

# Slowly but surely Asia switches on to green power

REUTERS, Singapore

Rising oil prices and pollution are fueling interest in green power in Asia but experts see no prospect of a rapid switch from the region's growing dependence on oil, coal and gas.

The problem is the high cost of renewable energy projects such as solar, wind, geothermal and biofuels, lack of government incentives and vested interests who believe green power is not viable or a threat to their wallets.

"We have to work very hard to convince governments that this is something they should focus on," said Samuel Tumiwa, renewable energy specialist at the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"You have factions in governments that want renewables and others that don't. There are a lot of vested interests be they old power companies or oil companies."

Environmental groups such as Greenpeace and lending agencies such as the ADB say renewable energy is crucial for Asia's economic future.

Renewables would help trim dependency on oil, minimise exposure to oil price spikes and cut pollution in a region that is home to more than half of the world's population.

U.S. crude oil prices have averaged \$38.67 a barrel so far in 2004, up more than \$10 from the average for

the previous five years. U.S. benchmark crude hit a record \$49.40 last month.

The International Energy Agency, the world's energy watchdog, predicts Asia, particularly China and India, will need to make trillions of dollars of energy investment by 2030, much of it to build power stations to connect more people to national grids.

Transport is also booming.

Analysts say renewable energy can help meet some of these energy demands but most governments need to change the way they think and pass laws that level the playing field for green power.

Already there are signs of change.

## FUELLING THE FUTURE

China, the world's largest oil consumer after the United States, has ambitious plans to boost renewable energy use that include raising wind power generating capacity from 570 megawatts today to 20,000 megawatts by 2020 and 50,000 megawatts by 2030.

One megawatt of electricity can supply 1,000 homes.

A push to use more bio-fuels such as marsh gas, straw, sugarcane residue and garbage to fuel power plants could eventually save China 28 million tons of coal a year.

In Japan, one of the world's top oil importers, auto-makers are investing in fuel cells to power new models using hydrogen, though costs remain out of reach for ordinary motorists.



A namaz-e-janaza of BNP lawmaker AKM Abu Taher was held in front of the party office in the city yesterday. Taher died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

## OIC Day today

### President greets world's Muslims

BSS, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday extended his warm and heartiest felicitations to the Muslim brothers and sisters around the world on the occasion of the 3rd Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Day today.

In the backdrop of the prevailing global scenario, the commemoration of the OIC Day bears a special significance for the Muslim Ummah,

the President said in a message.

"Our great religion of peace, solidarity and tolerance enjoin upon us the moral obligation for forging an invincible fraternity and unity," he said.

"Today, the Muslim Ummah is in greater need for well-concerted efforts for facing the challenges confronting it and for delivering a significant part of its members from the clutches of backwardness and poverty."

Since its inception, the OIC has played a significant role in fostering a sense of Islamic brotherhood and in creating awareness of the need to uphold the interests of the Ummah, said President Iajuddin.

He said, "Its subsidiaries and specialised organs provide a significant platform to coordinate efforts in preserving the Islamic spirit, ethical and socio-economic values. Yet, there is scope for accomplishing more."

"We must step forward with our collective endeavors and resources to achieve common progress for the Ummah, which constitutes about one-fifth of the world population."

The President said Bangladesh has demonstrated an unswerving commitment to the ideals and worthy purposes of the OIC and made important contributions to the activities of the organisation.

"Bangladesh desires to see the OIC as a powerful forum that contributes to the establishment of a just and equitable world order and enhances the social and economic well-being of the Muslim Ummah.

## Robbery at Savar

UNB, Savar

Robbers looted valuables worth about Tk 1.50 lakh from the house of a banker at Imandipur village here on Wednesday night.

Police and local people said a gang of 10 or 12 robbers stormed the house of Selim Reza and looted valuables, including cash and 10 tolas of gold.

A case was filed with Savar thana.

## Madrasa girl raped in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mob beat up a rickshaw mechanic and handed over him to police as he raped a minor girl in Banshkhali Poursava area on Thursday night.

The girl, a student of class four at a local madrasa, was returning home from her private tutor's house at around 10.30pm when the rapist

picked up and took her to an abandoned house at Baharullah Para, police said.

Relatives of the girl took her to the police station and filed a case the same night.

Agitated people caught the mechanic Abdul Jabber and handed over him to police yesterday morning.



PHOTO: STAR

Activists of Gana Sanghati Andolon demonstrate against the upswing of the prices of essentials, among other issues, at Muktangon in the city yesterday.

## BNP lawmaker Taher buried

UNB, Comilla

BNP lawmaker AKM Abu Taher, who died of liver cirrhosis at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital in Dhaka on Thursday, was buried at his family graveyard at Sonaimuri village of Barura upazila yesterday.

Thousands of people thronged Barura Eidgah Maidan to pay their last respect to him as a helicopter of Bangladesh Air Force carrying the body landed there at 3:15pm.

Abu Taher, also a prominent industrialist, was elected to parliament from Comilla-7 (Barura) constituency three times.

Upazila BNP took up a three-day mourning programme, including wearing black badges, hoisting black flags and a condolence meeting.

Earlier, a janaza for the deceased lawmaker was held at south plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Speaker Muhammad Jamir Uddin Sircar, Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, cabinet members, deputy leader of the opposition Abdul Hamid, MPs and many political leaders attended the janaza.

## BKSP reunion

UNB, Dhaka

The annual reunion of former BKSP students, organised by The Alumni Association of BKSP (AAB), will be held on October 8 on the institution premises in Savar.

Interested ex-students have been requested to confirm their participation by September 30 over phone (0171845018, 0171113170 and 0175008912).