

RENEWABLE ENERGY RESEARCH CENTRE

# Remarkable progress despite lack of funds

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Renewable Energy Research Centre (RERC) of Dhaka University (DU) has progressed remarkably in the renewable energy research field in the last 24 years despite insufficient funds and lack of governmental or non-governmental assistance.

"The allocation for the centre is less than the requirement, but research activities have been continuing," said Dr Nimchandra Bhoumik, the centre's director.

The allocation from fiscal 1991-92 to 2005-06 was above Tk 4.7 million, but the energy park received about Tk 2.1 million, sources said, adding that a major portion of the money they received was spent on officials and employees' salaries and allowances.

Prof SMA Faiz, DU's vice chancellor admitted the crisis in funds, but said: "We are fully aware of the Centre's situation and doing our best to reduce the shortages."

"We mostly depend on the government, and now shall have to mobilise our internal resources, and increase the source of income. The Alumni Association is engaged in different sectors of trade and commerce and will utilise the privileges that can be achieved from these sources to solve the problem," he added.

The centre's development and research work in last 24 years have been solar radiation, flat thermal collectors, concentrating parabolic collectors (CPC), solar water



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heaters, solar cookers, battery charge controllers, PV lantern design and fabrication, PV water pump, PV refrigerator, biogas, fast growing trees for biomass and tunnel for drying fish.

"Initially the centre concentrated on research in solar power and developed the solar water heater that can boil water up to 70 degrees," said Himangshu, a research fellow at the centre.

The solar cooker takes two and half to three hours to cook something. However, the centre developed a process to reduce

electricity consumption while cooking during the rainy season. "An additional coil is required for the purpose," said Himangshu.

The centre also developed a process to dry fish using solar power.

RERC is currently implementing the Solar and Wind Energy Resource Assessment (SWERA) project with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF). Under the project, a digital map determining resource potential

of solar and wind power in the country will be developed.

"The digital map will unearth a new window in the country's energy sector," said Dr Bhoumik.

People are now showing interest in the centre's research work, but Bhoumik said it was a matter of regret that some people think the centre is working on inventing something new related to the energy sector. "But our work is to research renewable energy and to develop it," he said.

The centre organises seminars and exhibitions each year

to let people know the importance of matters related to renewable energy.

On March 24, RERC in association with Bangladesh Solar Energy Society will organise a one-day seminar titled, 'National Seminar on Renewable Energy' in Dhaka.

"The focus of the seminar will be on 'bio mass' or 'bio energy' and in this regard a national exhibition of renewable energy will be held from 24 to 26 March," said Himangshu.

The centre was established in 1981. Seven years later, in 1988 an energy park was established inside the centre premises.

"The park has been popular among people interested in renewable energy, thus it remains open all day long to attract and educate people" said a researcher.

When asked what they were doing to attract people to the field of renewable energy, Prof Bhoumik said: "Persons who want to obtain a PhD, M Phil and MSc in research are very interested in our work. The centre works as an information cell on the renewable energy for them."

"We also help many by providing necessary data. DU students and other universities too, come here to learn about the uses and utilisation of solar energy," he said.

## Making it easier for the terminally ill

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dignity and peace.

The foundation, with its office in Lalmatia is trying to establish complete facilities for Palliative care. It provides free consultation four days a week for four days a week.

"In the future we will charge those who can afford and use the money to treat those who cannot pay," said Dr. Iqbal. The foundation also plans to provide home nursing service for those who cannot be brought to the Palliative centre.

"We are currently focusing on cancer patients and gradually will extend services to other diseases," Iqbal added.

The foundation also plans to chalk out a training programme for family members of the terminally ill.

"A terminally ill patient is usually bedridden, totally dependent on the family who knows very little of the disease. Special training can help them learn methodical nursing needs, which can eventually provide comfort for these patients," said Ahmad.

In Bangladesh a family face the symptoms and pain alone. Palliative care is also about moral support and mental boosting of

the patient and family. It is a support system to help families cope throughout the patient's illness," Ahmad added.

These doctors wish to take the service to the next level, which is to create community participation and establish Community Palliative Care Centres.

"The entire community takes part in the process, working as volunteers in relaying news to the centre about a certain patient; in nursing; in shifting a patient to the centres and providing mental support. Such community care centres exist in Kerala, India," said Ahmad, who believes that with similar economic infrastructure, it is possible in Bangladesh too.

"A traditional way of community Palliative care lingers in our society as the culture of extended family is still very strong and these families take care of patients with cancer and other illness like strokes and paralysis," Ahmad said.

The foundation hopes to organise a national seminar on palliative care and community participation on March 31 and April 1.

Ahmad believes that local communities can be empowered to identify the terminally ill. They

can support their families with self-sustainable community led services despite limited economic resources and without any outside economic support. The community can take responsibility for the care of its terminally ill, Ahmad added.

## Rejoinder

Mahbubul Bari, principal research engineer, Roads for People Movement, UK, in a rejoinder said he was misquoted in the Star City story headlined "No respite from traffic jam despite ban on rickshaw" published on February 19, 2006. The story reads: Dr Bari gave emphasis on creating proper parking facilities and improving bus services in the city in order to resolve the transport problem caused by the eviction of rickshaws. In the rejoinder Dr Bari said: "In fact, we never gave oblique support for eviction of rickshaws. On the contrary, for efficient management of transport system, we proposed reintroduction of rickshaws in all roads where they have been banned including all VIP roads." The story also says Dr Bari is a transport planner from the USA, but actually he is from the UK. We regret the inadvertent errors.

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