lights and recently we have also launched home appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioners, deep freezers and others.

EU: How much market share your company has captured so far?

Mr. Ali: According to market survey as God willing the results will definitely show that we are the leading brand in the solar industry of Pakistan. Like each passing day, we have been increasing the import of our products owing to constant rise in demand in the market. This is because we have always introduced the best solar products in the Pakistani market that proved to be innovative and trendsetter for our competitors. All over Pakistan we have 29 service centres, which have been providing services related to our solar products.

EU: What are your plans to use local technology in your products?

Mr. Ali: Our products are fully based on imported technology as there is no local component. God willing we will give you news quite soon that we are going to start local manufacturing as that is also our present target. The engineering universities in Pakistan produce nearly 100,000 engineering graduates every year. But these newly qualified engineers don't have any scope with regard to their profession. Our budding engineers are very much talented but they lacked guidance about their profession. The graduating engineers mostly do their



100,000 engineering graduates every year. But these newly qualified engineers don't have any scope with regard to their profession. Our budding engineers are very much talented but they lacked guidance about their profession. The graduating engineers mostly do their first job with a meagre per month salary of Rs 15,000-20,000 as this is no future for them especially when you have graduated from a private university where your parents pay hefty tuition fees. So we are going to establish a small manufacturing unit for producing UPS and solar inverters. We are also working to manufacture solar panels but it is a difficult task as its technology changes very fast.

EU: What is the future of the solar industry in Pakistan?

Mr. Ali: Solar industry has a very bright future in Pakistan. One thing I know with certainty is that the solar industry will boom whenever the government increases electricity rates of the power utilities. There has been a massive switch over to solar energy in developed countries like the UK, USA, Germany, and Australia. This conversion is taking place because all these countries need green energy. The power plants established in the country, which consume fossil fuel cause pollution while their cost is also almost double as compared to the option of solar energy. We have 90 per cent availability of sun but it is quite unfortunate that we don't use it even 05 per cent. The policy of the government should be made more conducive for encouraging more utilization of solar energy in the country.

EU: What should be the policy of the government regarding solar energy?

Mr. Ali: The policy of the government should be such that there should be a ban on importing garbage (substandard solar panels) from all over the world as standards should be maintained in this regard. The importers have to pay extra 800 US Dollars to get the CoC/PSI quality testing of their products but even then substandard solar panels are brought into the country. The government should do something to check this practice. The government should run awareness programmes. The awareness will motivate people to install a solar panel on the rooftop of every house. The policy of government should be clear in this

regard. The government should allow the option of reverse metering on single phase as afterwards we will not be required to install the grid system.

EU: Tell us about your viewpoint regarding the power crisis in Karachi?

Mr. Ali: There has been immense economic hardship in Karachi. Only %5 per cent consumers in Karachi have been using the option of solar energy. We have very good business in cities outside Karachi like in Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Sukkur, Larkana, and Khairpur. Then going forward we have very good business in cities of South Punjab like Rahim Yar Khan and Bhawalpur. As these cities offer us business, which is not available elsewhere in Pakistan. This shows that people in these relatively smaller cities have much better understanding and awareness about the solar technology as compared to the residents of Karachi.

EU: Is there any option available to the consumers to install solar systems on easy installments?

Mr. Ali: Banks have been doing this sort of financing but their documentation requirements have been massive as prospective buyers of the solar system are mostly unable to fulfill them.

EU: Are you planning to run any awareness campaign regarding the solar industry on your own?

Mr. Ali: We are planning to go to the association programmes of trade and industry and chambers of commerce and industry to make their members aware about the utility and benefits of the solar option. These sessions will not be

conducted for selling any product as they are meant only to raise awareness among the industrialists about the option of solar energy. Obviously the industry people have the resources and capacity to install the solar energy option for their massive energy needs.

EU: Is there any programme to train the technicians of the solar industry?

Mr. Ali: One of the big reasons that we are unable to provide service to our customers in an adequate manner is that we don't have properly qualified technicians and fitters of solar technology. For this purpose, we want to assemble all the technicians and fitters of the industry on one platform for their proper training so as to later award them certification of the industry.

EU: What is your message regarding our native country?

Mr. Ali: Solar option is a necessity for our country as it is not at all a luxury for our countrymen. For other countries it might be a luxury but it is a necessity for all of us given the massive and persisting energy shortfall in the country. All our work is aimed at achieving the dream of a "Roshan Pakistan". We have been working to achieve our vision of a "Roshan rahay Pakistan". We want that "Made in Pakistan" products are not only produced here but we will also be able to export them for achieving our vision of a "Roshan Pakistan" for the rest of the world. The manufacturing and international selling of "Made in Pakistan" products will be fully in accordance with the aim of the government to increase exports from Pakistan for its name and fame and also for economic prosperity of the country. ■