

**USAID/SARI-ENERGY SAWIE Second APPLICATION WORKSHOP ON EFFICIENT ENERGY MANAGEMENT AND RENEWABLE ENERGY**  
17-19 Nov, 2008, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel

**Welcome Speech - by Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, Chairman, BREA**

Chief Guest Hon'ble Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser for Power, Energy and Minerals Prof. Dr. M Tamim, Special Guest Secretary Dr. M. Fouzul Kabir Khan, Ms. Denise Rollins, Mission Director, USAID/Bangladesh, Mr. S. Padmanaban, Regional Program Director, SARI/Energy, USAID/India, New Delhi, Ms. Shireen Kamal Sayeed, Assistant Country Director, UNDP-Bangladesh, Distinguished guests and participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives and Afghanistan and ladies and gentlemen,

As Salamo alaikum and very good morning.

I am very honoured to be part of this august gathering that is focusing on efficient energy management, renewable energy and the role of women within the energy sector. We are also happy to have been able to convene this important workshop in Dhaka supported by USAID/SARI Energy and UNDP Dhaka.

We all know that there is a close association between the availability of reliable, uninterrupted power supply in industry and commerce and in the attaining of socio-economic potential and decent living standards. In this era of globalization, there are few issues that better demonstrate the confluence of politics and business than energy. From fuelling the economies of rich countries to driving economic development in poor ones, it has an effect on almost everything we do. Consequently, ensuring the safe supply and distribution of energy should be an important part of strategic state policy. There is also agreement that true transformation of the energy system, making electricity production carbon-free through nuclear, renewables, carbon capture and storage would require massive investment. In this regard, the best way forward in meeting the challenges confronting the energy infrastructure, could be through a constructive engagement between the private and the public sectors.

It would be pertinent to state here that we should try to learn from China. That country's astounding economic growth has been accompanied by spectacular additions to its electricity generation. It has added an estimated 100,000 MW in 2006 alone. By the end of this year, 99 per cent of its huge population will have access to electricity as compared to about 49 percent in Bangladesh and slightly over 70 per cent in India. China has managed to do this by moving towards nuclear power (six nuclear power stations are currently under construction) and other forms of renewable energy. It is now the world's leading producer of photovoltaic solar panels and also its largest exporter. Those involved in this industry have mentioned that China and Japan could have done more but are facing two constraints- a global shortage of silicon- the main component in photovoltaic technology and sufficient numbers of skilled contractors and technicians to ship and install the panels.

Well, we continue to hear from our geologists that we are rich in silicon (the Cox's Bazar coastline). If we can confirm that we have the basic material, the next step should be manufacturing of the panels and acquiring necessary technical training for rapid deployment. Promoting this sector as a part of clean energy could be achieved through international assistance and by the Climate Fund being set up to tackle the effects of climate variability.

I have mentioned in several of my recent articles that it is time that our political masters took decisive steps towards the production of nuclear power. It will be costly and might take more than six years to complete. The Three Mile Island accident in the USA in 1979 and Ukraine's Chernobyl disaster in 1986 had accorded pariah status to this industry but European countries as well as the USA have now started changing their stance in this regard. It has been reported that we are thinking of having a nuclear facility that can produce 1000 MW of power. We meet the necessary international legal and safeguard requirements. There is now no time to lose given the fact that our gas reserves are in a poor state and need extensive investment if their potential is to be fully extracted. We must move towards nuclear power generation, the sooner the better. I wish to recall in this regard the strong views in support of such a move made earlier by Late Dr. Anwar Hussain, our former Chairman of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission. I believe that this should be priority number one for the next political government.

Using wind turbines as a source of renewable energy could also be examined, particularly in the coastal areas. However, the intermittent nature of wind power is a drawback as it will require the supply infrastructure being equipped with specialized technology to monitor and manage it. Unfortunately we are terribly weak in this area.

We need to sit down together- all the stakeholders and the important political parties- and agree on least common denominators regarding production, delivery and maintenance of grids. This is a crucial and serious bi-partisan engagement that affects our national security. We must not fail in our efforts towards meeting the gap between demand and supply.

I have been selected by all the stakeholders belonging to Bangladesh Renewable Energy Association (BREAA) to be its new Chairman after the untimely passing away of Engr Quamrul Islam Siddique, its Founder Chairman. A great visionary, Late Mr. Siddique understood the importance of promoting renewable energy and energy conservation and efficient energy management. I hope that we can all work together to achieve this objective.

Distinguished Guests, this three-day workshop is expected to focus on several issues related to women in the context of the energy sector in South Asia. We all know that women, particularly in the rural areas, play an important role in not only conserving energy but also in being able to find the best potential and subsequent use of renewable energy. From that point of view there will be, over the next three days, discussion on gender awareness, on renewable energy promotion through micro-finance, on impact of rural energy sources on economic development, on how to generate financing for promoting renewable energy in Bangladesh and also a comparative survey of practices in different South Asian countries.

The first Application workshop of USAID/SARI was held in Kerala. I hope this second workshop will help SAWIE achieve agreed momentum towards future success. I also hope that all of you will enjoy the three-day workshop in Dhaka and the foreign participants will enjoy their visit to Bangladesh. I now take this opportunity to request all participants to kindly join me in observing one minute silence for the eternal peace of Late Engr. Quamrul Islam Siddique.

Thank you.