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Interview: Sameer Gupta

We Want to Invest Rs 800 Cr in 1 GW Cell Manufacturing

September 23, 2021. By Manu Tayal



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We have made a total investment of about Rs 150 crore for existing 600 MW solar modules at our Greater Noida plant. We plan to invest another Rs 150 crore for doubling this capacity and intend to have this facility in Southern India. Once there is clarity on PLI eligibility to us for manufacturing of cells, we would want to invest another Rs 800 crore in two phases for having a total cell manufacturing capacity of 1 GW, disclosed **Sameer Gupta**, Chairman & Managing Director, Jakson Group, in an exclusive conversation with **Manu Tayal**, Associate Editor, Energetica India. Gupta also shared about his company's future business plans for India, latest product offerings, expectations etc. Here're the edited excerpts from that interaction:

Que: How do you see the journey of Jakson Group from a diesel generator manufacturer to a clean energy solutions provider?

Ans: Jakson Group has been at the forefront of providing reliable power backup solutions for over seven decades. We are incredibly proud that we have fulfilled and exceeded our promise of facilitating uninterrupted power solutions across diverse customer segments.

It was a natural progression for us to foray into Solar Energy Business back in 2011. We are happy to state that the journey has been highly fulfilling & rewarding so far. Today we are one of the few solar companies in India with an integrated portfolio that includes utility scale based and solar rooftop EPC, manufacturing of PV modules, manufacturing of solar products and having IPP's.

Jakson Group has always been committed to clean energy and sustainable development. Looking ahead, we will soon launch a new line of battery-based Energy Storage Systems.

The whole objective is to offer clean and green energy solutions to our customers thus leading to sustainable development.

Que: Kindly shed some light on Jakson Groups' solar manufacturing facilities in India, its specialty, R&D infrastructure, capacity, quality check parameters, etc.

Ans: Our solar manufacturing facility is based in Greater Noida, India, with an annual installed capacity of 600 MW. We are also planning to further scale up our manufacturing capacity by another 500 MW taking our total manufacturing capacity to over 1 GW per year.

The facility is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, enabling the highest levels of manufacturing automation and multi-level quality control systems. Apart from manufacturing the traditional full-cell modules, the new line can manufacture the latest high-efficiency Helia Series half-cut cell modules in both mono-facial and bifacial variants.

Que: Recently, Jakson has introduced its Made-in-India Helia series with half-cut PERC PV solar cells. What is its USP & unique features, and cost-comparison over other products available in the market?

Ans: It has always been our endeavor to provide customers with products & solutions with the latest technology. The Helia Solar Module is just a manifestation of that commitment. These modules are equipped with the latest half-cut cell and MBB technology, enabling a peak power output of 590W per module with an efficiency of over 21 per cent. These enhanced performance characteristics translate into reduced LCOE and faster ROI for our esteemed customers, making Helia an extremely cost-effective option. We are the first module manufacturer in India to have introduced 590W state-of-the-art modules.

Que: How much capacity of solar cells and modules Jakson is currently producing? By when Jakson is expected to reach its goal of 1 GW capacity of both solar cells and modules? Any export plans as well?

Ans: Our current module manufacturing capacity stands enhanced to about 600 MW solar modules. This is a fully automated line and we plan to add another 500 MW capacity of solar modules capacity over the next 12-18 months.

Our state-of-the-art solar PV manufacturing facility is equipped to produce Polycrystalline, Mono PERC,

Bi-facial and Half Cut Solar Modules. Currently, our solar panel range starts from 160Wp and goes all the way up to 600Wp. All our solar modules conform to the highest quality standards and have been certified under IEC and BIS guidelines. Our high-quality solar modules have been the preferred choice for installation in many prestigious solar projects like Rashtrapati Bhawan, Solar Train, Airports, and several metro stations of DMRC, amongst others.

In addition to solar modules, we have another facility to manufacture module mounting structures and other innovative solar products, catering to both industrial and residential customers. These products are distributed through a dedicated Channel Partner and Dealer network in India and overseas.

We have been planning to do backward integration and invest in the manufacturing of solar cells. The Government policy framework is conducive and there is a push towards a self-reliant India. We are exploring all options and depending on the outcome of the PLI scheme, we would be taking a final decision.

Que: In your view, up to what extent the Govt's production linked incentive (PLI) scheme would help the domestic solar manufacturers?

Ans: The PLI scheme is a huge commitment made by the Government to promote domestic manufacturing. This will motivate and attract investments in large-scale integrated solar module manufacturing plants capturing all parts of the value chain. This will make our country self-reliant and is an opportunity to position India as a global manufacturing hub.

Que: So far, how much investment Jakson had already made in building solar manufacturing capacity in India? How much more investment is planned for further expansion?

Ans: We have made a total investment of about Rs 150 crore for existing 600 MW solar modules at our Greater Noida plant. We plan to invest another Rs 150 crore for doubling this capacity and intend to have this facility in Southern India. Once there is clarity on PLI eligibility to us for manufacturing of cells, we would want to invest another Rs 800 crore in two phases for having a total cell manufacturing capacity of 1 GW.

Que: Will the recent price hike of polysilicon & other raw materials impact the returns of solar project developers? Can tariffs also be impacted? What will be the impact on new project bidding?

Ans: During the last few months, module prices have increased by almost 20-30 per cent (mainly due to an increase in Polysilicon & other raw material prices), which is contrary to the decreasing price trend seen in the past.

It has a negative impact on the Return on Investments for investors/ increase in Pay Back period for end-users while affecting the execution of existing orders as well as new demand in the short term. Solar power tariff for new tenders is likely to increase marginally but overall per unit rate from Solar Energy will remain competitive against other power generation sources. Demand for solar modules and other associated products for solar power plants will continue to rise in the coming years.

Que: What will be your key suggestions for policymakers to further boost the solar industry in

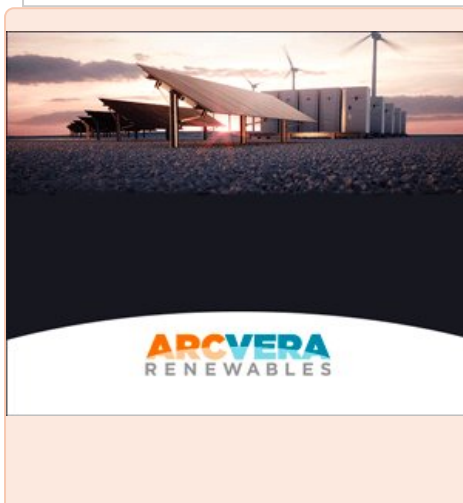
India?

Ans: There could be three key things that can boost the solar industry in India. Firstly, project financing at interest rates that are comparable to global counterparts which will help us to compete with Chinese products - solar should be treated as a priority lending sector. Secondly, the PLI scheme should be extended to encourage MSME to make investments in the manufacturing of related components. Thirdly, conducive policies for promoting investment in R&D, as technology in this sector is changing very rapidly.

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