C-57: Biogas systems in decentralized energy generation

Ajith de Alwis
(*Dept of Chemical Engineering, University of Motatuwa*)

Biogas generation (or Biomethanation as it is scientifically known), has been considered as a means of energy generation in Sri Lanka. However, the emphasis had been on meeting rural energy needs through this option. Due to this emphasis this technique did not receive due support and hence had been much neglected. Sri Lanka having a low per capita availability of energy, needs to bolster its reserves with supply systems of high reliability and sustainability. Today in large scale power generation due consideration should be given to overall environmental aspects and projects thus could not he implemented at will. Large scale generation and transmission involves losses at many points and decentralized options are finding much favour. It is time that we in Sri Lanka address this aspect of decentralized energy generation in a more practical and a logical manner than using concepts such as pre-electrification or alternative methods.

To effectively develop these biogas systems to serve in a decentralized manner, it is not possible to look at units at individual household level. It has been stated that *small biogas systems are not so beautiful!* Available information indicates that this method will only lead to a lower success rate. A proper systems approach is needed with appropriate technical inputs (does.not mean low cost) and with proper management. The lessons with regard to this approach can he learnt from the developed West and not from countries such as India, China and Bangladesh as seem to have been done in the past.