

Russia's Largest Solar Power Plant Opens in Siberia

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A solar power station opened Thursday in Siberia's Altai republic has become the biggest facility of its kind in Russia.

The Kosh-Agachskaya plant, which has a capacity of 5 megawatts (MW), will be the first of five solar power facilities to open in the region by 2019, the Kremlin said in an online statement.

The project, which has a price tag of more than 5 billion rubles (\$135 million), will bring Altai's total solar power output to 45 MW, the statement said.

Russia's previous record holder for solar-power generation was a plant in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan that was opened in 2013 and has an output of 2 MW.

The new plant will be located on Altai's Chuyskaya Steppe, which has an insolation level — the amount of energy present on the earth's surface — on a par with South Europe, according to Smartnews.ru website.

But despite experiencing up to 250 sunny days a year, the region, which sits almost 2,000 meters above the sea level, is also the coldest place in Altai, the report said.

According to the Energy Ministry, Russia could obtain four times the energy that it currently consumes per year if it properly utilised renewable sources, especially insolation and wind power.

The country currently gets just 0.5 percent of its total annual power output, estimated at 200 gigawatt (GW), from renewable sources, excluding major hydro plants, according to the ministry's figures.

The government plans to hike that figure to 4.5 percent by 2020, but renewable energy advocates say it is behind the schedule on the project.

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