

(b) Non-Renewable Energy Sources

These are the fossil fuels like coal, petroleum, natural gas and nuclear fuels. These were formed by the decomposition of the remains of plants and animals buried under the earth millions of years ago. The fuels are very precious because they have taken such a long time to be formed and if we exhaust their reserves at such a fast rate as we have been doing, ever since we discovered them, then very soon we will lose these resources forever.

■ COAL

Coal was formed 255-350 million years ago in the hot, damp regions of the earth during the carboniferous age. The ancient plants along the banks of rivers and swamps were buried after death into the soil and due to the heat and pressure gradually got converted into peat and coal over millions of years of time. There are mainly three types of coal, namely anthracite (hard coal), bituminous (Soft coal) and lignite (brown coal). Anthracite coal has maximum carbon (90%) and calorific value (8700 kcal/kg.). Bituminous, lignite and peat contain 80, 70 and 60% carbon, respectively. Coal is the most abundant fossil fuel in the world. At the present rate of usage, the coal reserves are likely to last for about 200 years and if its use increases by 2% per year, then it will last for another 65 years.

India has about 5% of world's coal and Indian coal is not very good in terms of heat capacity. Major coal fields in India are Raniganj, Jharia, Bokaro, Singrauli, and Godavari valley. The coal states of India are Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra. Anthracite coal occurs only in J & K.

When coal is burnt it produces carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas responsible for causing enhanced global warming. Coal also contains impurities like sulphur and therefore as it burns the smoke contains toxic gases like oxides of sulphur and nitrogen.

■ PETROLEUM

It is the lifeline of global economy. There are 13 countries in the world having 67% of the petroleum reserves which together form the

OPEC (Organization of Petroleum exporting countries). About 1/4th of the oil reserves are in Saudi Arabia.

Petroleum is a cleaner fuel as compared to coal as it burns completely and leaves no residue. It is also easier to transport and use. That is the reason why petroleum is preferred amongst all the fossil fuels.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG): The main component of petroleum is butane, the other being propane and ethane. The petroleum gas is easily converted to liquid form under pressure as LPG. It is odourless, but the LPG in our domestic gas cylinders gives a foul smell. This is, in fact, due to ethyl mercaptan, a foul smelling gas, added to LPG so that any leakage of LPG from the cylinder can be detected instantaneously.

Oil fields in India are located at Digboi (Assam), Gujarat Plains and Bombay High, offshore areas in deltaic coasts of Gadavari, Krishna, Kaveri and Mahanadi.

■ NATURAL GAS

It is mainly composed of methane (95%) with small amounts of propane and ethane. It is a fossil fuel. Natural gas deposits mostly accompany oil deposits because it has been formed by decomposing remains of dead animals and plants buried under the earth. Natural gas is the cleanest fossil fuel. It can be easily transported through pipelines. It has a high calorific value of about 50KJ/G and burns without any smoke.

Natural gas is used as a domestic and industrial fuel. It is used as a fuel in thermal power plants for generating electricity. It is used as a source of hydrogen gas in fertilizer industry and as a source of carbon in tyre industry.

Compressed natural gas (CNG): It is being used as an alternative to petrol and diesel for transport of vehicles. Delhi has totally switched over to CNG where buses and auto rickshaws run on this new fuel. CNG use has greatly reduced vehicular pollution in the city.

Synthetic natural gas (SNG): It is a mixture of carbon monoxide and hydrogen. It is a connecting link between a fossil fuel and substituted natural gas. Low grade coal is initially transformed into synthetic gas by gasification followed by catalytic conversion to methane.