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Power for All by '20

## 'Investment-friendly policy needed in power sector'

Staff Correspondent

In a bid to ensure power for all by 2020, the government should introduce an investment-friendly policy in power sector, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They called for resolving the debate over the methods of mining and focusing more on renewable energy sources in the country.

The speakers underscored the need for bringing accountability and transparency in all spheres of the power sector.

They also urged all to join hand in hand to help overcome the power crisis.

The roundtable titled 'Energy and power crisis' was organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) in collaboration with the UNDP at BEI conference hall at Gulshan in the city.

Speaking as chief guest, Energy and Mineral Resources Adviser Tapan Chowdhury said it is an undeniable fact that development in power and energy sector lagged far behind the expectation and the need of the country during the past years.

He said the government has chalked out a programme to produce an additional amount of 1133 megawatt (MW) electricity by December 2008.

Tapan said the government is strengthening the Bapex to utilise the local resources for gas exploration.

They are also working to finalise a policy ensuring wide use of coal as prime source of energy for power generation and other economic purposes, he added.

The adviser said Bangladesh is on the threshold of an investment break-through in the power and energy sector.

He urged the development partners and private sectors to come forward in this gigantic task.

Former Awami League lawmaker Col (Retd) Faruque Khan said it is the duty of the government to meet the basic needs of people and access to power is one of them.

The government needs an investment-friendly policy and alternative sources of energy, he said.

"The debate over coal extraction must be resolved immediately as we have wasted a lot of time over the mining methods," he added.

Brig Gen Nazmul Hasan, chairman of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), said present situation in power sector is much better than earlier and they are trying sincerely to give better service to the customers.

"We should keep our concentration not only on power generation but also on power distribution," he added.

Former energy secretary Nasir Uddin said, "If we want to achieve the new goal, to connect 60 percent of the population to power grid by 2010, we have to ensure the implementation of the plan."

Raising many questions about gas and coal, he said the government has to take a decision whether the gas should be allowed for domestic purpose or industrialisation.

BEI President Farooq Sobhan said future of the country depends on the solution of energy problems.

Nazrul Islam, executive director of Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre, Masayuki Inoue, ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, Australian High Commissioner in Dhaka and representatives of different organisations also spoke at the roundtable.