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Huge scope of India-Bangladesh power, energy cooperation: Experts



Dhaka, Mar 16 (UNB) – Speakers at a seminar here on Saturday said there is huge scope for India-Bangladesh cooperation in the power and energy sectors as many areas still remained untapped for lack of positive attitude at both political and bureaucratic levels.

They said India and China have a bigger role to play in developing a homogeneous and harmonised power market in the South Asian region where any country can send their electricity and buy it as per the need.

“But while thinking of regional cooperation taking into Chinese role into account, Indian policymakers can’t ignore the security issues,” said SD Muni, Professor Emeritus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, while speaking at the seminar titled “India-Bangladesh Energy Cooperation: Policy Issues and Orientations” at the Sufia Kamal Auditorium of National Museum in the city.

Bangladesh Heritage Foundation and JNU jointly organised the programme with former diplomat Waliur Rahman in the chair.

The seminar was also addressed by former Indian Ambassador to Bangladesh Prof Muchkund Dubey, eminent energy expert and Brac University's Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr M Tamim, Prof Ijaz Hossain of Buet, Dhaka University's Prof Badrul Imam, Jahangirnagar University's Prof Shahab Enam Khan, Khondaker Abdus Saleque, Mollah Amzad Hossain and Bangladesh Power Management Institute Director Rafiqul Islam.

Giving a brief description on the role of India, China, Bangladesh and other countries in regional and sub-regional forums, Prof Muni said there is a huge scope for regional cooperation in trade, energy and other areas in this part of the globe.

He said India has to keep in mind the security issues when China involves in any regional move in this area because of tensions in Doklam.

"India has got reservation over the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China although they work under the framework of BCIM," he said, adding that that's why such regional forum could not click.

"Whoever in power, no Indian policymaker can afford to ignore the security issues in Doklam," he observed.

Prof Muchkund Dubey said a move of energy cooperation had been at the final stage in 1979-82 during his assignment in Dhaka under which India wanted to import 1.5 tcf of gas from Bangladesh. "But after the changeover in political power, that move also stopped," he said.

Prof Badrul Imam said it was a wrong idea on the part of New Delhi to import gas from Bangladesh while it has done a big mistake by failing to implement the tri-nation pipeline among Myanmar, Bangladesh and India.

Prof Ijaz said Bangladesh can share Indian experience in gas exploration in its area in the Bay of Bengal.

Prof Shahab Enam Khan said there should be harmonised and homogeneous system in the cross-border power trade to promote regional cooperation in the energy sector.

Khondaker Abdus Saleque said the electricity market should be open for all like that in Europe and electron will move as per its demand. "There should not be a particular directional market," he said.