

Staff Reporter

US Ambassador Dan W Mozena has suggested Bangladesh to go for a dynamic program to explore gas both in offshore and onshore areas, and concentrate on quality education to help Bangladesh turn an Asian tiger.

“You need to have a dynamic program to explore gas right now. I don’t know whether any exploration is going on in offshore and onshore areas but it should be aggressive one,” he told economic reporters at the National Press Club yesterday.

Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) arranged the event. ERF President Sultan Mahmud and General Secretary Sajjadur Rahman were also present.

Mozena said Bangladesh needs power and energy to become an Asian tiger. “This Asian tiger would reflect major investment in the nation’s power, energy, ports and railroads so Bangladesh would have the modern infrastructure.”

He also talked about ‘attractive’ price structure in exploring energy saying ‘you’ll have to be in a position to make money’.

Identifying the challenges ahead of Bangladesh, the US Ambassador said governance issues, red tape, corruption and political instability are all resolvable. “Every challenge for Bangladesh can be fixed.”

Appreciating Bangladesh’s progress in various areas, Mozena said the Asian tiger would be a welcoming home for foreign and domestic investment by improving the rule of law, reducing red tape, reining in corruption and minimising the threat of political instability.

Asked what stands in the way of becoming an Asian tiger by Bangladesh right now, he said education is the number one reason. “I think...in my view number one reason is education. I believe education is the way to build the country.”

He laid emphasis on real and quality education, recruiting the best young people as teachers with adequate training facilities for the teachers with smart salaries and good supervision.

Mozena said there are many schools where there is no adequate library facility for the students. “You need to connect all classrooms with high-speed internet to get in touch with virtual libraries.”

Responding to a question on Bangladesh’s joining in Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), he said Bangladesh needs to assess whether that makes sense for Bangladesh.

“If it does, that’s a good thing,” he said adding that Bangladesh needs to work with the highest quality banks to get quality loans to do quality projects.

Meanwhile, the US envoy disagreed with the notion that Bangladesh pays US\$ 800 million annually as tariff for goods to enter the US market saying Bangladesh pays zero tariff as the buyers actually pay it.

America is the largest single-country market Bangladeshi exports amounting to over US\$ 5 billion a year.

Mozena said the Asian tiger would be the nexus of and a giant contributor of goods to one of the emerging great trade routes of the 21st century, the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, linking South Asia with China, South East Asia and the world.

“I believe America is a natural economic partner for Bangladesh, and I look for the day when the investment and economic ties between our countries much greater than today,” he said.

The US diplomat said growing economic relations between America and Bangladesh can contribute significantly to Bangladesh’s great quest to build Sonar Bangla.

