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Biofuels as India's socio-economical environmental growth driver

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Biofuel and several possibilities for positive transformation.

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HT Brand Studio

Biofuel is a benevolent option that not only solves the environmental issue but also brings with it several possibilities for positive transformation.

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Increased consumption of fossil fuels, more fuel dependency causing economic stress for countries like India, and the inevitable environmental damage caused by such fuels point to the urgent need for sustainable alternatives. Biofuel is a benevolent option that not only solves the environmental issue but also brings with it several possibilities for positive transformation. Commemorating the World Biofuel Day (Aug 10) let's take an overview on the perspective of fuel assurance and economy.

Every time an aircraft travels from London to New York and back, it emits 986 kg of carbon dioxide per passenger. This percentage is more than the average per capita emissions per year of the citizens of 56 countries of the world. Forget New York, even a return trip from Rome, located just 1800 km from London, is more polluting than the average per capita emissions of citizens of 17 nations! Along with road transport, this issue of carbon emission has become grave in marine and air transport as well. The example given here is based on the account given by the German voluntary organization "Atmosfair" in 2019.

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2021. While 20% of the world's casualties are directly or indirectly caused by pollutants generated by the use of fossil fuels, we are frighteningly dependent on them as our source of fuel. In fact, fossil fuels fulfill 80% of the world's total energy requirement, not to mention they are essential components in the production of plastic and steel which pervade our day-to-day lives!



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From industrial emissions to the burning of waste, and from vehicle exhaust to construction activity, fossil fuel is the prime cause of pollution. A recent survey by Harvard School states that 30% of fatalities in India are due to air pollution caused by fossil fuels. These findings have been published in 'Environmental Research' in February 2021. While 20% of the world's casualties are directly or indirectly caused by pollutants generated by the use of fossil fuels, we are frighteningly dependent on them as our source of fuel. In fact, fossil fuels fulfill 80% of the world's total energy requirement, not

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The combustion of fossil fuels emits carbon into the air. According to an inter-governmental report on global warming, an average of 89% of the world's carbon emissions comes from fossil fuels and industry alone. On average, 1/3rd of the total carbon emissions in the world are from the combustion of fossil oils. Coal emits even more carbon than fossil fuels while natural gas emits relatively lesser amounts of carbon. The committee says that in order to maintain the level of global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius just above the pre-industrial era, carbon emissions from fossil fuels should be reduced by almost half in the coming 11 years, i.e. 2030. For this, fossil fuel usage should also be brought down to about half, which is clearly a daunting task before policymakers. OPEN APP

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Growing population, accelerated industrial and infrastructure development are the causes for increased demand for energy. Electricity and fuel are two forms of energy that are crucial to any nation's growth. But as a country that is heavily dependent on energy imports, it is not feasible for India to fulfill the unbridled demand for energy-using captive resources. India accounts for 18% of the world's population. But our natural gas and oil reserves are a minuscule 0.6 and 0.4% respectively out of the total world reserves.

 Dr. Pramod Chaudhari

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Besides the resultant stress on our economy, fulfillment of the aspirations of common citizens is also a challenge. Arbitrary decisions of oil-producing countries, lack of transparency in price determination of natural gases, and dependency on imports are serious obstacles in the way of 'Energy Security. Add to it the unrest among oil-rich countries that have agreed to cooperate with India, and we have a grave situation before us. The US-Iran conflict is one such example.

But, India's predicament stems from the increasing demand for energy even when ^{OPEN APP} are many challenges on the supply side. That is the reason; the only way out of it is to find new sources of supply. In 2018, the Government of India announced the National Biofuel policy and in 2019 expressed deep faith in biofuels as the panacea to India's energy problem. In India, the amount of ethanol blending in petrol was then 2% and that of biodiesel in diesel was just 0.1%. The government announced that this amount would be upgraded to 20% and 5% respectively by 2030. However, in order to accelerate the process, this goal has been recently advanced to the year 2025.

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The use of biofuels can help us reach the much-desired self-sufficiency in energy. Fuels developed from biomass for road, water, and air transport, will help our nation become self-sufficient in energy resources. Not just that, it will also create a robust rural economy which in turn will help in overall economic development.

Technology for food crops-based ethanol production is available and widely used the world over, especially in Brazil and the United States of America for more than four decades now. Sugar-based ethanol production is going on in India with home-grown technology in India also. But the food versus fuel debate triggered further technological development and has opened a new frontier with the advent of 2nd generation technology it is now possible to produce ethanol from damaged or waste grains, and with other farm waste left over after harvests. This is a step closer to solving the issues of food conservation and fuel conservation, where the two complement each other.

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would thus not only drive machines and vehicles, but they would also drive a brand new rural economy towards prosperity.

This article has been authored by Dr. Pramod Chaudhari, Founder Chairman – Praj Industries Ltd.

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