Media Release

Curtin University

13 April 2011
C063/11

Curtin sustainable energy research honoured

Curtin Department of Electrical Engineering academic, Professor Chem Nayar, was recently honoured at the Sustainable Energy Awards for his long-standing contribution and commitment to excellence in sustainability research.

Winning the Sustainable Energy Association's (SEA) 2011 Ambassador Award, Professor Nayar, educator of over 40 years and founder and Director of Regen Power, whose company also won the Product and Technology Award, said he was honoured to receive recognition for his work in electrical energy, which was an essential foundation of society.

“We require electricity for water and waste treatment, communications, agriculture, health care, lighting, television, computers and so much more. Unfortunately about two billion people in the world still have no access to electricity and are therefore struggling just to survive, with no education and economic opportunities,” Professor Nayar said.

“Traditionally, in Australia and everywhere in the world, the energy sector has been government business. Increased access to energy is required for development and prosperity.

“Conventional fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) account for almost 80 per cent of global energy consumption.

“This is because governments have justified providing subsidies to fossil fuel large-scale power generation as it was part of development. It is only realised recently that our planet faces risks from global climate change and local ecosystem destruction due to the carbon dioxide emissions and other pollutants from fossil fuel based power generation.”

Professor Nayar said governments were now forced to include the true cost of greenhouse gases abatement in the price of electricity generation using fossil fuels.

“In addition, countries around the world are faced with importing fossil fuels, depleting biomass sources, and increasing pollution levels in the environment. So the cost of electricity generated through fossil fuels will be escalating in the coming years,” he said.

“Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are abundant around the world. Progressive government policy has the greatest impact on our renewable energy future.

“The renewable energy sector in Australia is driven by policies in the federal, state and even at local council level.”

Professor Nayar said government rebates through renewable energy certificates and feed in tariff had helped the renewable energy industry to generate thousands of jobs.

“We should remember that jobs created in the sustainable energy sector are not just engineering-related, but also include administration, information technology, accounting, marketing, sales and a number of other roles,” he said.

“So the key drivers for getting renewables in for both urban and rural applications are government policy, and the true, unsubsidised, cost of conventional fossil power going up every year.”

Professor Nayar said energy was a key input to existing lifestyle with the future belonging to renewable energy technologies.

“I am not advocating a switch overnight but diversity of energy sources is the key, and policy has to be in place to ensure that a holistic approach to energy generation and utilisation is taken,” he said.

“As an engineer I must put all factors on the table and be as comprehensive as possible. We are running out of time and there is no room for trial and error anymore.”

Contact:

Andrea Barnard, Public Relations, Curtin University
Tel: 08 9266 4241, Mobile: 0401 103 755, Email: andrea.barnard@curtin.edu.au