THE SOLAR PLANT THAT NEVER SLEEPS

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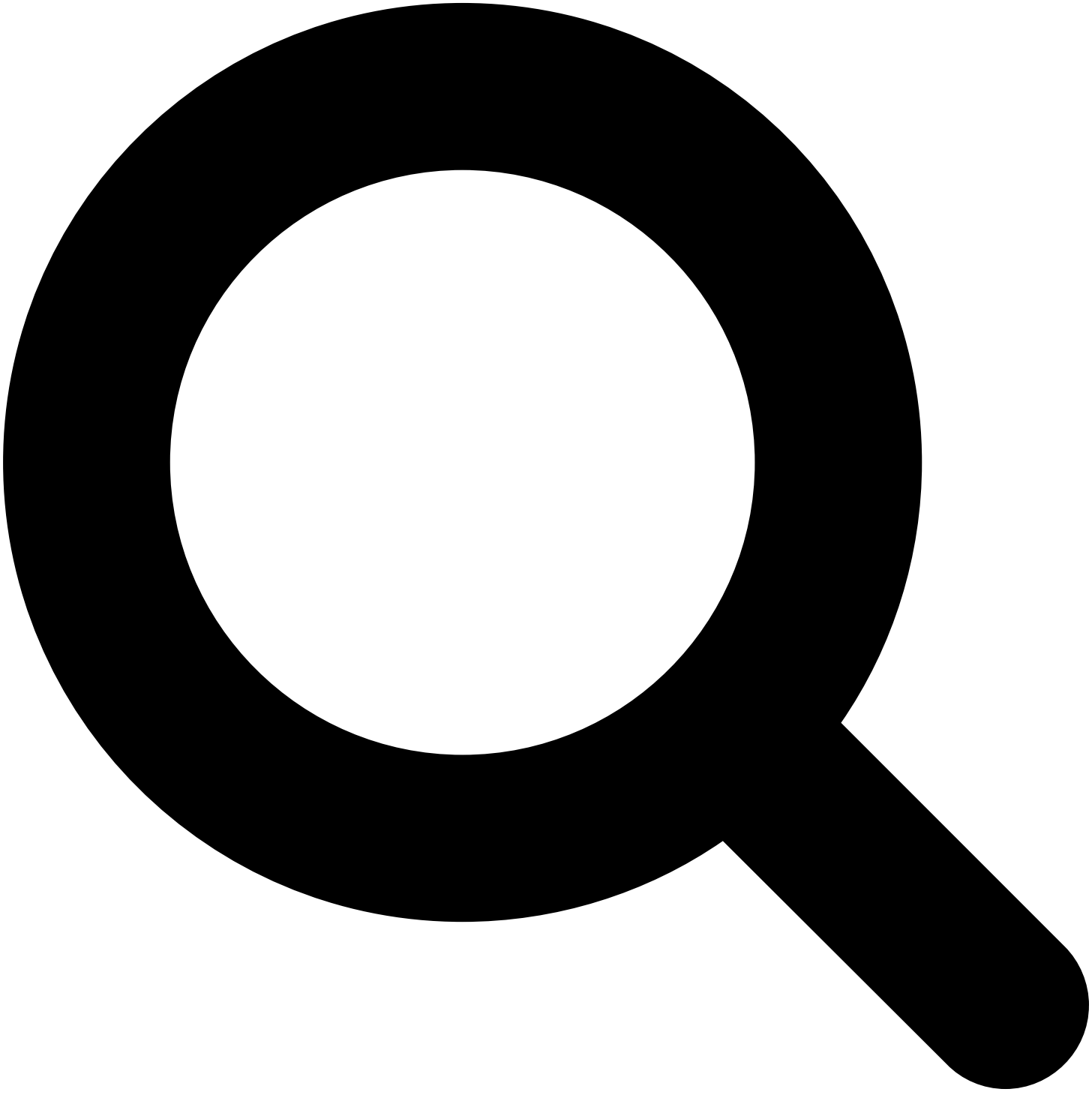

The Chilean government has given the green light to an ambitious solar thermal plant project in the province of Tamagural that is expected to produce power 24/7 – a considerable achievement for a plant that relies solely on from the sun's energy.

As detailed *Ars Technica*, the plant will consist of three 150-megawatt thermal towers, which capture the sun's rays through mirrors placed in formation around them. The

captured energy is transferred to molten salt – a combination of sodium nitrate and potassium nitrate held at 566ºC – which circulates around the plant's heat exchangers during the day and is stored in tanks at night. Molten salt stores heat so effectively that in dark or cloudy conditions it can be pumped back to thermal towers, where it will generate electricity by super-heating water that will power a traditional steam turbine.

The plant, designed by the US company SolarReserve, will be able to provide 450 MW of power continuously, and up to 2,600 gigawatt hours annually.

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