Think Globally, Act Locally

"*We are like tenant farmers chopping down the fences around our house for fuel when we should be using nature's inexhaustible sources of energy -- sun, wind and tide. I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that.*" [2]

Thomas Alva Edison

Apparently, we have paid little attention to Edison's advice -- rather, warning, and many other warnings over the years. Instead, we continued to rely more and more on the fossil-nuclear energy path of oil, coal, natural gas, and uranium to fuel the economy. But these resources are limited.

All the reserves of oil, natural gas and uranium are estimated to be exhausted by 2050, and coal by 2250.[3] These resources took millions of years to accumulate. Of course, we can go on arguing about the exact number of years before the world runs out of oil, continue to dig for additional reserves with more efficient and innovative extracting tools, and entrench ourselves in the nonrenewable path even more by substituting one nonrenewable fuel for another.

But, at best, all this amounts to is choosing one disaster over another and keeping the wolf away from the door for a bit longer. And the wolf is, all-in-one-body: sky-rocketing fuel prices, threatened national security, terrorism, pollution, climate change, acid rain, nuclear contamination and energy wars.

The solution requires us to be awakened to the simple truth -- and the holistic, perennial wisdom -- that the essential condition of sustainability lies in our ability to live harmoniously within the limits and renewability of our natural resources. The age of unlimited, exploitative, and imbalanced industrial growth at any cost is over. And the truth should invoke within us an urgent need for a transition -- from an obsolete, destructive, and unsustainable non-renewable energy path to a sustainable path of innovation, renewable energy and peace.

Is such a transition possible? The answer is yes, but only under certain conditions. Such a transition is possible only through a worldwide moratorium on further entrenchment into the fossil-nuclear path while, through conservation and efficiency, utilising these resources only as transitional fuels toward a sustainable renewable energy path.

Undoubtedly, the transition will face short-term challenges and risks, but these pale in comparison to a suicidal entrenchment into the dead-end non-renewable energy path -- and that path is inevitable if the risk is not taken. We must set a clear goal and an uncompromising and sustained action-oriented policy for transition. Fortunately, the enormous potential of renewable energy technologies still offers us that choice, but only if we act -- now!



SHAFIQ ISLAM/DRIKNEWS

The Renewable Choices

"*Nuclear power and fossil fuels are the choices of the past. Renewable energy is the choice of the future that is here today.*"

Hermann Scheer[4]

The sun sends an immense amount of energy to Earth -- freely -- and it will continue to do so for its entire life, estimated to be between five