lights for widespread and cost-effective distribution are on the horizon.

Taking another major step, Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy Ltd has announced setting up the first solar panel assembling plant in Bangladesh within the next few years. Telephone Shilpo Sangstha and Cable Shilpo Sangstha, both under Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, too, have announced taking up some mega projects which include production of solar panels.

Demonstrating the government's commitment to encourage the use of renewable energy, a 21.6 kilowatts peak capacity PV system was installed at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in November, 2009. It is the country's single largest solar system so far.

According to Power Development Board (PDB) officials, this initiative is "only the beginning for a quick expansion of renewable energy technology to other government and semi-government offices."[19]

These are highly commendable steps. However, to make a transition to a renewable energy path, which implies a fundamental reversal of the trend towards the non-renewable energy path, requires more.

Based on the common-sense understanding and the perennial wisdom that long-term sustainability lies fundamentally in our ability to live harmoniously within the limits and renewability of our natural resources, a comprehensive national policy -- with a Policy-Programs-Practice continuum (PPP) -- must be conceived and implemented. Applicable to every country in the world, including Bangladesh, and conjoining "top down" and "bottom up" approaches, it will require the following:

One, maximising conservation and efficiency in the use of non-renewables, while utilising them only as transitional resources; two, transparent, equitable, and socially and environmentally responsible public-private partnerships to maximise efficiency and expediency; three, a moratorium on further entrenchment into the non-renewable path, combined with disincentives such as a reduction of subsidies for nonrenewables and a progressive carbon tax and cap on carbon production; four, proactive and massive utilisation, investment and development of appropriate renewable options; five, a combined offering of public education, technical support, a legal framework and financial incentives to renewable energy users and producers; and six, collaboration between experts and stakeholders in both nonrenewable and renewable energy fields to devise an integrated and comprehensive public policy -- holistically assessing both the nonrenewable and renewable options, from both global and local perspectives -- to lead the transition through action (programs into practice).

The multi-faceted energy crisis will have to be understood and addressed from multiple perspectives and skills. Bridges have to be built between policy makers and practitioners, economists and environmentalists, academics and field workers, specialists and generalists, educators and activists, idealists and realists, industrialists and ecologists, program planners and implementers, problem researchers and problem solvers. Some bridges exist, but more as exceptions. We must engage in dialogue and collaborate -- within the country and with the world -- in a shared vision and action. It's good for Bangladesh, and it's good for the world.

Transition to a renewable energy path may seem like a daunting -- even revolutionary -- task. But insisting on the nonrenewable energy path that has led Bangladesh -- and the world -- to the crisis we are in is not a solution; it is suicidal. On the other hand, the revolutionary scope of renewable energy offers us another choice, a hope, a one-time opportunity to pave a path towards a solution.

Bangladesh is capable of achieving the "impossible." Against all odds and formidable opposition, the Liberation War proved it. An essential meaning and realisation of that blood-drenched liberation is now to be found in Bangladesh's claim, commitment and achievement of her energy independence and sustainability. The task amounts to nothing less than a national task with the utmost urgency -- and a call to action -- now!

Begum Rokeya -- A Global Visionary of Renewable Energy

> *The kitchen was situated in a beautiful vegetable garden. Every creeper, every tomato plant was itself an ornament. I found no smoke, nor any chimney either, in the kitchen -- it was clean and bright; the windows were decorated with flower garlands. There was no sign of coal or fire.*
> *"How do you cook?" I asked.*
> *"With solar heat," she said, at the same time showing me the pipe, through which passed the concentrated sunlight and heat. And she cooked something then and there to show me the process.*[20]

This quotation is from "Sultana's Dream," a short story by Begum Rokeya (1880-1932), a pioneer of women's education and gender equality, writer and social reformer, who was born in Pairabond in Rangpur (now in Bangladesh) and died in Calcutta (now Kolkata).