

THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL ENERGY SYSTEMS



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ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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INTRODUCTION

On 26 September 2025, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired its 52nd episode of the Voices of Sustainability series, featuring Narendra Taneja, Chairman of the Independent Energy Policy Institute in New Delhi, India. The episode explored the critical crossroads facing the global energy transition and the urgent need to align systems with principles of justice, equity, and universal access.

With his deep expertise in energy policy and governance, Taneja shared his perspective on how rebuilding trust, fostering genuine dialogue and elevating affordability as a core value will be essential to shaping a sustainable and equitable energy future.



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SUMMARY

The 52nd episode of Voices of Sustainability focused on the evolving global energy landscape, highlighting both challenges and opportunities ahead. Narendra Taneja, Chairman of the Independent Energy Policy Institute, provided pointed insights into the forces shaping the future of energy systems, emphasising the absence of honest and transparent dialogue across the sector. Taneja identified this lack of meaningful conversation between producers and consumers, developed and developing nations, and within individual societies as the greatest obstacle to sustainable energy progress.

Taneja observed that although numerous energy-focused summits and conferences exist globally, many lack the dedicated focus necessary for advancing collective solutions. He underscored the importance of reframing energy debates to prioritise the basic needs of ordinary people rather than national or commercial interests. The concept of energy security, he explained, takes on different meanings depending on context: energy-deficit nations prioritise a stable supply while producers seek to safeguard demand. Despite these varied perspectives, Taneja argued that all ultimately converge on a fundamental concern, the importance of ensuring affordable and reliable energy access for global communities.

The episode highlighted the scale of today's energy challenge, noting that around 4 billion people still live below the energy poverty line and some 700



Energy is life. Energy is survival. Energy is the future. To question or deny energy to any person, society or country, is like denying water or air.

Narendra Taneja

Chairman of the Independent Energy Policy Institute

million lack access to electricity. Taneja cautioned that when energy resources are politicised, it is these vulnerable communities who bear the greatest cost. He called for a global consensus to ensure that vital resources such as oil, gas, coal and renewables are never used as instruments of leverage, but safeguarded as essential to human development. At the same time, he accentuated that this is also a moment of opportunity. By restoring energy transition to the forefront of international dialogue and grounding it in justice and equity, there is a chance to build systems that truly serve everyone.

SUMMARY

For Taneja, a just transition means ensuring no community is left behind, with innovation, investment and cooperation driving a more resilient energy future. He acknowledged that the world possesses both the technological resources and the accumulated expertise needed to create this, and suggested that the missing elements are genuine political will and a renewed commitment to cooperation. In his opinion, a new chapter in energy governance, one based on the twin pillars of affordability and justice, is overdue. He stressed, “Energy is as essential as water or air,” and urged that it must never be used as a tool for exclusion and leverage.

Collaboration and innovation were central to the discussion, with Taneja calling for partnerships that respect different national models while

drawing lessons from both emerging and advanced economies. He pointed to decentralised renewable systems, stronger financial frameworks, and people-focused policy design as ways to turn ambitious energy visions into everyday impact. Drawing on India’s rollout of LPG access and mass adoption of LED lighting, he showed how affordability-driven solutions can deliver rapid change at scale.

Throughout the episode, Taneja provided a compelling call to action for collective responsibility. He emphasized that partnerships, global learning and innovation are central to reducing energy poverty and advancing a just transition. His vision highlighted dialogue, pluralism and practical cooperation as the foundations for an inclusive global energy order: one that delivers affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all and ensures the benefits are shared equitably across generations.



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BIOGRAPHIES

Narendra Taneja

Chairman of the Independent Energy Policy Institute

Narendra Taneja is one of India's foremost energy experts and commentators, widely recognised for his insights on global energy security, markets, and the energy transition. A leading voice on the intersection of energy, economics, and sustainable development, he has advised governments, corporations, and international institutions on policy and strategy. Based in New Delhi, he is also a frequent contributor to national and international media. His work consistently highlights the links between energy policy, economic growth, and the drive towards more sustainable futures.



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OUTCOMES



Energy security should be reframed around affordability and access for people, not narrow national or commercial priorities.



The persistence of energy poverty, impacting nearly half the world's population, requires urgent, equitable, and scalable solutions.



Embedding justice and equity at the core of the energy transition is essential to ensure no community is left behind.



Energy should be governed as a shared human right, as essential as water and air.



Innovation and partnerships across national models can accelerate decentralised renewable systems, inclusive finance, and resilient policy frameworks.



Leadership from committed nations is needed to catalyse momentum, embedding justice and affordability into global energy governance rather than waiting for universal consensus.

Watch the full episode on the Zayed Sustainability Prize's YouTube channel

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