

Solar man's campaign for energy security

Solanki's 'Energy Swaraj Yatra' aims at driving 100% adoption of solar energy

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A solar bus that is pivoting a nation-wide campaign to gain energy security by tapping sunlight, rolled into Pondicherry University to a rousing reception recently.

The solar bus symbolises the 'Energy Swaraj Yatra', a vehicular renewable energy campaign led by Chetan Singh Solanki, a professor at IIT Bombay, who goes by the epithet 'Solar Man of India'.

The Energy Swaraj Yatra led by Mr. Solanki was given a reception by the team from the Department of Green Energy Technology (DGET), Madanjeet School of Green Energy Technologies at the Pondicherry University as part of promoting the vision to promote energy harvesting, conservation and utilisation.

In the wake of serious and catastrophic climate change, the yatra is designed with the purpose to create a public movement towards 100% adoption of solar energy.

The vehicle had reached the campus after travelling for 500 days on road. Mr. Solanki's yatra bus, a sort of home on wheels, is equipped with 3.2 kW solar



Warm welcome: Pondicherry University Vice-Chancellor Gurmeet Singh receiving the solar bus. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

panels and 6kWh of battery storage, and a 3 kVa inverter. It also houses facilities such as lights, cooler, stove and other appliances that run entirely on solar energy.

The vehicle, which set out from Mumbai in 2020, will be on the road for 11 years until 2030 to drive the campaign across the country.

During his visit to Pondicherry University, Mr. Solanki inaugurated a 'Meet the Giants' lecture series, hosted by the DGET.

In his lecture titled "Energy, Climate change and I", Mr. Solanki noted that there was an imperative for change in energy usage and consumption pattern in the current energy scenario. The

reality is that 33 million kg of CO₂ is emitted per second and it keeps on increasing, he said.

'Switch to solar'

He advised the audience to switch to solar energy instead of depending on conventional energy resources. After 1950, global energy use has grown exponentially and 80-85% of it was contributed by fossil fuels. In fact, the planet is warmer by 1.1 degrees Celsius, compared to the pre-industrial era, calling for drastic measures to limit warming to, ideally, 1.5 degree Celsius. "Once this threshold is crossed, the changes will be irreversible," he added.

Mr. Solanki advocated a three-step approach for switching fully to solar energy - "avoid, minimise, generate". This involved avoiding use of energy as much as possible even if it is solar energy, or at least minimising its use and generating energy locally.

Mr. Solanki pointed out that energy 'swaraj' was about distributed production. There are two important 'laws' that needed careful study.

In an ecosystem of finite resources, there could only be finite consumption. And, two, in an ecosystem of finite resources, there would have to be distributed production.

Earlier, Pondicherry University Vice-Chancellor Gurmeet Singh inaugurated the session and also felicitated Mr. Solanki. P. Elumalai, head of department and R. Prasanth, programme coordinator also spoke.

According to the University, Mr. Solanki is undertaking his mission while on unpaid leave from IIT Bombay. He is the brand ambassador of solar energy for the Madhya Pradesh Government and the founder of the Energy Swaraj Foundation.