

Energy conservation law a must for an efficient sector: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh must pass an energy conservation act to ensure energy efficiency to turnaround the country's bleak energy scenario, said an expert yesterday.

"Without an energy conservation act and the Sustainable Energy Development Agency (SEDA), we can achieve absolutely nothing on energy efficiency," said Dr Ijaz Hossain, a professor of the chemical engineering department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

He spoke at a roundtable on "Energy efficiency in buildings" at the Cirdap auditorium in the city. The Energy and Power, an energy magazine, organised the programme in association with the German agency for international cooperation GIZ.

Terming the country's energy efficiency scenario very dismal, Hossain said: "In a seminar [when the present government came to power three years ago], I told the government where to intervene."

"But after three years, I can say that nothing has happened. But India has moved ahead of Bangladesh by 10 years by enforcing an energy conservation act."

"We have already submitted a report to the government on the issue. The SEDA is also supposed to be passed. Three years have passed, but the act has not been passed," he informed.

He said there are SEDA type organisations in many countries, which talk about the issue and hold talks with different stakeholders. "I don't know why it is not being passed in Bangladesh," he regretted.

The expert said the country is running with inefficient power plants. He alleged that the authorities are hiding the real system loss in the power sector in a new way.

"Here the system loss is calculated in terms of billing, not in terms of kilowatt-hour we consume. Our real picture is bleak. I agree that the system loss has reduced, but I still think the amount is too high."

Hossain said Bangladesh has inefficient power plants, fertiliser plants and buildings and the power demand projection is prepared taking them into consideration.

The government says the country will need 30,000 megawatt of electricity by 2030. But I say if we can use conservation, renewable energy and make the plants efficient then we will be able to bring the demand down to 10,000MW," Hossain projected.

"It means that we do not need to set up power plants to produce another 10,000MW of electricity, if we can control our demand through energy efficiency," he further opined.

He said no governments would be able to meet the whole energy

demand of the country, as Bangladesh is increasingly becoming an energy importing nation.

"If we cannot use our own resources like coal and do not immediately start exploring resources in the new maritime boundary, we will never be able to be self-sufficient in energy," Hossain warned.

Hossain said the talk of energy efficiency of a building should include residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

"We do not talk much about industrial buildings, but they are the biggest source of energy consumption. We can bring energy efficiency to them."

He said the government should give special heed to the cooling systems, as its load has become a monster for Bangladesh.

"Last year, we heard that cooling accounted for 1,800MW of electricity as per estimation of the Power Development Board. This year it will go up to 2,000MW against our production of 6,000MW," Hossain added.

"We need to conduct research on cooling to find out where we can reduce its consumption. People's income is increasing so there will be a lot of cooling system in households. Efficient technology is available and we should go for that."

Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, energy adviser to the prime minister, said they are working to establish an energy research

council to the likes of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council to create a platform for research.

He said the government plans to introduce smart-grid for households to reduce electricity consumption.

Zebun Nasreen Ahmed, head of architecture of Buet, said there is a lot to do with ensuring energy efficiency of buildings as they account for 40 percent of all energy consumption.

She said energy efficiency of buildings should get priority before the country moves for renewable energy.

She urged the government to promote light emitting diode (LED) bulbs, which are four times more efficient and durable than the compact fluorescent lights (CFL) that the country is currently advocating for.

"The LEDs are safe, long-lasting and very energy efficient and 50 to 100 times longer life than incandescent bulbs. We need to do research so that we can make LEDs cheaper," she said.

The architect said greener roof is not all about water conservation. "It can keep the whole building cool too."

She said although photovoltaics are expensive they are appropriate because of high solar input in Bangladesh.

Islam Sharif, chief executive officer of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd, said having energy efficiency buildings is

also a good business.

Khursheed Ul Islam, senior adviser to GIZ, said the country needs to think whether it is time to think about Green Building Code.

Saiful Huque, coordinator of Renewable Energy Research Centre of Dhaka University, said the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha should make appointment of a solar specialist mandatory for constructing a building.

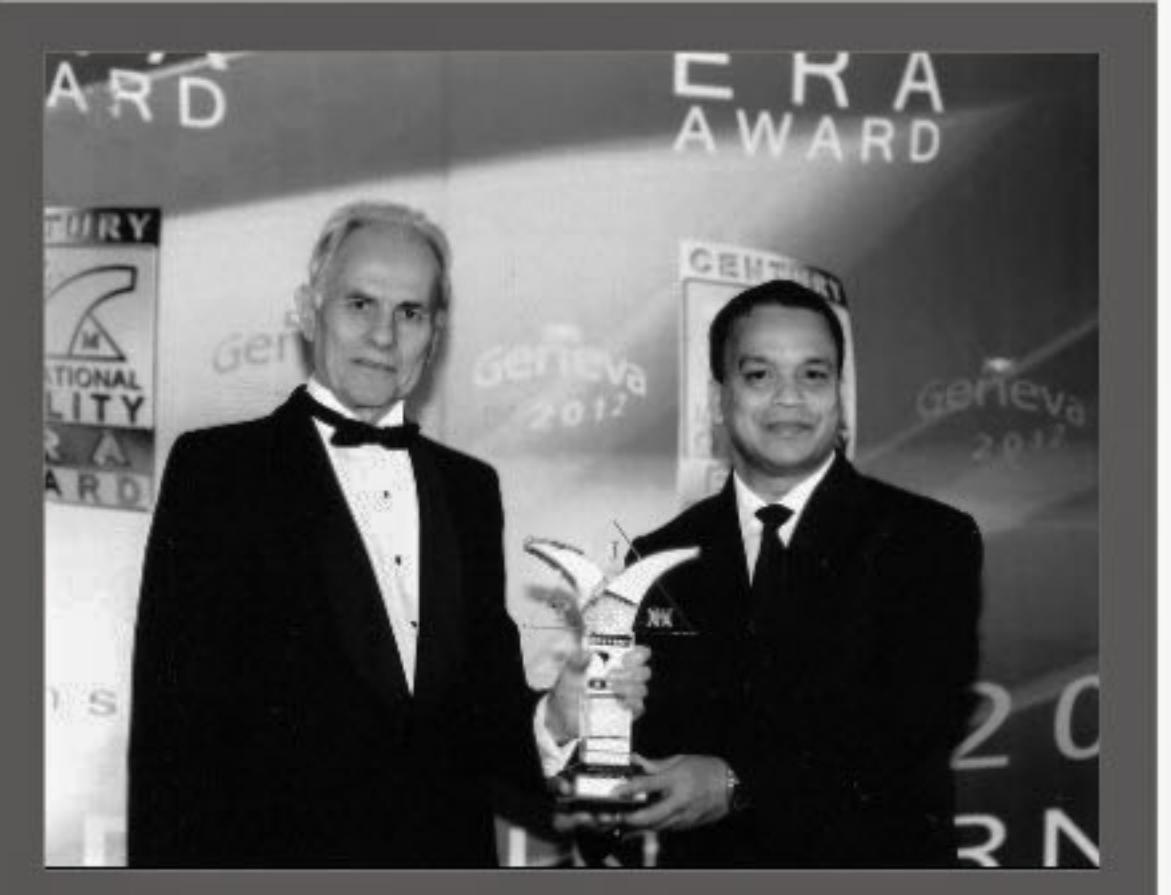
Shireen Kamal Sayeed, a former assistant country director of United Nations Development Programme, said the authorities should not only look at energy efficiency issue in urban areas, but also in rural areas, as there is rapid urbanisation in the countryside.

Nurul Aktar, a director of Energypac, said new buildings are installing solar system negligently just to comply with the government order for obtaining power connection.

The real estate sector is not interested about solar system, he said, adding that there has to be a system that ensures a win-win situation.

He said the government can think of promoting the uses of LEDs in posh areas instead of across the country. "If it is made mandatory for all, low-quality products will flood the market."

Rakibul Islam, a manager of Grameen Skakti, said the government should withdraw all duties levied on solar products to make them cheaper.



Md Nazrul Islam, chairman of Fareast Islami Life Insurance, receives the 'Century International Quality Era Award' in gold category from Jose E Prieto, president of Business Initiative Directions of Spain, at the BID International Quality Convention at Geneva in Switzerland recently.

Nissan looks to profit on retro Datsun brand

AFP, Tokyo

Three decades after sidelining Datsun, Japan's Nissan is dusting off the brand to tap emerging markets, a move sure to stir up nostalgia among fans of the low-cost, fuel-efficient cars.

Analysts said the plan to sell Datsuns in Indonesia, Russia and India would help the auto giant take on fierce competition in those markets without hurting its existing brands or spending time and money on creating a new one.

"Reviving the Datsun brand is better than creating a new brand as the old Datsun cars are still there and recognisable by some people," said Kota Yuzawa, an auto analyst at Goldman Sachs in Tokyo.

Datsun -- the first set of wheels for many adolescents -- was a big seller especially in the United States where its sporty, two-door hatchbacks became synonymous with fuel-efficiency during the 1970s oil crisis.

But Nissan phased it out from 1981 as the company pushed its own name onto its fleet of cars.

Last week, chief executive Carlos Ghosn said Datsun would be a "global brand" alongside Nissan-branded cars and its luxury line Infiniti, although there are no immediate plans to sell it in Japan or other mature markets.

"Datsun is part of our history. It was synonymous with affordable and reliable cars," Ghosn said in Jakarta on Tuesday.

"With the return of Datsun, we want to add modernity to it, with a new level of quality, like a high fuel economy."

Company spokesman Mitsuru Yonekawa said owners of the old Datsun brand were "optimistic about their future, had upward mobility, a strong yearning for possessing cars and yet were somewhat demanding about the quality of cars".

The updated models will attract "quite similar" customers, he added.

Carmakers have released models targeting specific markets before, but Nissan's revival of a shelved brand for emerging economies is unprece-



SAM Yousuf, executive director of Gallerie Apex, inaugurates a showroom of the company at Jurain in Dhaka on Wednesday. Khandker Swapan Shahriar, general manager for marketing, was also present.



Md Nurul Islam, deputy managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh, speaks at a workshop on "Foreign remittance product and services of IBBL", at Agraab in Chittagong yesterday. Md Munirul Mowla, zonal head for Chittagong, was also present.

Bangladesh seeks greater Indian investment

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh seeks greater Indian investment in prospective areas, including power and infrastructure, to strengthen trade relations between the neighbours.

"We have invited Indian investment in a larger volume in any sector, both in joint venture and directly," Industries Minister Dilip Barua told reporters yesterday after a meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran at his office.

Barua said Bangladesh wants to work jointly on region-based multi-connectivity theory which will help boost trade and commerce in the region.

"India also sought Bangladeshi investment there," Barua said quoting the Indian envoy as saying: "The envoy, however, did not specify the sectors where Bangladeshi can invest."

During the meeting, they also discussed different bilateral issues and laid emphasis on boosting trade and commerce through mutual cooperation.

Reforms plant seeds of hope for Myanmar farmers

AFP, Bago, Myanmar

Recent reforms in Myanmar have planted a seed of hope that the country can turn back the clock on five decades of military rule and isolationism to once more become the rice bowl of Asia.

With rich natural resources and a strategic position between China and India, Myanmar was seen as one of Southeast Asia's star prospects in the years after independence from Britain in 1948.

But international economists left the army out of their reckoning and following a military coup in 1962, the junta's economic mismanagement resulted in the once-thriving agricultural sector tumbling into ruin.

Storage problems and ill-maintained rural roads mean that much produce rots before it can ever reach market. However, experts point out that Myanmar still has the vital water and land resources to rebuild its agricultural sector.

"This represents an incredible opportunity for Myanmar because almost uniquely amongst the countries of Southeast Asia and beyond, it has an incredible, vast supply of water, and water is fast becoming the critical element that countries need for agriculture," Myanmar expert Sean Turnell said.

"We've got this country with a vast amount of water resources, with the most fertile soil imaginable, this country was the rice bowl of not only Asia but the British Empire as well," said Turnell, of Australia's Macquarie University.

"And here it is with agriculture neglected for 50 years, extraordinarily unproductive, but of course from that low base you can get extraordinary growth."

However, change comes slowly to Myanmar's sprawling fields, where farmers till the land from dawn to dusk as they have done for generations, with little reward for their back-breaking labour.

"I am old, but I have to farm the land for 16 hours a day to pay off my debts,"

lamented Ohn Thaung, as he worked in a rice paddy in Bago district, northeast of Yangon.

The 75-year-old farmer shares a tiny hut with his five children, 15 grandchildren and two prized water buffalo.

To plant his 28 hectares (70 acres) this season, he borrowed about 200,000 kyats (\$300) from a cooperative controlled by the regime, a large sum in a country where about one-third of the population lives in poverty.

He also had to pay for "permits", or local taxes, for every hectare tilled.

"My family is surrounded by rice we cannot eat, because we have to harvest and sell it," he said, his leathery face creased by years under the tropical sun.

Ohn Thaung has no granary of his own, so his harvest gets sold at a break-even price to a local trader, and the little money he earns goes to his creditors and to buy seed -- a vicious cycle that has also trapped his sons and grandchildren.

Money-mad Singapore aims to become non-profit hub

AFP, Singapore

Singapore has long courted international banks and companies in its drive to become a financial hub. But it is also wooing a very different sector: non-profit groups including campaign charities.

Singapore has attracted more than 130 "international non-profit organisations" such as the charities Mercy Relief and World Vision International, and the International Air Transport Association, an aviation lobby group.

This is triple the number of regional or global non-profits that were based in Singapore when a campaign to lure them with tax breaks and other incentives started in 2007.

The government says it is keen to broaden Singapore's international appeal and tap into a growing environmental and charitable consciousness among its wealthy populace.

But the welcome does not extend to every campaigning organisation that has attempted to set up shop in Singapore, whose no-nonsense government is routinely accused by foreign and local activists of squelching dissent.

Those who have made it in include the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), one of a clutch of non-profits housed in a dedicated three-building complex called the Tanglin International Centre.

Elaine Tan, chief executive of the Singapore branch of WWF, said the group appreciates the generous allocation of office space in the complex, a luxury hard to find in Singapore's costly business districts.



Matiul Hasan, deputy managing director of IFIC Bank, and Ali Newaz, chief financial officer of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, open an ATM booth of the bank at the premises of Beximco Pharma in Tongi recently.



Golam Faruque Babu, chairman of Paper Rhyme Advertising, and Nahid Sarwar, managing director of Cityscape, attend a programme recently where Paper Rhyme signed a deal to be the public relations partner of the latter.



KS Tabrez, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank, inaugurates the 112nd branch of the bank at Brahmanbaria Sadar in Brahmanbaria yesterday.