



PETROLEUM CRISIS AND COMPOSITES

One question in the minds of the composites fraternity of India is how the increase in petroleum price will affect their industry. The fear is that since the polymers used are petroleum based, it can directly affect the resin costs. Already for general plastics, a price rise of Rs 10. per Kg has been reported. At the same time, composites are lighter and durable and they can offset the price rise by saving the fuel cost related to the processing and transportation of products.

A similar parallel situation in the early 70s occurred when petroleum price went up, but it did not help the composites industry to grow faster. The conditions are somewhat different today. The costs of all other construction materials went up much more than those of plastics and resins. A marginal price rise similar to that of plastics may not very adversely affect the composites as such. In fact, it is the right time for the industry to go ahead aggressively to project the virtues of composites to tide over the oil-related problems. The supremacy of composites is already being projected by aircraft and wind energy sector industries.

The industry must project that advanced composites are one step better in load carrying than steel with less product weight. This can be achieved by going to larger products. The author has already designed a 30m tall structure and 500 KL capacity tanks recently and they show that composites can have better performance efficiency and can compete well with conventional materials as the size and load level of the product increases.

Industry must also project the energy saving capability, capability to preserve food with less energy spent and the ability to save environment from pollution with less carbon emission and by preserving trees using wood substitution products.

It looks that if the industry plays the card well, the present energy crisis may help the composites to win.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N.G. Nair'.

Dr. N.G. NAIR
Honorary Editor