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Speaking at the session, "Biofuels in Road Transport" at the Bio-Fuels Roundtable-2015, organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry in New Delhi recently, Mr Nitin Gadkari, minister of road, transport and highways and shipping, said, The transport ministry will make efforts to bring in biofuels including ethanol, biodiesel and bio-CNG for public transport in Delhi to reduce carbon emissions which have an adverse impact on climate change. He said, "Bio-fuels can be socio-economic change agents as they would address crucial issues of farmer suicides, agri surpluses in the sugar, wheat and rice industries and fuel economy. Higher use of biofuels will directly help reduce petrol and diesel imports which are at about Rs 6 lakh crores."

Mentioning another technological innovation in the area of biogas, he said, "In Stockholm, Sweden, methane is being taken from sewage water to make bio-cng which is being used to run buses. We are also forming a joint venture company to make biogas from sewage water and run buses on bio-cng."

Highlighting a pioneering initiative, he said, "The Haldia port started manufacturing 3 lakh litres per day of biodiesel which was being used in trucks and railway engines. It is the first green port in India where we will use only biodiesel."

Stressing on the need to focus on technological innovations, Dr RenuSwarup, senior adviser, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India said, "R&D has been given a special place in the biofuels policy. If a country like India, with the largest diversity and quantity of biomass, cannot have sufficient ethanol to meet its targets, there is cause for concern. The answer lies in new technologies and while there are technologies ready, the challenge lies in the feedstock options. We need to experiment our technologies on a variety of feedstock. Commercial plants need to be set up with multi feedstock options." Talking about feedstock options she further added, "We need to look at algae as feedstock. India has a distinct advantage as far as algae is considered as we have the largest biodiversity strains available for algae, nearly 2,000 strains have been collected and are being given to the industry for testing." She also mentioned that India is on the track to develop a roadmap for synthetic biology.

Stressing on the importance of the use of alternate fuels in transport, Dr PS Anand Rao, executive director, Association of State Road, Transport Undertakings (ASRTU) in his address on Promoting Low-Carbon RoadTransport in India said, "The best tool to fight vehicular pollution is ethanol as it contains 35 percent oxygen and reduces particulate and Co2 emissions. Ethanol can reduce emissions by as much as 75 percent and can also result in savings in fuel cost of $149.2 billion."

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Discussing the impact of vehicular emissions on the key issue of climate change, Mr VK Srivastava, additional director, PCRA, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said, "Road transport is the biggest GHG producing segment accounting for about 64 percent of the diesel consumption in India. A 50 percent cut in GHG emissions/mile is feasible by 2030 from conventional technologies and biofuels."

Setting the context Dr AK Dhussa, former adviser, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, Government of India said, "There is a large potential for bioenergy in general. 36,000 MW generation possibility and 107 million tonnes of biofuels which is enough to replace about 80 percent of product consumption for transportation. Benefits of Rs 2 crores accrue for every 3,000 tonnes of biofuels used. Recently in a key policy decision, bio-CNG has also been approved as a transport fuel." He further added that to ensure adequate availability of ethanol, support is required for pre-commercial projects based on indigenous technologies for ethanol production.

Mr Pramod Chaudhari, chairman, CII national committee for bionergy and chairman, Praj Industries in his welcome address said, "The time has come for bio-based economy. Most important is the need for flexibility of feedstock, ethanol can be made from a variety of feedstock-sugarcane, sweet sorghum, etc. A consistent policy and a roadmap for promoting biofuelscan give an impetus for taking biofuels to the next level. A bio-Energy Mission or a Task Force is required to take the momentum forward in an organized manner."

Mr GS Krishnan, regional president, Novozymes South Asia in his concluding remarks said, "The mandate for ethanol blending in India has to be increased immediately and a roadmap to achieve the 20 percent level in the next 3-5 years has to be formulated." He further said, "The need for supporting 2 G ethanol production is important."
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