



MESSAGE

Energy security has become a critical national concern as India's energy needs are growing rapidly with rising income levels and burgeoning population. Most of the energy requirements are currently satisfied by fossil fuels- coal, petroleum based products and natural gas. Our dependence on oil imports has increased, which is 72% of our total domestic consumptions and costing almost 10% of the GDP of India. In this background, there are no two opinions that Bio fuels are going to play an extremely important role in meeting India's energy needs. Bio fuels offer a number of environmental, social and economical advantages & opportunities to our country e.g. lower emissions of harmful pollutants & green house gases, increased energy security specially for rural areas, increased employments and farm incomes, decreased dependence on oil imports and good fuel properties for vehicles.

In 2003, Government of India embarked an ambitious National Bio diesel mission with the objective of meeting 20% of country's diesel requirements through bio diesel by 2011-12. The subject being inter-disciplinary & inter-ministerial in nature, the Government has earmarked specific responsibilities to the selected Ministries under Allocation of Business Rules. MNRE has been identified as Nodal Ministry for coordination and preparation of National Policy on Bio Fuels. My Ministry, after an extensive process of consultation, has prepared a draft policy with a road -map for accelerated development of bio fuels in the country. The National policy would also address issues of R&D in appropriate technologies for cultivation & processing of various bio fuels, fiscal and financial supports to biodiesel industry, investment requirements and regulatory aspects. Though the National Policy is concerned with bio fuels in general, the focus remains the same. Since the demand for edible vegetable oil exceeds supply, the Government decided to prefer the use of non edible oils mainly from *Jatropha curcas* oilseeds as bio diesel feedstock. Extensive research has shown that *Jatropha curcas* offers a number of advantages for Indian conditions: it requires low water and fertilizers for cultivation, not grazed by cattle or sheep, pest resistant, easy for propagation, high seed yield and high protein manure. It can be grown in areas of very low rainfall (upto 200 mm per year) on low fertility, marginal, degraded, fallow and waste lands. Canals, roadsides, both sides of railway tracks, borders of farmers' fields as fence/hedges in arid areas and even in alkaline soils

The National Bio diesel Mission is under implementation in 2 stages, would enter its second phase from next year. In this phase, focus is going to be on Commercialization of bio diesel technologies. However, I feel that not many commercial bio-diesel plants have yet been installed in India. The lack of assured supplies of *Jatropha* feed stock for oils has skewed efforts by the private sector to set up bio-diesel plants in India. The main problem in getting the bio-diesel plants and production programme rolling has been the difficulty in initiating the large scale cultivation of

*Jatropha* because farmers still do not consider *Jatropha* cultivation remunerative enough. Many types of doubts about the pricing remains in the minds of cultivators. For that a Mission mode programme of propogation of *Jatropha* cultivation needs to be taken up.

I am fully aware that the bio-diesel industry is at the incubation stage but the enthusiasm of entrepreneurs in this field assures me that appropriate infrastructure for the industry would soon be in place which would steer the bio-diesel industry on rapid growth track. The initiatives taken by the Bio-diesel Association of India to convene a convention is therefore timely. I am sure that various issues relating to Bio diesel production, processing, pricing and marketing would be discussed in the convention and some concrete recommendations would be formulated for taking appropriate action at the level of government. I extend my best wishes to the organizers. May this first annual convention of Bio diesel Association of India be a great success.

(VILAS MUTTEMWAR)