

Iqbal urges NGOs to increase investment in renewable energy

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood has called upon non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to invest in the renewable energy sector.

“NGOs have significant opportunities to promote solar power in rural areas. Expanding solar power generation and usage would reduce energy import costs, allowing the government to redirect the savings toward development projects,” he said.

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at the national workshop titled “Voice of Development” organized by the National Development Programme (NDP) at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre here.

“If we can achieve 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy generation, our dependence on imported fuel will decline, and the money saved can be invested in development,” he said.

He added that the government has already introduced policies to promote solar energy.

The minister said NGOs could help expand rooftop solar power in rural areas through cluster-based projects.

Under the net metering system, he said, they could recover their investments by selling surplus electricity to the grid.

He also noted that just as owners of deep tube wells earn income by selling irrigation water to farmers, solar-powered irrigation systems could become profitable business ventures.

He emphasized that financing would not be a major obstacle, as the World Bank and other development partners are interested

in funding renewable energy projects.

At a time of global climate change, he said, financial institutions are unlikely to fund fossil fuel-based projects.

Highlighting public interest in renewable energy, the minister cited the example of a woman in Faridpur who produces biogas from livestock waste and supplies cooking gas to her neighbours.

He said this demonstrates both public enthusiasm and the strong commercial potential of such initiatives.

The minister said that after the current government assumed office, Bangladesh had to spend heavily on importing fuel and other energy resources, placing significant pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

He said ongoing global conflicts have made energy security even more challenging, reinforcing the need to expand renewable energy.

He also pointed out that declining domestic gas production has forced Bangladesh to import larger quantities of liquefied natural gas (LNG), increasing the government's subsidy burden.

The energy minister alleged that although the previous government claimed success in securing Bangladesh's maritime boundaries, it failed to take meaningful steps to develop offshore energy resources.

Meanwhile, neighbouring countries have made significant progress in this area, he said. He noted that neighbouring countries are already extracting gas from offshore fields, while Bangladesh is still in the exploration stage.

He informed the audience that the government has invited bids for offshore oil and gas exploration, although such projects will require substantial investment.

To encourage investment in renewable energy, the minister said the government has provided tax incentives for solar panels and batteries.

He urged NGOs to move away from grant dependency and instead develop commercially viable renewable energy projects using international financing.

“Why depend on aid? Take financing, invest, run businesses, and repay the loans. You will receive funding at concessional rates,” he said.

He also encouraged NGOs to take advantage of the government’s tax holiday incentives and invest in sectors such as solar energy and bio fuels, saying this would not only contribute to rural economic development but also strengthen the financial sustainability of NGOs.