

Energy

Stone-age ancestors of present man, acquired the skill to make a spark, and get fire by hitting two stones together. These hunter-gatherers experienced natural forest fires, and partially burnt animal carcasses found after such fires lead to the man's habit of eating "roasted, smoked or dried meat". This was how man acquired the practice of cooking and storing foods, and they had to get the fire from a tiny spark when they need it. This was the first energy conversion done by man, and fuel used to keep the fire was wood or dried plant materials that was abundantly available. When man started to migrate all over the earth, those who have settled in temperate areas faced with the scarcity of fuel-wood, not only for cooking, but also to keep them warm during the winter periods. This could have been the first fuel crisis faced by man. Man developed the ability for planning for the future from very ancient times through surviving the annual extremely cold seasons.

During the evolution, man learnt to use plant and animal oils, fossil fuels such as coal, lignite, natural gas, and petroleum liquids as natural fuels, some countries became economically rich because they have these natural resources, while they know how to manage these natural resources for their benefit.

Many countries like Sri Lanka do not have known fossil fuel resources, and they import these fossil fuels by spending a large sum of money continuously. Rural Sri Lankans use wood as the main fuel, but it has become restricted due to its uncontrolled use and other environmental concerns. Although, Sri Lanka is faced with the fossil fuel crisis, we have most valuable free energy from sunlight, but we are not capable of using it for our energy requirements.

Modern world economies are dependant on petroleum and nuclear fuel energy sources for industry and day-to-day household activities. Powerful countries use fossil fuels as a powerful weapon to extract money from other countries while indirectly controlling those countries for their benefit. Meanwhile, the natural fossil fuel sources are getting depleted very fast as these are non-renewable. However, scientists all over the world are trying hard to develop methods to utilize renewable energy sources such as wind-power, solar-power, sea wave-power and microbial energy conversions etc. as alternatives to fossil fuels. Sri Lanka has a very great potential to develop dendro-power because sunlight and rainwater is available all the year round to grow wood-fuel trees. The origin of fossil fuels was photosynthetic energy conversion, and dendro-power source is also from the same basic energy conversion done in nature. Accordingly, Sri Lanka has declared *Glyricidia* as its fourth commercial crop cultivation. Dendro-power programme have environment protective and nature friendly added advantages.

Sri Lanka has to seriously think about our current situation with respect to the current fuel crisis that drains foreign exchange of the country. This issue of Vidurava explores the current status of Sri Lanka's energy requirements and future needs, assuming that we are in the path of development.

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