

ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Intelligence Bulletin

ISSUE **26** 04 OCTOBER 2007

Right Livelihood Prize for Grameen Shakti



Grameen Shakti, the renewable energy company under Grameen Bank family won the 2007 Right Livelihood Award. The prize money SEK 2 million (USD 310,000/EUR 220,000) is shared between four Recipients, who show that there exist practical solutions to pressing global challenges. Grameen Shakti has demonstrated that solar energy applications can be scaled up massively and rapidly to provide an affordable and climate-friendly energy option for the rural poor. The Jury commends Grameen Shakti "for bringing sustainable light and power to thousands of Bangladeshi villages, promoting health, education and productivity".

The other three winners are: Christopher Weeramantry of Sri Lanka for "his lifetime of groundbreaking work to strengthen and expand the rule of international law", Dekha Ibrahim Abdi from Kenya for her "effective peace work and conflict resolution" in many divided countries and Percy and Louise Schmeiser of Canada for giving "the world a wake-up call about the dangers to farmers and biodiversity everywhere from the growing dominance and market aggression of companies engaged in the genetic engineering of crops."

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation is a Swedish charitable foundation that has so far presented Awards to 123 Recipients from 56 countries. The presentation takes place in the Swedish Parliament, with the support of Members of Parliament from all political parties.

The Awards were founded in 1980 by Jakob von Uexkull "to honor and support those offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today". Since then, the Award has been supported by individual donors. The 2007 prizes will be formally awarded at the Swedish Parliament on December 7.



ADB Mission on Coal Sector

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has showed keen interest in financing coal development. A high profile ADB delegation arrived in Dhaka on 2 October 2007 on a three-day visit to discuss its possible support to the development of the country's coal sector, particularly the Phulbari Coal Mine project. ADB's Director General of South Asia Department Kunio Senga is leading the delegation. One of the objectives of the ADB mission is to explore the ways and strategies as to how it could encourage foreign investors to invest in power, gas and coal sector.

ADB is now providing US\$ 109.86 million to build a 240 MW plant at Shiddhirganj to ease the electricity demand during the peak hours and is also willing to supplement the government effort to develop the coal sector and set up coal-based power plants considering the country's future gas and power shortage.

During the meeting with Finance Adviser Dr. Mirza Azizul Islam, the ADB expressed its concern that the government's indecision about the investment proposals of Asia Energy and Tata was giving 'investors a wrong signal.'

It may be noted that the Phulbari Coal Mine project got stalemate since August 2006 following mass agitation by the local people. Developer of the project UK-based Asia Energy submitted US\$ 3 billion open-pit development scheme to the government, but no decision has yet made.

After the meeting, the ADB mission told the media that both the government and ADB agreed coal mining is going to give huge potential benefit for power generation. At this moment we rely on gas, which is limited. So, the government has to find alternative sources for power generation. Coal mining is very effective. To ensure coal-generated power, many technical, environmental, social and viability studies have to be undertaken.

The Finance Adviser also spoke with press and said that coal mining company Asia Energy expressed its willingness to re-negotiate terms of its contract with the government. Before this re-negotiation, the government must decide which contractual terms should be revised.

On Tata's \$2.5 billion proposal on gas-based steel industry and power plant, the Adviser said, "A significant issue here is allocation of natural gas for Tata's project. We have to guarantee gas supply to Tata. Before that we must ensure that we have adequate gas for the guarantee period. Then we have to be sure about our own reserve and immediate gas and power demands, and how much gas we should keep for our own use. "

South Korea ready to Support in Setting Nuclear Power Plant

South Korea has expressed readiness to provide financial and technological assistance to Bangladesh for setting up a nuclear power plant to meet the growing demand for electricity. The South Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Suk-Bum Park told a news agency on 2 October that South Korea is waiting for appropriate response from Bangladesh government to the proposal they have already made. He said Seoul proposed a couple of projects to Bangladesh that includes setting up a nuclear power plant and coal exploration and development combined with coal fired power plant.

The Ambassador also told: "We would be glad if Bangladesh take serious look at these proposals and take appropriate measures to realise the projects, which are keys to Bangladesh's development". Bangladesh is now having a good momentum to realise economic benefits and South Korea wants to share know-how, experience, capitals and other resources for mutual benefit and development.

Replying to a question about the proposed nuclear power plant project, Ambassador Park said: "We're flexible and we are also following the international practices in terms of financing".

He gave example of South Korea and mentioned that 40 per cent of Korean demand for electricity is met from nuclear power plants. Korea has standardised the nuclear power plant having capacity of 1000 MW, which is very efficient and cost productive. He added that it would cost over one billion US dollars to set up a nuclear power plant of 1000 MW.

He informed that the visit of the Secretary to the Science and Technology Ministry to Seoul in July was very fruitful. Earlier, Foreign Adviser Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed visited South Korea and held talks with Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and the Deputy Energy Minister in May last. "Process of consultation is going on in right way", the Ambassador said.

Replying to another question, he said if South Korean company Daewoo Engineering is designated for setting up the nuclear power plant, it would form a consortium with other leading Korean companies. Daewoo, having experiences in installing nuclear power plants in many countries, already placed a proposal to the Ministry of Science, Information and Technology, he said. As per proposal, Daewoo will provide 70 per cent of the total cost of the installation of nuclear power plants in Bangladesh.

It may be noted that Foreign Adviser Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury during his recent visit to Moscow discussed the issue of nuclear power plant with his Russian counterparts. The Russian government also offered assistance to Bangladesh in installing the nuclear power plant.



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