

NIAS NOT ONLY PRODUCES OWN POWER, FEEDS GRID TOO

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Grid tied solar rooftop plant (NIAS guesthouse block)

By: Mihika Basu

While Bengaluru might be reeling under power cuts, the city-based National Institute of Advanced Studies (Nias) has not only managed to power its own needs during the day, it also supplies to the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd (Bescom). This has been made possible by the 100 kWp solar plant at Nias. Operational from October 2014, the monthly average generation for the period October 2014 to March 2016 is 11,900 kWh, said institute authorities.

According to Nias research associate Anasuya Gangopadhyay, a total of 46,940 units were exported from Nias to Bescom, from April 2015 to March 2016. Hence, the average monthly export to the utility has been 3,912 units.

"When the grid is functioning and we have a surplus, the electricity is fed into the grid. When our plant was commissioned, Bescom had not adopted a policy on rooftop solar. Later, our meters were changed and we are 'compensated' for the electricity we supply to the grid. However, we had so designed our plant that we would not be net exporters to the grid, but continue to be net importers, although at a much reduced level. Thus Bescom does not have to pay us anything," Dr Dilip Ahuja, professor of energy and environment policy at Nias, told Bangalore Mirror.

Nias had installed solar panels on the terraces of most of the buildings in its five-acre campus in 2014. On most days, grid electricity is used only in the night to power hostels. The solar power is used throughout the campus, that is, the faculty block, the auditorium, the hostel and the guest block, among others. The institute estimates that the investments will be recovered six years from the time the solar panels were installed. Dr Ahuja said that rooftop solar, especially institutional plants, will help overcome the city's deficits and help the utility to gear up to how the grid will function in the future. This, he says, will help the Centre reach its target of 100 gigawatts of solar power by 2022. "A significant increase in wind turbines and solar PV facilities will require a robust, flexible and responsive electricity grid. The entire country, and perhaps all of South Asia, should operate as one grid to average out the impact of the variability," Dr Ahuja had earlier stated in an article.

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