



Solar Energy Conclave 2010

Inaugural Address by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

"I am very happy to be here today to launch the highly innovative Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission under the brand name "Solar India". This National Solar Mission has the pride of place in India's National Action Plan on Climate Change. Its success has the potential of transforming India's energy prospects, and contributing also to national as well as global efforts to combat climate change. This Mission is one of the major priorities of the second term of our government and I congratulate Dr. Abdullah and my other colleagues particularly Shri Shyam Saran, for the work they have done in bringing this to fruition.

Increased use of solar energy is a central component of our strategy to bring about a strategic shift from our current reliance on fossil fuels to a pattern of sustainable growth based on renewable and clean sources of energy. I sincerely hope that this solar Mission will also establish India as a global leader in solar energy, not just in terms of solar power generation but also in solar manufacturing and generation of this technology.

The importance of this Mission is not just limited to providing large-scale grid connected power. It has the potential to provide significant multipliers in our efforts for transformation of India's rural economy. Already, in its decentralized and distributed applications, solar energy is beginning to light the lives of tens of millions of India's energy-poor citizens. The rapid spread of solar lighting systems, solar water pumps and other solar power-based rural applications can change the face of India's rural economy. We intend to significantly expand such applications through this Mission. As a result, the movement for decentralized and disbursed industrialization will acquire an added momentum, a momentum which has not been seen before.

The target of 20,000 MW of solar generating capacity by the end of the 13th Five Year Plan is no doubt an ambitious target. But I do sincerely believe that the target is doable and that we should work single-mindedly to achieve it as a priority national endeavour.

The carefully crafted regulatory and incentive framework that has been unveiled today has several innovative features. We expect that it will lead to a rapid scale up of capacity. This will encourage technological innovation and generate economies of scale, thereby leading to a steady lowering of costs. Once parity with conventional power tariff is achieved, there will be no technological or economic constraint to the rapid and large-scale expansion of solar power thereafter.

Clearly, technological innovation will be a key factor in ensuring the success of this Mission. We will need to find ways of reducing the space intensity of current solar applications, including through the use of nano-technology. Cost-effective and convenient storage of solar energy beyond daylight hours will be critical to its emergence as a mainstream source of power. In the meantime, we may need to explore hybrid solutions, combining solar power generation with gas, biomass or even coal-based power.

It was the vision of Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that enabled India to create world-class scientific and technological capacities in the field of atomic energy and space sectors. It is these strengths in science and technology that eventually have created the Information Technology revolution in India and made it a global power. I am convinced that solar energy can also be the next scientific and technological frontier in India after Atomic Energy, Space and Information Technology.

There exists in our country immense talent and research capabilities already engaged in the solar energy field both in the private and public sectors. It is clear that a large number of Ministries and authorities will have to work in tandem if we are to make a success of this important Mission. The Solar Mission should evolve as a single national platform for coordination among our scientific, industrial and regulatory establishments in a synergetic manner.

I am happy that the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has been associated with this event. The role of industry in this Mission's success will be critical. Eventually, if the ambitious roll out of the Mission is to become a living reality, we will have to create many 'Solar Valleys' on the lines of the Silicon Valleys that are spurring our IT industry across the four corners of our country. These valleys will become hubs for solar science, solar engineering and solar research, fabrication and manufacturing. I urge Indian industry to see the National Solar Mission as the huge business opportunity that it is going to be.

The Sun has long been recognized as a primal source of all energy on earth. In an ancient civilization like India, the Sun has been worshipped as the God who bestows life and sustains it. The bounty of the Sun is truly inexhaustible, renewable and free. It is to this source of energy that humankind must turn to meet the twin challenge of energy security and climate change.

With these words, I wish the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission every success."