

Smart Use of Energy

As demands for energy grows and the effects of global climate change becomes more acute, the need to replace traditional fossil fuel with alternative energy sources that are both clean and renewable also becomes more urgent. Harvesting energy directly from sunlight is a popular way to have a clean and sustainable energy source.

Research Led by Dean of Engineering

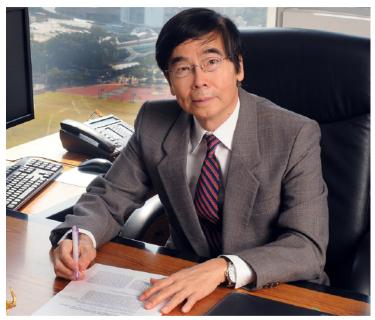
Prof. Wong Ching-ping, Dean of Engineering at CUHK, is leading a team of researchers from CUHK, HKUST and HKPolyU to study how to collect and distribute solar energy in

the most effective way. In line with the strategic priorities set by the HKSAR Government and the Research Grants Council, the proposed research project, entitled 'Smart Solar Energy Harvesting, Storage, and Utilization', studies how to sustainably utilize solar energy using new technologies that will enhance efficiency and security, while keeping the cost affordable.

Prof. Wong believes that the project will strengthen Hong Kong's competitive advantage in solar energy technologies and also help to increase solar energy use throughout the territory. This project will focus on (1) high performance vacuum deposited thin photovoltaic (PV) cells and modules, (2) solution-processed excitonic solar cells, and (3) alterative solar harvesting technologies based on photosynthesis, photocatalysis, and thermoelectric processes.

PV Cells and Modules

A photovoltaic (PV) cell converts sunlight directly into electricity. A module is a group of cells connected electrically and packaged into a frame (commonly known as a solar panel), which can then be grouped into larger solar arrays. PV cells are made of semiconductor materials such as silicon. When light strikes the cell, a certain portion of it is absorbed within the semiconductor material. The light energy knocks electrons loose, thus allowing them to flow freely. In the new design, the vacuum-deposited thin-film PV cells produces a higher output covering a larger area than the conventional silicon-based PV cells, at a lower cost.



Prof. Wong Ching-ping, Dean of Engineering at CUHK



Pilot production lines in Shenzhen Institutes of Advacned Technology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

Solution-processed Excitonic Solar Cells

Excitonic solar cells are devices that produce electricity from solar energy through the creation of an 'exiton', which is an electronic-hole pair. When a photon (a particle of light) hits the light-active component in an excitonic solar cell, a negatively charged electron is excited to higher energy. A positively charged 'hole' is therefore also created on the molecule at the point where the electron is now absent.

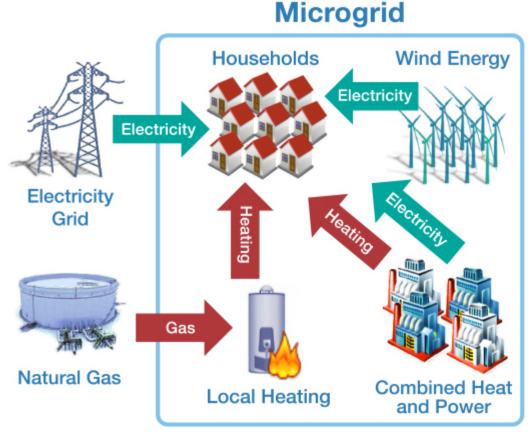
The advantage of exitonic solar cells over conventional solar cells, such as those made of silicon, is that in a conventional solar cell, the excited electron and its corresponding hole are immediately separated and can easily travel away from each other, while in the exitonic solar cells, the electronic-hole pair are bounded tightly together and cannot travel far without recombining (thus losing energy). Solution-processed exitonic solar cells are those that are developed using liquids that contain semiconductor nanoparticles, and is produced at a relatively low cost.

Alternative Solar Harvesting Technologies

In addition to capturing sunlight directly via PV cells, the study will also explore alternative solar harvesting technologies based on photosynthesis, photocatalysis, and thermoelectric processes. Photo catalysis is the acceleration of this energy conversion process using a catalyst; and thermoelectric processes are processes that directly convert temperature differences to electrical voltage and vice versa. The study will utilize metal oxides and chemical dyes as catalysts in an artificial photosynthesis process that develops cost effective materials capable to produce electricity from solar light.

Smart Storage and Distribution

In addition to harvesting solar energy, the project also studies the storage of such energy. The study will focus on high-energy redox flow batteries, high-power super capacitors and a hybrid system formed by these two components. By exploring new materials and new processing approaches, the study aims to develop a hybrid system that will provide a more secure storage for the energy.



Microgrids are distributed electric power systems with local generation

With enhanced harvesting and storage of solar energy, the project will utilize micro grids (MG) as a promising platform for effective solar energy utilization. Using advanced technologies and strategies to integrate and manage information and communication, these 'smart' grids are more reliable, flexible, and efficient. The research will monitor and manage the utilization as well as the security of these grids.

An Integrated Intelligent System

The project will not only create an interdisciplinary research platform for studying solar energy, harvesting, and utilization, but will also advocate applied research that leads to technology transfer to industry. By combining the aforementioned technologies, the project will deliver a practical demonstration of micro grid (MG) operations based on intelligent control and integration of PV modules, smart storages and loads and other technologies in a laboratory and selected campus building systems under interconnected and islanded modes. This demonstration will eventually be shared outside of academia with an eye towards industry application, and in turn promote a wider user of solar energy in Hong Kong.



Sustainable 太声幺中 Campus 小真小火大



智能化能源運用

人類對能源的需求不斷增長,加上全球氣候變化的影響日益嚴重,開發潔淨的可再生能源來代替化石燃料,遂成爲當務之急。從陽光取得能源,就是其中一種最受歡迎、且能獲取潔淨和可持續能源的方法。

中大工程學院院長帶領新研究

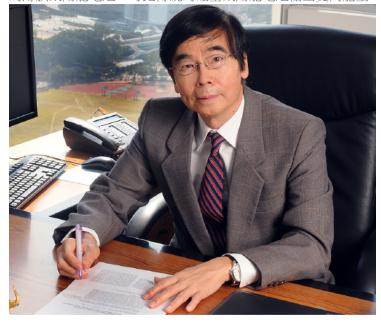
香港中文大學工程學院院長汪正平教授正率領來自中文大學、香港科技大學及香港理工大學的研究人員,鑽研最有效收集和分配太陽能的方法。名為「智能化太陽能技術:採集、存儲和應用」的研究計劃,與香港特別行政區及研究資助局的可持續發展綱要一脈相通,旨在開發多種新科技,以實現太陽能的有效轉換、安全存儲和使用,同時維持成本在可負擔水平。

汪教授相信此計劃有助加強香港在太陽能科技範疇的競爭力,

並擴大太陽能在香港能源領域的實際使用率。計劃的研究課題包括: (1) 開發高性能真空沉積薄膜太陽能電池結構和組件技術; (2) 以溶液技術製作激子太陽能電池和組件的基礎研究;以及(3) 開發新型的金屬氧化物和有機染料分子,從而在化學燃料合成中,實現高效人工光合作用和光催化。

薄膜太陽能電池結構和組件技術

光伏電池可直接進行光電轉換,電池通電連接成模組,可再組成面積較大的太陽能板。太陽能電池一般以硅或其他半導體製成,每當接觸陽光,就能將部分陽光吸納。這些光能源會打散電子,讓它們能自由流動。在新設計中,以真空沉積技術製造的薄膜太陽能電池,可比傳統的硅基太陽能電池輸出更高能量、覆蓋更大面積,而成本較低廉。



工程學院院長汪正平教授



中國科學院深圳先進技術研究院的試驗生產線

以溶液技術製作激子太陽能電池

激子太陽能電池可通過製造「激子」來產生電子-電洞對,從而透過太陽能發電。當光子與激子太陽能電池中的光主動元件相遇,就會激發帶有負電荷的電子,產生更多能量。由於缺乏了電子,帶正電荷的「電洞」就應運而生。

相對於傳統太陽能電池,激子太陽能電池存在一定優勢。傳統太陽能電池的電子被激發後,洞容和相應電易分離,但後者的電子—電洞對卻會緊靠在一起,在重新組合前亦不會分隔得太遠(因而損失能量)。溶液技術製作的激子太陽能電池以含半導體納米物料的液體來開發,可有效降低成本。

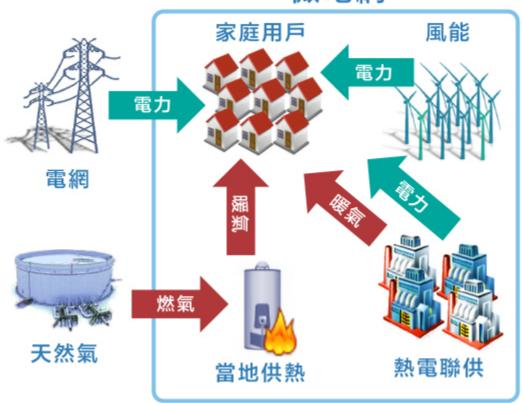
開發新型太陽能採集技術

除透過太陽能電池直接採集陽光外,此研究計劃亦會開拓其他以光合作用、光催化及熱電效應等為基礎的太陽能採集技術。 光催化是藉催化劑加速能量轉換過程,而熱電效應則指由溫差產生電壓的直接轉換,反之亦然。研究人員會在人造光合作用 過程中,利用金屬氧化物及有機染料分子作催化劑,開發更符合成本效益、可用陽光發電的物料。

智能化存儲和分配

除了研究採集太陽能的方法,該計劃也研究能源存儲方法,重點包括高能量氧化還原液流電池和高能超級電容器,並透過開發新材料和新技術,構建可更安全儲存能量的混和系统。

微電網



微電網是本地發電的分布式電力系統

有了完善的太陽能採集和存儲技術,研究計劃的下一步是以微電網為有效使用太陽能的平台。這些智能化電網利用先進科技和策略,融合管理資訊與和通訊,成為更可靠、更具彈性和更有效的工具。研究計劃將監察和管理太陽能的應用,以及增強電網的安全性。

綜合智能系統

這研究計劃不僅能夠創建跨學科平台,研究太陽能及其採集、存儲和應用,同時也能夠促進導向工業技術轉化的應用研究。透過結合上述各種技術,計劃可以具體呈現如何在實驗室和校園指定建築物內,進行以智能控制、一體化光伏組件、智能存儲和負荷等技術為基礎的微電網運作。研究的最終目標,是將這些技術帶出學術研究的框框,得以運用於工業範疇,從而在香港實現更大規模的太陽能應用。





智能化能源运用

人类对能源的需求不断增长,加上全球气候变化的影响日益严重,开发洁净的可再生能源来代替化石燃料,遂成爲当务之急。从阳光取得能源,就是其中一种最受欢迎、且能获取洁净和可持续能源的方法。

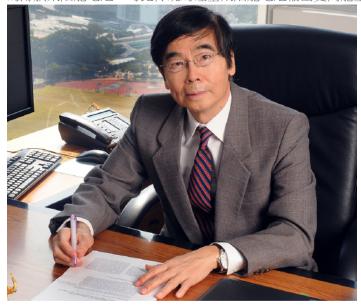
中大工程学院院长带领新研究

香港中文大学工程学院院长汪正平教授正率领来自中文大学、香港科技大学及香港理工大学的研究人员,钻研最有效收集和分配太阳能的方法。名为「智能化太阳能技术: 采集、存储和应用」的研究计划,与香港特别行政区及研究资助局的可持续发展纲要一脉相通,旨在开发多种新科技,以实现太阳能的有效转换、安全存储和使用,同时维持成本在可负担水平。

汪教授相信此计划有助加强香港在太阳能科技范畴的竞争力,并扩大太阳能在香港能源领域的实际使用率。计划的研究课题包括:(1)开发高性能真空沉积薄膜太阳能电池结构和组件技术;(2)以溶液技术制作激子太阳能电池和组件的基础研究;以及(3)开发新型的金属氧化物和有机染料分子,从而在化学燃料合成中,实现高效人工光合作用和光催化。

薄膜太阳能电池结构和组件技术

光伏电池可直接进行光电转换,电池通电连接成模组,可再组成面积较大的太阳能板。太阳能电池一般以硅或其他半导体制成,每当接触阳光,就能将部分阳光吸纳。这些光能源会打散电子,让它们能自由流动。在新设计中,以真空沉积技术制造的薄膜太阳能电池,可比传统的硅基太阳能电池输出更高能量、覆盖更大面积,而成本较低廉。



工程学院院长汪正平教授



中国科学院深圳先进技术研究院的试验生产线

以溶液技术制作激子太阳能电池

激子太阳能电池可通过制造「激子」来产生电子—电洞对,从而透过太阳能发电。当光子与激子太阳能电池中的光主动元件相遇,就会激发带有负电荷的电子,产生更多能量。由于缺乏了电子,带正电荷的「电洞」就应运而生。

相对于传统太阳能电池,激子太阳能电池存在一定优势。传统太阳能电池的电子被激发后,洞容和相应电易分离,但后者的电子—电洞对却会紧靠在一起,在重新组合前亦不会分隔得太远(因而损失能量)。溶液技术制作的激子太阳能电池以含半导体纳米物料的液体来开发,可有效降低成本。

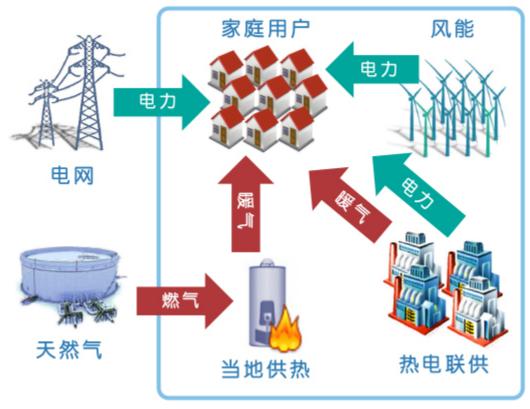
开发新型太阳能采集技术

除透过太阳能电池直接采集阳光外,此研究计划亦会开拓其他以光合作用、光催化及热电效应等为基础的太阳能采集技术。 光催化是藉催化剂加速能量转换过程,而热电效应则指由温差产生电压的直接转换,反之亦然。研究人员会在人造光合作用 过程中,利用金属氧化物及有机染料分子作催化剂,开发更符合成本效益、可用阳光发电的物料。

智能化存储和分配

除了研究采集太阳能的方法,该计划也研究能源存储方法,重点包括高能量氧化还原液流电池和高能超级电容器,并透过开发新材料和新技术,构建可更安全储存能量的混和系统。

微电网



微电网是本地发电的分布式电力系统

有了完善的太阳能采集和存储技术,研究计划的下一步是以微电网为有效使用太阳能的平台。这些智能化电网利用先进科技和策略,融合管理资讯与和通讯,成为更可靠、更具弹性和更有效的工具。研究计划将监察和管理太阳能的应用,以及增强电网的安全性。

综合智能系统

这研究计划不仅能够创建跨学科平台,研究太阳能及其采集、存储和应用,同时也能够促进导向工业技术转化的应用研究。透过结合上述各种技术,计划可以具体呈现如何在实验室和校园指定建筑物内,进行以智能控制、一体化光伏组件、智能存储和负荷等技术为基础的微电网运作。研究的最终目标,是将这些技术带出学术研究的框框,得以运用于工业范畴,从而在香港实现更大规模的太阳能应用。