

SHAFIQ ISLAM/DRIKNEWS

Energy Prospect for Bangladesh

"*The Sun, it shines everywhere.*"[14]
William Shakespeare

Bangladesh is richly endowed with renewable energy sources. Sunlight is abundant year-round in this semi-tropical region. Even during the monsoon season the solar radiation is as good as the annual average.[15]

In addition to ample light and heat, the hundred-plus-mile long coastal areas, hilly sections, and islands provide plenty of wind for wind turbines; waterways of varied forms and speed provide sufficient wave and gravity driven water flow for ecologically balanced hydro-electric generators; and the lush vegetation provides rich photosynthesis and biomass for fuel for a variety of purposes.

Compared to Germany -- an inspiring example of a country set on a full transition to the renewable energy path -- Bangladesh receives twice the amount of solar radiation than Germany. Bangladesh is truly an exceptional, naturally endowed and integrated, renewable "energy mine."

Judiciously planned and harnessed, this energy mine has an inexhaustible capacity far beyond meeting the country's annual 4,000 megawatts of electricity need, while also generating other forms of usable energy such as heat and bio-gas.

However large the capital cost appears up front, that cost will be minor compared to the alternative. That alternative is the vast amount of money which will need to be invested towards the, at best, short term solutions -- but in the long run, dead-end non-solutions -- from non-renewables, leaving the country only more economically impoverished and indebted, environmentally ruined, and politically vulnerable.

None of these is inevitable if the current energy crisis is viewed as a warning, a critical turning point, a crossroads, and, indeed, both an unprecedented and one-time opportunity to act urgently on a revolutionary transition to the renewable energy path. It is in their support for the transition that the other countries and their donor agencies can play a vital role, if they're truly interested in helping Bangladesh solve its energy crisis. Currently some support is being given to renewable energy projects, but nowhere close to the rate needed to make a transition. A much bigger push is needed for non-renewables. So, the motive and extent of collaboration will need to be examined. Genuine collaboration for a transition is necessary and welcome. It's good for Bangladesh and it's good for the world.

Bangladesh's renewable energy mine offers such a promise. Contrary to the publicised notion that it will take a miracle to solve Bangladesh's energy crisis, it is indeed a "development" blunder of a miraculous proportion that such a crisis could be contrived in Bangladesh.

Since the late 1980s, various renewable energy technology projects have been implemented at the NGO, private, commercial,