

CABLE INDUSTRY RIDING HIGH ON GROWTH MOMENTUM

SAFETY, SAFETY AND SAFETY

The keyword for the cable industry

In conversation with Dr. Abdul Hasib Chowdhury, Professor, Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department, BUET



Abdul Hasib Chowdhury

Power consumption is a lead indicator of growth. In Bangladesh per-capita electricity consumption is only 310.39 kWh (World Bank, 2014) whereas in neighbouring India it is 805.60 kWh (World Bank, 2014). The good news is that the government is seriously thinking about expanding electricity coverage in rural areas which will create huge demand for power. The Power System Master Plan (PSMP) 2016 sets the target of generating 60,000 MW by 2041. To achieve the goal Bangladesh has to improve a lot in its power generation capacity. Similarly, it has to improve power transmission and distribution capacity.

Professor Hasib Chowdhury of BUET thinks that this is an opportune moment for the local cable industry to expand their business in manufacturing distribution and transmission cables. He explains that high voltage transmission lines are required to meet the high power demand in the city areas. But, overhead transmission of high voltage lines is very risky. It also consumes valuable city space. Hence, the government should gradually move towards underground transmission. The government is planning to change all overhead electricity distribution lines to underground ones in six major cities by 2025. It will also increase longevity and reliability of the power distribution system. To cater to this need a huge amount of cables will be

required. Dr Hasib suggests that the local companies who have the capacity should gradually expand towards producing 132 kV and 230 kV cables.

He adds that manufacturing of transmission cables requires high investment because 132 kV and 230kV cables are far superior qualitatively to domestic cables. Once a company achieves the capacity of producing high voltage cables its overall production quality improves significantly. This type of investment is always rewarding, shares Professor Chowdhury.

He points out that low quality cables cause huge loss of power in the long run. If impure material is used for conductor a certain amount of power gets lost during the distribution process due to higher resistance. Generally, a cable remains in operation for 20-30 years. If the total loss is counted over the years the figure stands very high. This is the less talked about side of the perennial problem of system loss, explains the expert.

He laments that there are many standards and regulations in Bangladesh but their enforcement status is very poor. In developed countries, industries develop various types of regulatory mechanisms in cooperation with government to ensure strict enforcement of those standards which ultimately help the whole industry. He thinks that the local cable industry leaders should emphasise on quality issues for their own interest.

He adds that regular factory inspection is very important for ensuring quality in every stage of the production process. Dr Hasib points out that in Bangladesh, industries generally focus on the quality of sample products, not on mass production of the product. He suggests that testing labs should be put in place to check the quality of raw materials as



well as finished products.

Cable industry is a 'conversion industry' in the sense that it only converts raw materials into cables. In conversion industries raw materials are usually the most expensive part. In cable industries, raw materials make up 60-70 percent of the total production cost. Dr. Chowdhury suggests that if the cable companies focus on enhancing efficiency in the supply of raw materials they can

maintain a good profit margin without compromising on quality.

Dr. Chowdhury points out that in many cases residential buildings are converted for industrial purpose. Since power consumption of an industry is much higher than a domestic building this malpractice often results in fire hazards and loss of lives. He recommends the installation of cables to be done under the

supervision of electrical experts. The cable industry should invest in training and raising aware about this issue, he adds.

"There is a close relationship between quality, efficiency and safety. If we ensure quality of power cables it will increase efficiency by reducing power loss. At the same time, it will ensure safety by preventing electrical hazards," concludes Professor Hasib Chowdhury.



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