

Green activists demand green tax

Staff Correspondent

Green activists on Thursday demanded green tax to brickfields, private vehicles and other carbon producing sectors in proposed national budget for 2012-13 fiscal year.

They also expressed their deep concern for insufficient allocation in the proposed budget.

They were addressing a seminar on 'Is Bangladesh Prepared for Future Climate Change Problems, National Budget 2012-13 and Climate Change Adaptation' organised by Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh and Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods at the National Press Club in the capital.

They also demanded transparency in using Climate Change Trust Fund.

They said Bangladesh climate change strategy and action plan should be considered as a matter of integration in national planning and budgeting. All ministries should prepare a document for a climate change adaptation issue while prime minister must oversee the coordination and integration of the issue, they added.

Chair of parliamentary standing committee on ministry of labour and employment Israfil Alam, lawmaker and member of parliamentary standing committee on ministry of environment and forest Soharab Ali Sana and lawmaker Saheen Monwara Haque also spoke, among others.

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DHAKA, June 14: Green activists at a seminar on Thursday called upon the government to give the climate adaptation issue almost priority in the national budget. Climate adaptation should be treated on a priority basis, with integration of all ministries, in the national budget, and special importance be attached to all the activities related to the issue to bring transparency in it, green activists suggested at the seminar "Is Bangladesh Prepared for Future Climate Change Problems, National Budget 2012-13 and Climate Change Adaptation".

Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (EquityBD) and Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihood (CSRL) organised the seminar at the Jatiya Press Club, said a release of EquityBD.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, chief of EquityBD, moderated the seminar while Israfil Alam, MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Sohrab Ali Sana MP, member Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Environment and Forest, Saheen Monwara Haque MP, Ziaul Haque Mukta, Asia Regional Policy Coordinator of Oxfam, Great Britain also participated in the discussions.

Zakir Hossain Khan of Transparency International Bangladesh criticised the fund disbursement process of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) run by World Bank.

There is hardly any transparency maintained in running the funds and 90 percent allocation of these funds were distributed for the non-coastal areas instead of the most vulnerable coastal areas, Zakir said.

There is a coordination gap between the ministry of forests and other ministries in implementing BCCTF and each ministry should have a plan of actions on integration of climate adaptation issues in view of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), Syed Aminul Haque of EquityBD said in his keynote paper.

Ziaul Haque Mukta of Oxfam GB praised the government for inclusion of the climate issues in its different planning documents, outline perspective plan, sixth five-year-plan, and also inclusion of clause "18. a" in the constitution.

He also criticised poor activities in implementation of both the funds. He further blasted absence of transparency and accountability in climate financing.

Israfil Alam, MP, and Sohrab Ali Sana, MP, also admitted the limitation of BCCTF allocation.

Moderator of the seminar Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EquityBD observed, there is little hope for foreign aid to come for climate adaptation as economic health of Europe and America is in a bad condition now. He urged the government to execute all the climate adaptation projects from the national revenue.

Right groups for integration of climate funding in budget

City Desk

Discussants at a post budget seminar on "Is Bangladesh prepared for future climate change problems and national budget for 2012-13" said climate change issues should be integrated in the activities of all development ministries instead of leaving it as the lone responsibility of the ministry of forests and environment.

They also urged the government to treat all climate projects, be it at adaptation or mitigation levels, as the priority action plan of the government in all ministries. EquityBD and Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihood (CSRL) held the seminar to press home their concerns in the new budget at National Press Club in the city.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EquityBD moderated the event while Syed Aminul Haque of the organization presented the keynote paper.

Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labor and Employment Israfil Alam MP; Member, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Environment and Forest Soharab Ali Sana MP, Saheen Monwara Haque MP and Ex state Minister KM Jahangir, Ziaul Haque Mukta of Oxfam, Zakir Hossain Khan of Transparency International Bangladesh, among others spoke on the occasion.

Speakers said the government should achieve capacity in implementing climate related projects effectively. Moreover preparation of climate projects should be discussed with local stakeholders in the grassroots while the Parliament should also discuss it at the national level, along with involvement of experts from different levels to make such projects action oriented.

They said there is hardly any transparency and accountability in climate change financing mechanism. These should be overcome and its reflection should be ensured in the budget.

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