

Japan Relighting Its Solar PV Industry

By EXPO Solar

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According to the findings in a recent report by the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st century (REN21), Japan slipped to third place in PV energy output at a production capacity of 1,970,000 kW.

Tetsunari Lida, head of the Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies in Tokyo, believes the disparity between Japan and the European leaders has to do with differing governmental policies influencing the energy industry. He said, "There is a huge gap between the policies of Japan and those of Germany and Spain, which require that power companies make long-term purchases of renewable energy at uniform prices... Japan has also required power companies to purchase a certain amount of such energy, (yet) it is so small that the policy has ended in failure."

As well, according to Michael Ginsberg, an international correspondent for InterPV magazine, a premier journal for the global solar PV industry, the Japanese government suspended its 12-year subsidies for the installation of residential PV systems program in 2006, opting instead for the promotion of large-scale PV systems. This change caused a major disturbance in the demand for PV and may also account for Japan's recent decline in PV production capacity.

In response, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has restarted the subsidy program. On March 31st, 2009 METI announced the commencement of application acceptance for residential solar generation installation subsidies, conducted through the Japan Photovoltaic Energy Association (JPEA). According to the press release, the aim of the subsidies is to "encourage the lowering of the price of the residential solar generation systems and to promote expansion of the market with an eye to achieving the objective of solar generation introduction stipulated in the Kyoto Protocol Target Achievement Plan and other documents and enabling a mass of introduction of solar generation."

The subsidy period officially came into effect on April 1st, 2009, and will last until January 29th, 2010. It will provide 70,000 yen per nominal output of a 1 kW solar cell module for individuals subscribing to electricity service contracts that include solar systems. These systems must have solar cell modules with a conversion efficiency that exceeds the standard value and a maximum output of less than 10 kW at a price of 700,000 yen or less per kW. Overall, the plan is to provide subsidies to about 84,000 cases with a budget of about 20.05 billion yen. METI hopes that 80% of newly built homes will be equipped with solar power systems by 2030.

Asia is growing in importance for the global solar PV industry as countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are rapidly progressing in their plans to develop and grow their solar industries.

To feel the market demands in this region and get exposure to Asian governments, distributors, installers, project designers and end users, it is essential that solar PV and equipment manufacturers are present in a leading trade show in the region. "EXPO Solar 2010 can be the most preferred destination for companies looking to increase their presence and expand their business in Asia thanks to the participation by diverse solar players from key Asian countries and its location based in South Korea with high tech innovation, skilled workforce, business-friendly infrastructure and, most importantly, strong government's commitment to becoming a global hub for the solar industry," said Choi Jeong-Shik, President & CEO of Infothe Media Group, the organizer of EXPO Solar and publisher of InterPV, a premier journal for the global solar PV industry.

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Scheduled to be held at the Northeast Asia's biggest international exhibition center, KINTEX, SOUTH KOREA, in 2010, EXPO Solar/PV KOREA will draw 1,200 booths of participating companies. After the success in 2009 when it attracted not only domestic Korean companies but also industry leading companies from all over the world, EXPO Solar/PV KOREA will come back in 2010 with an even bigger and better show which will become one of the world's largest solar energy events.

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