

The Daily Star

Monday, January 13, 2014

Experts for citizens in project execution

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Experts, development partners and government officials yesterday favoured engagement of citizens' groups and the people in implementation of projects to ensure transparency in public procurement. They were speaking at a national workshop, at National Economic Council in Dhaka, which aims to finalise the draft framework for monitoring public procurement through citizen engagement.

About 70 percent of the annual development outlay, which stands at Tk 65,872 crore in the current fiscal year, accounts for public procurement, according to the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS).

"This large volume of procurement spending coupled with increased role of the private sector in development activity following continuing economic reforms has opened up wide opportunities for manipulation and diversion of public fund for private gains," said AKM Nashirul Huq, a public procurement expert of IGS.

Christine Kimes, WB acting country director, thanked the government for improving the public procurement environment by formulating proper policies.

"What is a missing piece is a citizen's monitoring system that can complement the government's efforts," she said.

She said the final framework should be clear on the civic engagement so that civil society organisations can monitor public purchases.