

## Karnataka to get new solar park soon

**Bountiful sun:**Solar panels spread across several villages in Pavagada taluk of Tumakuru district.Special arrangement

Pavagada, one of the most backward and parched taluks in Karnataka, has been declared drought-hit more than 50 times in the last seven decades. The people residing in barren hilly lands are deprived of potable water. With no irrigation facility, farmers barely earn a few hundred rupees from groundnut crop, and worse, the crop often withers away every year.

Located 180 km from Bengaluru and bordering Andhra Pradesh, the taluk is blessed with good sunshine for most part of the year. capitalising on this, it is now finding a place in the global green energy map, with the State government commencing the process of setting up a solar park, claimed to be the world's largest, with an investment of Rs. 14,425 crore, including Central aid.

The solar park, spread over 13,000 acres across five villages of the taluk, will generate 2,000 MW of power by September 2018. In the first phase, to be ready by December, it would generate 600 MW.

With this and other solar projects, the State would become the number one State in solar power, with a generation of 3,000 MW by the end of December, officials of Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd. (KREDL) told The Hindu.

The Pavagada park is financed and co-developed by the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), the State government, and developers who pay upfront charges.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who inspected the progress of the park on September 28, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be invited to dedicate the park to the nation in December.

### Lease period

To set up the park, the government obtained 13,000 acres from farmers on a lease for 28 years. Landowners get land lease charges of Rs. 21,000 per acre per year with 5% escalation for every two years on the base rate. The farmers have been receiving the amount for the last two years.

For farmers whose land had been acquired for roads, power grid plants and other utilities, compensation of Rs. 6.6 lakh per acre has been given since such lands cannot be used for farm purposes in future.

Besides income to farmers, the park would generate 4,000 jobs for local youth. It would give a boost to local small-scale industries such as hotels, real estate, and petty business, officials said.

### Developers

Six developers — Adani Power and Tata Solar Power (150 MW each), Arrow Solar and ReNewer Power (50 MW each), ACME Solar and Fortum Solar (100 MW each), have set up solar panels to generate 600 MW in the first phase. National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd, which bagged the bid, will purchase power from these six developers at Rs. 4.80 per unit and supply to the State electricity supply companies at a bundled tariff of Rs. 3.30 per unit.

For the balance 1,400 MW, tariff is yet to be fixed through competitive bidding.

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