THE POWER OF THE SUN

RADIANT SOLAR

President Viswanath Nambiar and Director of Marketing Anjali Gandhi Nambiar of Radiant Solar Pvt. Ltd. spoke to *You & I* about their company's profile and role as an MNRE-approved channel partner of the Indian government.

Can you shed some light on the 75 power plants you've installed? How big are they? What sort of capacities are we talking about?

We are a Hyderabad-based design, manufacturing and integration company for residential, commercial and industrial power generation via land and rooftop solar installations. Our manufacturing facility is strategically located at Fab City. We are passionately committed to promoting green energy choices to combat global warming, and supporting a clean and sustainable future for our children. We are currently the market leader in key geographies across Kerala and South India. Some of our major installations include:

- 100kW for Mar Baselios College of Engineering and Technology, Trivandrum
- 100kW for Pushpagiri Medical College, Tiruvalla
- 80kW for MES College of Engineering, Kuttipuram
- 63kW for Jyothi Engineering College, Thrissur
- 30kW for Thangam Hospital, Palakkad
- 30kW for Mar Athanasios College for Advanced Studies Tiruvalla(MACFAST), Tiruvalla
- 30kW for Parijatha Hotel, Bangalore
- 25kW for Sagar group of Institutions, Hyderabad
- 5kW for Mobile Communications India Private Limited, New Delhi
- 15kW for Agency for Non Conventional Energy and Rural Technology(ANERT), Trivandrum

We also have installations at the Administrative Staff College of India, the Indian Army, Technopark Trivandrum, ICRISAT in Hyderabad, and various other locations across India. These projects all run successfully with little or no downtime, and all they are MNRE (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy) subsidy-approved. Our clients have appreciated and commended the seamless service we provide in order to ease procedural issues, all of which were tackled by the Radiant Solar team with élan. We handle all the subsidy paperwork on our end.

How and when did you start the company? What areas do you deal with?

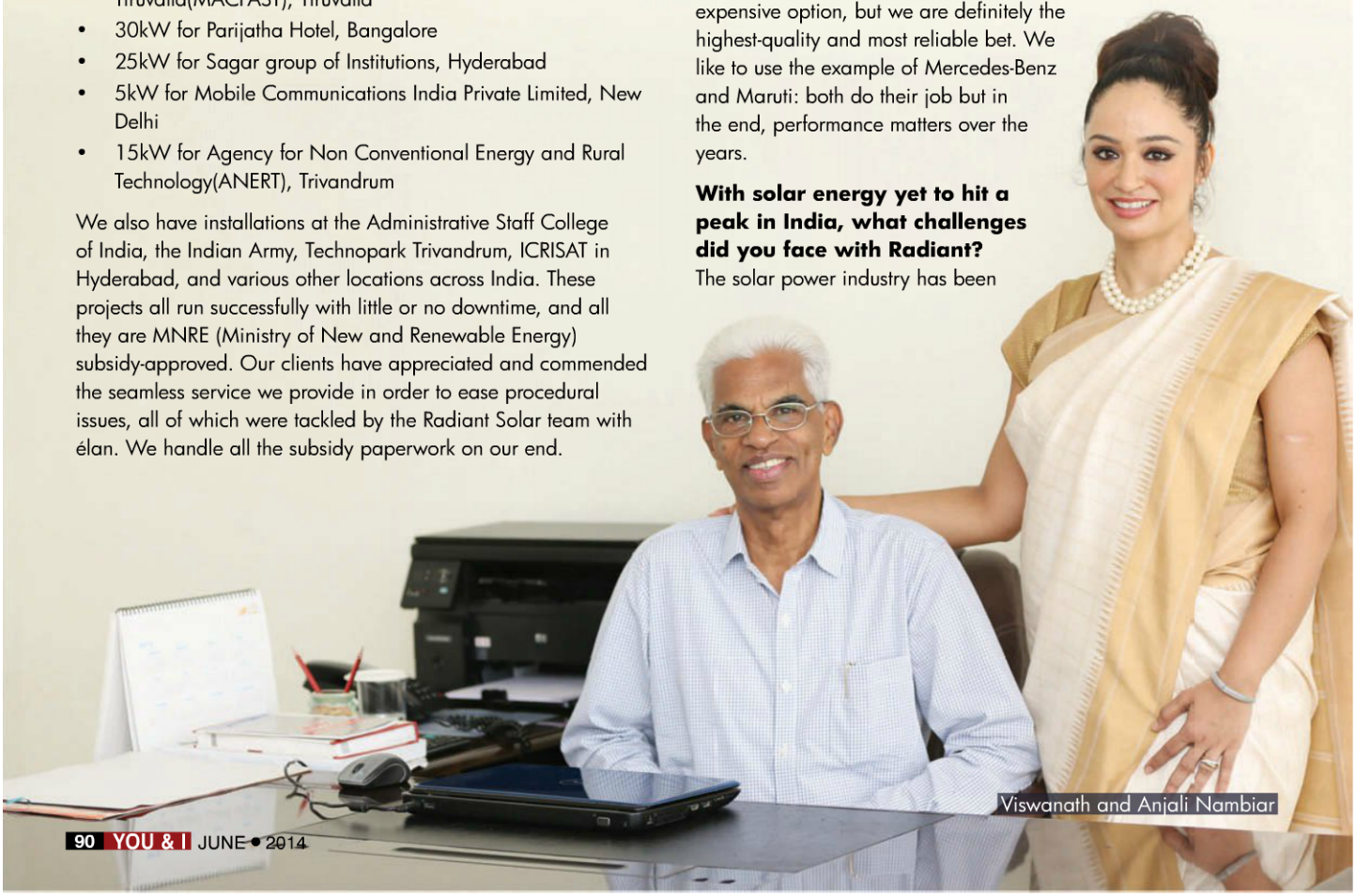
It was started in California in 2007, as a system integration company. We then focused solely on solar power plants, and have recently started manufacturing A-grade solar modules for local consumption and export. Our focus through the years has been on quality products and excellent customer service. Some 90% of our team consists of engineers who know what they're doing, as opposed to having a general background in the RE sector. Our success is attributed mainly to our team.

What is the competition like?

We've seen the advent of many companies in the last few years; this is a lucrative industry. Competition is healthy. It forces you to innovate, be creative, and strive for excellence. But we have seen that very few companies go the extra mile for their customers, in terms of educating them on which solution is best for their unique situation. We are proud to say that our team is solid when it comes to designing quality solar power systems for our clients, and they do it with panache. The proposals we design for our clients go through three rounds of quality control before submission. We might be the expensive option, but we are definitely the highest-quality and most reliable bet. We like to use the example of Mercedes-Benz and Maruti: both do their job but in the end, performance matters over the years.

With solar energy yet to hit a peak in India, what challenges did you face with Radiant?

The solar power industry has been



Viswanath and Anjali Nambiar


The team members of Radiant Solar Pvt. Ltd. with Anjali and Viswanath Nambiar

very hot! Record amounts of new capacity have been installed over the past two years. The accelerating rate of adoption of solar panels for distributed generation (installed at the point of use rather than sold into the power grid) and the downward trend of module prices have created exuberance about the industry's future. Solar energy has reached and eclipsed price parity with traditional fuel sources in some markets and, ultimately, the potential market for solar PV is huge. It is clear that the future of the industry is very bright.

What is less clear is when growth will accelerate, and how near-term challenges for the industry could create some rough patches before widespread adoption drives truly explosive industry growth. These two merging dynamics – dropping solar costs and rising utility rates for electricity – have caught the eye of more than a few investors and analysts. Return on investment is now being achieved within four years, so people are seeing the sense in investing in clean energy.

The challenge is that small companies like ours have struggled with subsidies from MNRE. Collection of MNRE-approved funds takes a long time, and this creates working capital problems for companies like ours. In Australia, subsidy is released by the government within a month. But on the upside, we are very excited about how this industry will shape up now that Narendra Modi's government has vowed to take solar power to the next level.

Tell us about some of your firm's major projects.
We are known for our institutional work in the industry. From solarizing India's first engineering college in Kerala to setting up 100kW plus power plants for several other colleges, hospitals, schools, hotels, residences; our focus has always been on delivering quality installations to our clients.

What is your association with Regen Power in Australia?
Regen is our financial and technology collaborator. It is a design, development and system integration firm that focuses on power conversion, monitoring and management needs of the renewable energy market. Professor Emeritus Chem Nayar of Curtin University is an authority on renewable energies such as solar and wind. He is the chairman of Regen Power and a powerhouse in his own right; he has several patents to his name and has authored many respected white papers. In addition, our strategic partner is Leonics, a Thailand-based pioneer in power electronics with experience in implementing large power farms (megawatt capacity) in several Asian countries. We are extremely proud of our associations with both, as our focus is on delivering the best that money can buy.

Can we expect regular households to use solar energy for their day-to-day activities anytime soon?
In the next five or ten years, the landscape for renewable energy will be very different from the present scenario. Unlike Germany, which is one of the biggest users of solar power, sunshine is fortunately so abundant in India. We need to take note of German efforts and solarise our homes. I live in a solar-powered home, and everything except my air conditioners runs on my power plant. I pay a maximum electricity bill of Rs. 5,000 in the summer months for a five-bedroom villa. In the winter, bills are negligible. The best part is that the whole process is seamless – the switch from the grid to solar to batteries is automatic, and the end clients don't have to do a thing!

Architects and builders, however, will need to plan better and incorporate green buildings into their design aspects for a sustainable future. The awareness needs to come from the grassroots level, and we have seen this building up well over the last few years.

What does the future hold for Radiant Solar?
Our plan is to grow over the years and execute large, megawatt projects to supply power to the utility grid, and to manufacture next-generation modules. – *as told to Niharika*