

India keen to ensure solar energy tops global political and economic agenda: ISA DG

ISA aiming to channel USD one trillion into solar energy sector by 2030 across the world, facilitate universal energy access and enable green economic recovery

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India is keen to ensure that solar energy tops the political and economic agenda across all countries through the efforts of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in greater capacity building programmes, reduction of per unit price and creation of markets, according to Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, ISA. In this regard, the ISA, launched by India and France, is aiming to channel USD one trillion in the solar energy sector by 2030 across the world, facilitate universal energy access as well as enable green economic recovery of growth along with climate change mitigation and adaptation, he said.

Dr Mathur was speaking at a webinar on ‘Tapping Solar Energy: Sharing India's Experience and Forging Partnership with Asia, Pacific Island Countries’ organised by RIS and Global Development Centre (GDC).

Mr Chandra Kishore Mishra, Former Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India who chaired the panel discussion said it is important for countries to not only reduce carbon emissions but also increase the carbon sink to ensure more carbon dioxide absorption than releases. He said that this effort should be fortified by reducing the dependence on fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy. He emphasized that the fall in renewable energy costs will also increase its adoption and usage. The ISA wanted a global collective effort help each other to tap solar energy through transfer of technology and exchange of best practices including on energy and resource efficiency, he said. This needs to be done in a manner without any conflict between development and environment, he said, adding that ‘responsible development’ and ‘sustainable consumption’ are the keys in this regard.

Dr Mathur explained that the foray into energy efficient lighting using LED lights through a multi-pronged strategy of aggregating demand, repeated bulk procurement and asking the customer to pay in instalments (to make sure that the monthly payment was less than the benefits), has been successful as the price of LED bulbs has dropped now by almost a tenth from around Rs 300 in January 2014. However, he said expensive technologies can pose a huge challenge to developing countries, he added.

Ambassador Amar Sinha, Chairman, Advisory Committee, GDC and Distinguished Fellow, RIS, said India has been proactive in its efforts to go green, rely on solar energy and push the ‘One Sun, One World, One Grid’ initiative. He amplified that the most crucial aspect is the interconnected problems of climate change, global warming and the rising sea levels poses existential threat to the mankind. The dangers of climate change have also found reflection in the statement of the recent G7 summit.

Dr Christopher Vehe, Permanent Secretary of the Solomon Islands – Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification, spoke about the need for strengthening capacity building and skill through effective management of human and financial resources. He mentioned about the limited electrification in most of low-income households of the Pacific Island

Countries due to higher tariffs. He emphasised the need for renewable energy to address climate change issues, energy security and achieve tariff reduction. Furthermore, he pointed out on the requirement of strong institutional set up as well as the crucial need of having a legal and regulatory framework in place for adjudicating effective policies and incentives as PICs are highest per capita users of the solar grids in the world.

Ms Sadhana Relia, GDC Fellow, gave vote of thanks and spoke on the need for tangible partnerships and future collaborations with PICs as collective global south.

The webinar saw a discussion on stimulating renewable energy deployment across the Pacific Island Countries, especially since the islands are endowed with natural resources like sunlight and wind. The challenges faced by the islands include lack of private sector investment, poor capacity to operate and maintain renewable energy systems, particularly for off-grid installations on remote islands, as well as the difficulties in grid integration. There were also discussions on the scope of India's support and partnerships in solar energy demand assessment plan development, creation of governmental enterprise, capacity building of personnel and help in accessing global finance to build solar power for Pacific Island Countries. (ENDS).

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