# Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission is a Historic and Transformational Initiative of the UPA Government: Dr. Farooq Abdullah

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Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy has termed the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission as “a historic and transformational initiative of the UPA Government”. The Mission was launched this morning by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi at the Solar Energy Conclave.

Delivering the key note address on the occasion Dr. Abdullah said, three major initiatives have been planned under the National Solar Mission including creating volumes which will allow large scale domestic manufacture, announcing a long term policy to purchase power; and supporting R&D to reduce material consumption and improve efficiency and develop new materials and storage methods. The implementation of the Mission will proceed on the basis of the technology advancements and cost reduction, which will be necessary for rapid scale-up and to achieve the target of 20,000 megawatts, he added.

**Following is the text of Dr. Farooq Abdullah’s address:**

“This Mission is named after India’s first and visionary Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. For him, India’s development needed to be anchored in its mastery over cutting-edge technologies. The Solar Mission is very much in line with his vision, which has made India today, a leading nuclear and space power. He would have been equally keen and proud to see India attaining the same level of advancement in solar energy. I am confident, that under the leadership of our Hon’ble Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, we shall make India a Global Solar Power as well.

This Mission on solar energy is one of the eight National Missions which comprise India’s National Action Plan on Climate Change. It has the twin objectives of contributing to India’s long term energy security and ensuring its growth in an ecologically sustainable manner. We are living in a world of rapidly depleting fossil fuel resources where access to conventional energy resources such as oil, gas and coal is becoming increasingly constrained. For the security of our energy needs, the deployment of renewable energy sources in our energy mix is imperative. Also we cannot be oblivious to climatic and environmental dangers inherent in the large scale use of fossil fuels. In this context and in view of the high solar radiation over the country, the rapid development and deployment of solar energy applications provides an effective and sustainable solution. Sir, your presence on this occasion demonstrates the commitment of the Government of India to develop and adopt clean energy technologies for the development of modern India.

The long term policy vision of the Solar Mission has been put together as a document, which has been enriched by stakeholder discussions and inputs. I would like to thank all my Ministerial colleagues for their valuable inputs and support as also Mr Shyam Saran, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister. The Solar Mission will be implemented in 3 stages leading to an installed capacity of 20,000 MW by the end of the 13th Five Year Plan in 2022. It is envisaged that as a result of rapid scale up as well as technological developments, the price of solar power will continue to decline and attain parity with grid power at the end of the Mission, enabling accelerated and large-scale expansion thereafter.

Quite obviously, in order to set the stage for achieving this ambitious target, what we do in the next 3 to 4 years will be critical. Our policies and programmes in the first phase of the Mission will be critical to guide and decide the future course of action. As we all know today the initial cost of solar is very high, especially for grid power generation. We aim to bring down the cost as quickly as possible. This will allow us to provide power to our villages and rural homes. We have planned three major initiatives under the National Solar Mission to achieve this (i) create volumes which will allow large scale domestic manufacture, (ii) announce a long term policy to purchase power; and (ii) support R&D to reduce material consumption and improve efficiency and develop new materials and storage methods. The implementation of the Mission will proceed on the basis of the technology advancements and cost reduction, which will be necessary for rapid scale-up and to achieve the target of 20,000 megawatts.

The Mission has decided to establish an investor-friendly mechanism which reduces risk and at the same time, provides an attractive, predictable and sufficiently extended tariff for the purchase of solar power. The focal point, for the next 3 years, will be the NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN), which is the power trading arm of the NTPC. NVVN will purchase solar power at rates fixed by the Central Regulatory Electricity Commission and for a period specified by the latter. When the State utilities purchase solar power from NVVN they will get an equivalent amount of thermal power from NVVN. The bundling of more expensive solar power with cheaper thermal power will enable a much cheaper tariff for the consumer, estimated at about Rs.5 or less per unit, and this will also enable concerned States to meet their renewable power purchase obligation, which is now mandatory. I wish to record my deep appreciation and grateful thanks to my senior Cabinet colleague, Shri Shinde ji, who as Minister of Power, has made this arrangement possible. I am confident that with the investor friendly arrangement put in place for grid connected solar power, we should be able to achieve the ambitious targets, set out by the Solar Mission. I am happy to inform you, Sir, that we have already taken the first steps in this regard and that 2MW each of solar power plants have recently been commissioned at Asansol , West Bengal and at Amritsar, Punjab.

There are several off-grid solar applications which are already commercially viable or near viability, where rapid scale up is possible. Solar thermal heating applications, such as water heaters, fall in this category. We can go for a rapid scale up in a short time, and considerably reduce the burden on our grid. By 2022, we aim to install 20 million square meter solar thermal collectors in the country and save about 7,500 MW power generation capacity. We are conscious that the achievement of this target requires regulatory and incentive measures as well as an extensive awareness campaign. We are working together with financial institutions, industry as well as user groups to put together the correct set of incentives that will enable the achievement of these targets. I would like take this opportunity to request all State Governments to aid this process by appropriate regulatory measures such as making the use of solar water heaters mandatory for certain types of consumers.

Solar lighting systems for rural and remote areas are also being purchased commercially in several parts of the country. Large scale use of solar lights can save substantial quantities of kerosene and also subsidy. We want 20 million solar lights to be installed by 2022, which would result in a saving of about 1 billion litres of kerosene every year. We are working with the banks, especially rural banks, to offer soft loans to consumers for this purpose. My Ministry will help the banks do this through refinancing or interest rate subsidy. We are aware that there are areas in the country such as island States and border areas which are still dependent upon diesel for power generation. In such areas we propose to provide up to 90% support for setting up solar power plants. In many other solar applications, where the initial cost is still very high, we are considering proposals for providing up to 30% grant-in-aid.

Sir, I have already mentioned about R&D being one of the key endeavour of the Solar Mission to bring down costs and promote deployment of solar technologies. In pursuance of this goal, we in the Ministry have embarked on a focused R&D programme which seeks to address the India-specific challenges in promoting solar energy. We are adopting a technology neutral approach. Instead of backing a particular technology, we are trying to address the current drawbacks in using solar energy ; for instance, the evolving of a cost-effective and convenient storage for solar power is high on priority in our R&D efforts. We shall also work, in parallel, on accelerating the process of development of the domestic solar industry. We believe that economies of scale, indigenisation and cutting edge research shall together lead to the cost reductions that are necessary for the rapid scale up and deployment of solar technologies. I am proud to inform you sir, that only yesterday, we laid the foundation stone of three major research projects, including one in PPP mode in our Solar Energy Centre at Gurgaon near Delhi.

Research and deployment needs skilled and trained manpower. Under the Solar Mission, we aim to address this issue as well. We would involve various stakeholders in human resource development and other capacity building efforts. As the first step, decided to offer fellowships to research students to work at our premier research Centres and train them in solar energy technologies.

Sir, in launching the National Action Plan on Climate Change, you had given a pride of place to the Solar Energy Mission. You have a vision of India emerging as a world leader in this sector. On our part, we are working in close coordination with all other stakeholders, specially the States, to translate your vision into a practical, measured and cost-effective plan of action. I would like to assure you once again that we are fully committed to translate your vision to make solar energy affordable and to make India a Global Solar power. “