

This small-time juice vendor makes hay while the sun shines

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Ramadas was very positive when he started a juice shop in Puducherry. However, his enthusiasm was shortlived as he could not earn sufficient money for a decent living due to frequent load-shedding. He gradually lost his customers.

But he did not want to give up his business since he had to look after his family. Suddenly, an useful thought came to his mind during discussions with his friends. He decided to implement his idea and install solar panel and other equipment to run his fruit juice shop along the East Coast Road in Puducherry. It has started paying dividends.

Ramadas, hailing from Villupuram district in Tamil Nadu, has not invested much on his new venture. The electrical devices — refrigerator, mixer and a light — operate from the power generated by solar panels fitted atop the cart.

"I worked in a tea stall as a daily labourer. After that I opened a juice shop in a rented area and paid the advance amount. However, due to frequent load-shedding he could not make any profit. I was finding it difficult to pay the rent also," he said.

Ramadas does not blame the government for his problems. Instead, he says: "There is no point in faulting ministers and officials. In a way I should be thankful to the government. Otherwise, the idea of setting up the solar power juice shop wouldn't have cropped up in my mind. Now, I earn on an average Rs 1,500 per day," he said. Ramadas's wife Parvathy, who is helping her husband, said "he was upset when he initially suffered losses. I encouraged him to start on his own again, which worked out very well."

Wife's assistance

Parvathy gets up early and purchases fresh fruits from the market. In addition, she gives innovative ideas in preparing fresh juices by mixing different fruits.

Ramadas of Karuvadikuppam taluk claimed that the idea of the stall was conceptualised by him and it was implemented by Phocos India. "I paid only Rs 20,000 as advance. The company arranged a loan for me without asking any documents," he said.

Ramadas said the solar panels would also serve as a roof for the cart and it has the capacity to generate over 1,000 watts. While the freezer operates on power generated directly, the mixer and light use power from the battery.

Besides solar panels, the push cart has a charge controller, 1,000W inverter and 2x135AH battery. "Based on Ramadas idea, we have designed the cart for very small-scale business," E K Pratap, Sales Manager of the company, said.

According to him, the shopkeeper uses the mixer-grinder for preparing fresh juices.

He can use a solar-powered DC-operated refrigerator for storing the fruits, water and other consumable items. This system is completely independent from the grid. Pratap said his firm in Puducherry, a branch of the Germany-based firm, had chipped in nearly Rs 1.50 lakh for setting up the solar-powered fruit stall.

To create awareness

He said the aim of building the stall was to create awareness among the public about solar-powered products.

Ramadas said the push cart was purchased by him and the fitting of solar panels and electrical connections were done by Phocos India. One interesting aspect is that, Ramadas leaves the cart with equipment on the road after his business. "I just cover the cart in plastic sheets. So far, there has been no theft or damage to equipment," Ramadas said while serving a "cocktail" fruit juice to one of his customers.

Ramadas is also planning to open one more solar-powered juice stall after repaying his loan.

"Hopefully, I will clear all my dues in a year. After that I will open another shop similar to this," he said.

He is also keen in creating awareness about the solar energy among the customers who come to his shop. "If anyone is interested, I will help," a confident Ramadas said. After seeing Ramadas' innovation, entrepreneurs in and around Puducherry evinced interest for venturing into new business where solar power could help them. "I am planning to start a small textile unit run by solar energy. I have already placed my inquiry with the company," S Vinod, a commerce graduate, said.

One-time investment

Though solar power is bit costly compared to other energy, Vinod claims that it will be a one-time investment and also reliable.

In Tamil Nadu and in the neighbouring Puducherry, power woes continue to torment not only the people but also businessmen in various sectors, who are under severe pressure to stay in the market in the last couple of years.

Barring cities such as Chennai and Puducherry, other areas, especially the rural region, are facing unannounced load-shedding of minimum five hours.

First Published in [Deccan Herald](#)

We sadly provide a link (please see below) to a more recent report on the unfortunate turn this alternative initiative was forced to take.

[Out of Pandy - Solar Juice Stall Owner Returns to Villupuram](#) (published by [The New Indian Express](#)), reports that subsequently, the traffic police and NHAI officials asked him to leave the place where he had been operating his stall. With no choice, Ramadas moved back to his home-town.