

High prices of energy: impact

Pakistan has only 4.8 per cent forest covered area which is declining due to household use of higher population growth rate, development needs and timber mafia's adverse activities. Pakistan has total 87.8 million hectare land, a tangible part of which is lying vacant. If plantation at this vacant

coal. In some parts, it is collected free of cost but in most situations, it is purchased. The fuelwood business generates about 20 times more local employment than energy from oil products (per unit of energy), according to an RWEDP report.

The government has formulated national Forest Policy 2001 to

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private nurseries. These measures would help in conserving biomass and lead to certain other externalities such as stopping land sliding, saving more biodiversity and reduce import bill of kerosene.

Renewable sources of energy can play positive role in the country's overall development and mitigating economic discrepancies. Solar cooker, solar gaezer, concentrator, dryer and reflectors are used, though in limited numbers. Different countries are improving solar pipes in their laboratories. Local material is being developed to further decrease cost of photovoltaic cells in order to bring technology for the common man's use that may take sometime. These cells can be disseminated in the areas where it is difficult to extend national power network due to physical infrastructure and high cost. The household, communication, health, irrigation and public health engineering for potable water can benefit from this technology.

Wind power is one of the fastest growing energy in several developed countries. Windmills can play a role in our coastal areas. Pakistan has not yet benefited from this technology but the process has been started. New Zealand will assist a wind power perfect in Chaib Kalmalry village of Gowader at a cost of US\$ 67257. The Pakistan Defence Officers Housing Authority, Karachi, plans to install 30/40 MW capacity wind turbine farm. These are the two new items about windmills available to the author only in July 2001.

More than 5,000 family size biogas plants have been constructed country over. Pakistan has 23.3 million buffaloes, 22.4 million cattles

Table-7

Annual average retail prices of dried firewood (Rs/40 kg)

Year	Karachi	Quetta	Lahore	Rawalpindi	Peshawar
1970	5.36	--	5.62	5.66	4.65
1980	19.04	15.92	20.90	20.88	24.10
1990	60.00	54.00	45.00	65.00	50.00
1997	85.00	80.80	72.00	85.00	80.00
2000	100.00	97.00	85.00	95.00	95.00

(Source: Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar, 1995, and Market Survey)

land is conducted, it will not only supply fuelwood for domestic use and export but will keep the environment clean and also will be surplus for export. The deforestation in the country is very high. The always escalating prices of fuelwood in our agricultural country are revealed from the following table-7.

The charcoal, which is obtained by converting fuelwood and is used in several rural industries, like black smithy, tikka cooking, etc, its prices are also shooting up as shown in the following table-8.

The consumption of wood, charcoal and biomass fuels in Pakistan is increasing in absolute terms, even their share in overall energy consumption is decreasing. Both low and high-income groups use char-

replace 1894 AD Forest Policy, prepared by the British government and amended three times in the 1950s, 1998-99 and 1999-2001. The policy is expected to save natural resources of forests, pastures and biodiversity from ruthless depletion and will involve community and the stakeholder for initiating process for sustainable development of resources in the light of prevailing environmental and livelihood of the rural masses.

The government is encouraging fuelwood production through all available options of artificial regeneration, natural regeneration, direct seeding, cutting of trees and transfer them directly to planting sites and sale of saplings through nation building departments, NGOs and

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and 292.4 million poultry birds. A tangible quantity of gas can be produced from their waste through anaerobic digestion. The GoP, for the R&D and dissemination of renewable energy, recently established Pakistan Council of Renewable Energy Technology (PCRET) under the known expert

the 1019 Society & SP
funds for development projects is not justified. It will have negative effect on the country's overall economic situation because with the rising cost, a number of agricultural and industrial instalments would close which would reflect on trade activities.

The 12% to 18% increase in the natural gas tariff by September this

Table-8

Prices of charcoal at selected cities (Rs/40Kg)

Year	Karachi	Quetta	Lahore	Rawalpindi	Peshawar
1970	16.07	--	12.86	14.45	12.04
1980	54.61	37.33	49.90	58.65	66.72
1990	100.00	100.00	107.00	118.00	122.00
2000	135.00	150.00	140.00	150.00	160.00

(Source: Charcoal Dealers and Regional Wood Energy Development Programme (RWEDP), Bangkok, 1995)

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The higher import of energy, especially, oil and coal, is one of the major causes of rising trend in prices of power, which increases hardships of the masses for excessive payment. This phenomenon disturbs the social, economic and defence sectors and emerges as one of the highest causes of tension. The energy sector has been identified among the four major drives of growth, which are in doldrums.

The government may curtail energy prices within certain limits by increasing limits by increasing its cheap and sustainable supply. Levying Power Sector Development Surcharge (PSDS) ranging from Ps 25 to Ps 50 per unit in the consumer end electricity tariff for generating

year and 18% average increase after every six months for the next three years will disturb almost all sectoral activities. Similarly escalating oil prices after proper intervals are rising cost of living and are detrimental to the health of our economy. The government may also give more importance to fuelwood supply by conducting afforestation at vacant spaces. Certain forms of renewable energy, which the government is encouraging for application to achieve planned targets will, indeed, mitigate people hardship and pave the way for development.

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