



## **Solar and biofuel can prod us towards fossil-free future, says Prem Shankar Jha**

*Dr Chandan Mitra, MP, and Editor and MD, The Pioneer, urged for devotion of more funds by the government and private sector for research and innovation for institutions like TERI, which have been at the forefront of innovation in clean and green energy.*

**New Delhi, December 10, 2015:** At the 14th Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture to commemorate the Foundation Day of TERI, Mr Chandan Mitra, who presided over the Lecture said that climate change can be compared to the threat of terrorism, with no imminent solutions. He highlighted the recent Chennai disaster caused by extreme rainfall and a similar experience in Mumbai a few years ago. He said these are evident examples of climate change, along with other factors causing these incidents.

Indicating the critical times that we are in, he said that “drastic measures” need to be taken and the introduction of the new proposed policy of Delhi government of plying odd and even numbered cars on alternate days, is one such measure. The success of this measure is yet to be determined, but the necessity of dealing with climate change and pollution has “jolted us out of [our] cocoon of complacency”.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Mitra said that while climate change is a challenge it also provides an opportunity “to think innovatively”. Referring to the limited success of primitive solar cookers, and the much applauded Solar Alliance announced by Prime Minister Modi, he said that innovation will improve itself but an initiation of that process is critical at this juncture.

Mr Prem Shankar Jha, Senior Journalist & Author, the Guest Speaker at the Lecture said that Paris talks may fail, as despite the current targets set by developing countries, absolute emissions will continue to rise at an unprecedented rate.

However, taking forward Dr Mitra’s point on opportunity and innovation, Mr Jha said that contrary to the popular belief that fossil fuel is indispensable, there are alternative

clean, low-cost technologies available that can help the world give up fossil fuels. Mr Jha was delivering a lecture on “Climate Change is an Opportunity and not a Threat”.

He said: “Two of these technologies for harnessing solar power and biomass have over the last 40 years matured to a point where they can reliably produce both electricity and transport fuels, cheaply enough to compete with existing sources and therefore to be profitable to private investors”. These are concentrated solar thermal energy and transport fuels by gasifying biomass, not fermenting biomass.

He cited several instances in India where this is attainable – the solar reserve in Rajasthan earmarked by the State Government that has a 350,000 MW of generating capacity. “This is double the present coal-fired capacity of the nation. If the people who live on this barren land today are awarded a fraction of one percent of its annual revenues they will become the richest people in the country.”

Talking about the feasibility of biomass in transport fuels, he said that there are even greater benefits of using this technology. It will support the Government’s “Swachh Bharat Abhiyan” as garbage, which is the primary input required for this kind of technology, will immediately assume great importance and will disappear off the dumping grounds. Citing another example, he said “A second immediately available source of biomass is bagasse and sugar cane waste is from the sugar industry, which is in crisis. “It can meet 2.5 times of the total transport fuel consumption requirements of India.”

“We are great at imitating, but poor at innovating,” said Dr Mitra. While he emphasised that “inculcating scientific temper” by the government is essential at this juncture, Mr Jha said that “we do not even have the system to identify the technology available abroad. We must be tech-savvy. The difference today, between a nation that fails and the nation that rises to greatness, is going to be in technology”.

He proposed that governments in India should take the pioneer’s risk, which is typically taken by venture capitalists in the West.

On the occasion, TERI’s Director General, Dr. R. K Pachauri, said: “Mr Darbari Seth’s legacy inspires all staff at TERI at every stage of our exciting journey. There is no more compelling an example for TERIers to draw encouragement from than the ideals, accomplishments and actions of our illustrious founder. On every Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture we not only benefit from the knowledge and wisdom imparted in this session, but also revive and strengthen the pride and confidence that we derive from Mr Seth’s life. His life was truly his message.”

The event also marked the felicitation of 22 employees who had completed 20 years of service at TERI. The event also marked the announcement of the ‘Roll of Honour’ for 21 research professionals for exemplary contribution to the organization in their respective fields.

## **ABOUT TERI**

The Energy and Resources Institute is an independent, not-for-profit research institute focused on energy, environment, and sustainable development and devoted to efficient and sustainable use of natural resources. Since its inception in 1974, TERI has emerged as an institution of excellence for its path-breaking research, and is a global brand widely respected by political leaders, policy makers, corporate entities as well as the civil society at large.

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