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16 NOV 1992

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The Bangladesh Observer

Radiation within 10 miles feared

Shifting of BAEC may bring disaster

Staff Correspondent

The proposed transfer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission from its present location on the Dhaka University campus to Savar is likely to bear a great risk of radiation within the radius of 10 miles in case of any breakage as the van-de-graaf accelerator and the cobalt radiator plant have become worn out due to use for a long time. Transfer of these plants will involve serious risk during the process of transit, some senior scientists of the Commission feared.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia announced the transfer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission from the present location to Savar during the medal distribution of Dhaka University on October 1. She also simultaneously announced the handing of the BAEC premises to Dhaka University.

Moreover the transfer of the facilities of the Commission will affect the research work of Dhaka University. The prime motive of establishment of BAEC on the D.U. campus was to build a healthy research collaboration between the scientists of the Atomic Energy Commission and the researchers of Dhaka University. The facilities of the Commission have been serving as the strong base of the University learning to create good scientists.

Teachers of Dhaka University largely participated in the research

and development activities of the AEC around the van-de-graaf, an atom smashing mini reactor and 5000 curie cobalt source plants. These two heavy nuclear research plants were installed in two separate houses with reinforced radiation protected building. According to a source each wall of the two houses are five feet broad under ten and five feet below the grounds on the concrete basements respectively with heavy roofs.

The thesis group of students and those work for Ph.D. use these facilities for analysis of their thesis work. At least 10 university students and some working scientists doing their Ph.D.'s are working around these facilities.

The atomic energy scientists feared these facilities might not be

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BAEC

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operational after their reassemble and transfet to other sites. In addition to it, several crores of Taka will be needed to rehouse them in the new sites, which they feel will be wasteful expenditure which a developing country can ill afford. The transfer of these facilities, they said, would adversely affect research activities specially in the field of Nuclear Physics for the students of Dhaka University.

This Centre's research activities are not only confined to fundamental and applied research but also extend facilities to social and commercial spheres. In the commercial side, the AEC laboratory has been examining radioactive contamination and wholesomeness of food and food products entering the country through various transit points. If the Centre is shifted to Savar quick services may not be available and clearance will be delayed.

With the costly equipment like polarigraph, charmatograph, spectroscopy, spectrometers etc. Analytical Chemistry Division of the Centre taking small samples, quality and purity of imported and exported food and food products are determined. It is desirable that such facilities should be located to the nearest point of transit or where goods are largely marketed. Any shift of the Centre to an odd place will delay such examination and add to the sufferings of the people at large.

Moreover, the centre has a rich library second to none in the country so far as scientific journals and up-to-date publications are concerned. Most of the scientists of the country use the library for their research activities. In addition to this, the students of Dhaka University use the library for their thesis. The central location of the centre facilitate hundreds of students and scientists. At present 200 university students and teachers are enrolled as users of this library.