



ENERGY JUSTICE – INTEGRAL TO THE ENERGY VISION OF INDIA

By H.E. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan,
Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, India

Prime Minister of India H.E. Narendra Modi while inaugurating Petrotech 2019 in New Delhi earlier this year stated, “*energy justice is also a key objective for me, and a top priority for India*”.

It is, indeed, a pleasant coincidence that the underlying theme of the 8th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable (AMER) to be held on 10 September, 2019 emphasises the need to reorient energy security in the age of change with emphasis on advancing inclusive access to secure, affordable and sustainable energy services keeping in view the commitments of countries to climate change.

The Energy sector is, undoubtedly, a pivot and key driver of socio-economic growth. Suitably priced, stable and sustainable energy supply is essential for the rapid growth of the economy. It also helps the poor and the deprived sections of society partake of economic benefits.

Towards our collective commitment to deliver energy to our people, we need to work towards the early realisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7, which requires all member states of the UN to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. It is also recognised that fulfilling SDG 7 is a requirement to fulfil all other SDGs in an equitable and timely manner.

Asia is emerging as the major energy consumption centre globally as the shift from West to East is becoming a reality. We are also entering an era of greater energy availability. Paradoxically, over a billion people across the globe, including in Asia, still do not have access to energy sources. This calls for concerted efforts at the national level as well as at the regional and multilateral level.

India recently became the sixth largest economy in the world. By 2030, India could be the second-largest world economy. We are also the third-largest energy consumer in the world, with demand growing at about five per cent annually.

The Energy Vision of India, as enunciated by Prime Minister Modi in 2016, is based on four pillars i.e. energy access, energy efficiency, energy sustainability and energy security. As part of our integrated approach towards energy planning during the last five years, India is placing enormous emphasis on energy access with energy justice as a key objective in itself. A number of path-breaking policies and initiatives have been taken to realise energy justice for over 1.3 billion people in the country.

LPG connections have been given in India to over eighty (80) million households in just under four years under the Ujjwala Scheme. A ‘*Blue Flame Revolution*’ is underway. LPG coverage has reached more than ninety per cent from

fifty-five per cent five years ago. Access to clean cooking fuel provides major benefits, especially to women and children at risk of exposure to smoke pollution.

India is attaining universal electrification with electricity reaching all our rural areas. This year, India aims to achieve hundred per cent electrification of households in India, through a targeted programme called SAUBHAGYA. India’s World Bank *Ease of Getting Electricity* ranking, improved from 111 in 2014 to 29 in 2018. As part of a national drive under UJALA scheme, LED bulbs have been distributed across the country resulting in an annual saving of nearly US\$2.5 billion.

Clean transportation is another area of high priority in India. We are jumping directly from BS-VI to BS-VI fuel by April 2020. This is the equivalent of EURO-VI.

Recent years have seen rapid growth in installed solar generating capacity along with significant improvements in technology, price and performance. Moreover, creative business models have spurred investment in this sector.

The *International Solar Alliance* (ISA), jointly launched by India and France, is adding a new dynamism to energy diplomacy in the 21st century. India has more than doubled the renewable power installed in the country to 78 GW in the last 5 years, with a major share of that in solar energy.

India’s achievements, such as 100 per cent electrification and increased LPG coverage, have become possible through people’s involvement. Prime Minister Modi has underlined that energy justice can be done only when people believe in their collective power. Government is only an enabler in converting that belief into a reality.

India has taken a major initiative towards a gas-based economy, by constructing over 16,000 km of gas pipeline with an additional 11,000 km under construction. With the tenth bid round for *City Gas Distribution* completed, it will cover over 400 districts and extend coverage to 70 per cent of our population. India seeks to intensify its commitment to energy justice through the wider supply of environmentally-compatible energy sources to its vast population. We have to collectively achieve the targets set at COP-21 in Paris. India has made rapid strides in meeting its commitment and is on its way to achieve the targets.

There is an increasing need to move towards responsible pricing, which balances the interests of both the producer and consumer. In addition, there is a need to move towards transparent and flexible markets for both oil and gas. All these would invariably help achieve energy justice globally.

In this context, the International Energy Forum (IEF) has a seminal role in promoting energy justice. ■