

Oman to Float International Tender for Solar Plant Next Year

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MUSCAT - The Gulf state of Oman, which vigorously promotes the use of renewable energy technologies, expects to float an international tender next year for the country's first large-scale solar plant that will generate between 50 Megawatts, or MW, and 200 MW of power, a key official said here on Sunday.

Mohammed in Nasser al Khusaibi, Secretary-general of the Ministry of National Economy, said the Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW) was now in the process of appointing international advisors to conduct a feasibility study on the project. Expressing confidence that the study would confirm viability of the proposed Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) plant, he said the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company' (OPWC) would launch in 2010 „a fair and transparent competition to build, own and operate the plant.

“This would be a significant development not only for Oman but for the region, Khusaibi said.

He was opening a seminar on renewable energy organised by the Authority for Electricity Regulation or AER attended by policy makers, industry experts, electricity companies and investors from within and outside the country.

A survey carried out by AER last year underlined the Sultanate's significant renewable energy potential. It found that the level of solar energy density in Oman was among the highest in the world with considerable scope for setting up solar projects in all areas of the country, meeting all of its domestic electricity requirements and providing for export.

The study also identified substantial wind energy potential in coastal areas in the south of Oman and in the mountains north of Salalah, observing that wind speeds in these areas are comparable to recorded wind speeds at inland sites in Europe where large numbers of wind turbines are installed and operational.

“The study acknowledged the potential of biogas, geothermal and wave energy, but recommended Oman focus its attention on utilising its abundant solar and wind energy resources,” Khusaibi said. The AER study proposed immediate implementation of pilot projects in rural areas to test the performance and efficiency of renewable technologies in local conditions.

The authority is currently reviewing proposals for six such projects, including a wind and solar projects incorporating thin film and silicon based technologies.

“The Sultanate has implemented ambitious and far reaching structural reforms of the electricity and related water sector and these reforms provide an excellent basis on which to start introducing renewable energy into the electricity system,” Khusaibi said.

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