

HopSol: Lighting the way to the future

Submitted by NamibianSun on Wed, 2016-06-22 01:00



The sight of 35 640 large solar panels spread out in 42 rows on 12 hectares in perfect symmetry, slowly rotating to follow the sun in order to ensure the biggest grid-connected Namibian solar plant humming along, is breathtaking.

The 5 Megawatt (MW) solar plant installed by Hopsol Africa (Pty) Limited and situated on a small plot on the outskirts of Otjiwarongo, was commissioned in November 2015, after four months of installation.

The benefits of deploying the state-of-the-art sustainable technology in a country that boasts close to 365 days of sunshine a year have been numerous.

Dubbed as the first 'green' city in Namibia, the HopSol solar plant delivers electricity to Cenored, the regional electricity supplier, and supplies sufficient solar energy to keep the lights burning in approximately 2 500 residential homes in Otjiwarongo.

Dr Bettina Janka, manager of legal and human resources at HopSol explained that one of the benefits of solar energy is that it is "clean and renewable energy which is available without polluting the environment like a generator or like a coal- or gas-powered station."

She said with of the highest sunshine radiation in the world the country could "produce so much solar energy that Namibia could even export electricity".

Cost-wise, solar power production is cheaper than conventional power generation and costs are expected to drop further as the prices on the manufacturing side continue to decrease.

The power plant in Otjiwarongo operates on thin film technology on a tracking system. Thin film solar modules have a very low temperature coefficient and can withstand and handle the daily heat and radiation of the region better than polycrystalline panels.

Janka confirmed that HopSol Africa is in the process of building a second 5 MW solar park in Grootfontein which will be operational end of June 2016, and that NamPower has recently opened a tender for a massive 37 MW solar park in Namibia.

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