

## Sri lanka energy independence

Sri Lanka stands at crucial crossroads. With an increasing reliance on imported fossil fuels, amidst global climate challenges and energy security concerns, the nation faces mounting economic and environmental pressures.

However, the island nation, blessed with abundant natural resources presents a unique opportunity to transition to a more sustainable energy future. The narrative surrounding renewable energy, is gaining traction, not only as a necessity but as a vision for a self-reliant and prosperous Sri Lanka.

In the past, Sri Lanka's energy infrastructure was predominantly renewable. In the mid-1980s, the country met approximately 80% of its energy requirements using domestic renewable resources, such as hydro and biomass. Only 20% of the energy, primarily for transportation and minor needs, was sourced from imported fossil fuels. It enabled Sri Lanka to be largely self-sufficient in energy production, relying on its own renewable resources for the bulk of its energy needs.

However, over the years, population growth, industrialisation, and increased energy demands have shifted this balance, with fossil fuels now accounting for over 51% of the country's energy mix, leading to a higher dependency creating economic and environmental challenges. The need to move away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy is not only a national priority but also a global imperative.

The recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka starkly highlighted the vulnerabilities of depending heavily on imported fossil fuels. Power cuts lasting up to 13 hours, fuel shortages and the inability to afford fossil fuel imports because of limited foreign exchange, not only disrupted daily life, but also demonstrated the critical need for energy independence.

It is clear that Sri Lanka cannot continue on this path. The country must shift towards harnessing its indigenous renewable resources, such as solar, wind and biomass, to meet its growing energy needs. While efforts are ongoing to explore possible petroleum reserves, the focus must remain on renewable energy, as this is the only viable and sustainable option moving forward.

Today, with Presidential elections imminent, the importance of renewable energy has gathered support across the political spectrum. This realisation has been acknowledged by all major political leaders – Ranil Wickremesinghe, Sajith Premadasa, and Anura Kumara Disسانayaake – have included strong commitments and renewable energy targets into their manifestos.

n Ranil Wickremesinghe aims to achieve 70% renewable energy by 2030, making Sri Lanka a Green Energy hub and exporting to neighbouring countries. The plan includes developing Trincomalee and Pooneryn as energy hubs, reducing energy costs, and implementing climate-friendly policies across key sectors.

n Sajith Premadasa's Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) emphasises climate action through a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) focused on renewable energy. According to the manifesto, the aim is to exceed the 70% renewable energy target by 2030, positioning Sri Lanka as a regional renewable energy powerhouse.

n Anura Kumara Disanayake's manifesto emphasises the potential of wind power, stating, the nation has the capability to harness over 40 gigawatts of wind power and sees renewable energy as a pathway to enter the global energy market.

Like many countries globally, Sri Lanka is on the cusp of an energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables, and the future of the nation's energy sector will largely depend on this shift.

Solar and Wind power potential

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