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## Pradeep Chakraborty's Blog

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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2008

### Building a good solar ecosystem in India

[Solar/PV](#) has been doing the rounds consistently, and has probably now become one of the most hyped sectors.

In fact, renewable energy has never ever had such a good time! As mentioned, a tremendous hype has already been built around solar photovoltaics. [Several companies, in India](#), and elsewhere, have also jumped into the solar bandwagon.



So what are the reasons behind this 'sudden' interest in solar? According to Dr. Ashok Das, managing director, Solar Solutions, and a well know expert in this area, consumers do not yet drive the solar energy sector. Being energy, it is mostly driven by the government and its subsidies.

So, why has there been this 'sudden interest' in solar? There are two reasons.

First, the climate change issue started getting center stage at world forums, leading to policies and targets to cut global warming, and hence boosting renewable energy. Second, the soaring oil prices and continued dependence on a few countries for oil has led to the realization of the energy security.

There are several takeaways from the European experience with solar. Dr. Das says that Europe, particularly, has taken solar very seriously. They have been a leader in solar. "Germany, for instance, gave away all of the necessary subsidies to attain energy security. These subsidies have led to the solar boom. It has also led to an increased R&D to bring down the cost of solar energy."

Nevertheless, he adds there seems to be a bubble forming in this sector, like all other booms in the past. The industry will go through consolidation as the market matures.

And where does India stand in comparison? According to Dr. Das, steps are being taken to promote [solar energy in India](#). "As of now,



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the feed-in tariff is Rs. 15 for photovoltaics and Rs. 12 for thermal solar. The government also announced a mandatory 5 percent renewable energy mix in the electricity production.

"The PMO (Prime Minister's Office) has also issued a National Action Plan that has plans for boosting solar. These subsidies are driving some of the increased activities in India."

He contends: "We need stronger lobbying so that better subsidies can come through. Therefore, most of the manufacturing activities in India are still driven by the export markets."

Surely, given the surge of [investments in solar](#) within India, there is every room for developing a very good ecosystem.

Dr. Das says: "Coming to the solar ecosystem, we already make solar products, as well as the modules. We also have the capability to make cells. The only part missing has been wafer, the silicon for solar.

"A few silicon factories should be coming up in India soon. So, India can easily establish the entire ecosystem for solar photovoltaics."

Postscript: More investments in solar today, in India. According to [Hindu Business Line](#), there have been three additional investments worth Rs. 55,000 crores.

Vavasi Telegence to invest Rs 39,000 crore for solar PV and polysilicon unit; EPV Solar to invest Rs 4,000 crore for solar PV unit; and Lanco Solar to invest Rs 12,938-crore for solar PV and polysilicon unit.

A word of caution: It's advisable not to get carried away by all the success in solar. Solar is/was only part of the ecosystem units in the Indian semicon policy.

*Don't forget semiconductors!*

While this success in solar does augur well for the solar industry in India, don't think this is even close to what the [Indian semicon policy](#), launched with fanfare last September, originally set out to achieve!



Hear  
this post

Posted by Pradeep Chakraborty at 9/22/2008 03:48:00 PM

Labels: [Dr. Ashok Das](#), [global solar industry](#), [Indian solar industry](#), [PV](#), [Solar](#), [solar ecosystem](#), [solar/PV](#)

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Anonymous said...

What's happening with the semiconductor wafer IC fabs? Or, has it all been forgotten in this run for solar?

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#### About Myself



Pradeep  
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I have multiple interests, including sports, reading, writing, etc. My blog was selected as the best in the world in the Electronic Hardware category for 2008, by Electronics Weekly, UK

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