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IISc to extract oil from algae

By By Our Correspondent

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June 28: Driving will soon be a pollution-friendly activity if a small team of scientists from India and Canada have their way. Scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have collaborated with their counterparts in Canada to ensure that global warming becomes a thing of the past.

According to the scientists, the answer to a clean and sustainable energy production lies in the microscopic algae — diatoms.

Some geologists believe that a majority of the world's crude oil originated from diatoms. "Diatoms are the lowest in the order of the food chain, but are known to have oil glands that can yield an effective amount of oil. They also act as carbon sequesters trapping in carbon and releasing oxygen. We hope that this could work as a replacement for conventional energy or gasoline paving the way for a clean fuel that can effectively work as a solution to tackle global warming," said Dr T.V. Ramachandra at IISc.

The research, that will soon be published in an international journal, indicates that a solution to the impending crude oil scarcity exists. It offers solutions for a cost-effective renewable source of alternative energy and also helps stop the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to an extent. Diatoms can trap and store carbon, sending out emissions free of any pollutants.

The team that comprises IISc professors Durga Madhab Mahapatra, Karthick B. and Dr Ramachandra and Richard Gordon from the University of Manitoba in Canada have also proposed a new approach to sustainable energy that uses solar panels by incorporating altered diatoms that secrete oil products.

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