

BEPZA International Investors Summit- 2018
Inaugural Ceremony

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Honorable Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Wednesday, 11 Magh 1424, 24 January 2018

Bismillahir Rahmanir

The Chair,
Dear colleagues,
Investors from home and abroad, and business leaders,
Dear employees and workers of EPZs,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the BEPZA International Investors Summit-2018.

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority-BEPZA has already made well-acquainted the country's EPZs as attractive destinations for investment to the investors from home and abroad.

The main driving force of our economy is our private sector which has been playing an important role in expanding our industries and exports, and creating employment opportunities. The government has been performing the role of a facilitator in this regard.

BEPZA has also been playing a pivotal role in boosting export, creating new job opportunities and women empowerment through attracting investment and diversification of export baskets.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the independence, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, undertook rehabilitation works of the war-ravaged Bangladesh alongside industrialize the country. He nationalized the left-out industries. During the 3-and-a-half year tenure of Bangabandhu, the GDP growth rate crossed 7 percent benchmark. But the post-75 rulers sold out the industries at a through-away price. They were engaged in self-aggrandizement instead of improving the lots of the common people.

Assuming office in 1996, we started boosting the private sector for rapid industrialization of the country. We were the first to hold BEPZA Investors Conference with the participation of investors from home and abroad. At that time, Chittagong EPZ and Dhaka EPZ with limited scale were in operation.

Later on, we expanded the Chittagong and Dhaka EPZs, and set up Comilla EPZ. Not only in Dhaka and Chittagong, we thought that employment opportunities should be created in remote areas, especially in the disadvantaged areas through industrialization. So, we have established EPZs at Mongla, Ishwardi and Nilphamari. The EPZs have brought a dramatic change in the socio-economic condition of people of the areas. Most of the EPZs now operating in the country were set up during Awami League's tenure.

Investment of BEPZA has been increased two-folds while export increased 2.5-folds during 2009-2017. Some 468 industries are in operation in 8 EPZs set up on 2307.27 acres of land. About 5 lakh Bangladeshis have been working in the EPZs. Of them 64% are women. During the last 9 years, some 283,620 new jobs have been created in the EPZs.

The EPZs under BEPZA is contributing about 20% of the total national exports and foreign investment. Due to our investment friendly policies, investors from 38 countries,

including China, Japan, South Korea, India, US and UK have been producing world famous brand-items in the factories of EPZs.

Dear audience,

Our land resource is limited. With this scarce land, we have to produce sufficient food to meet our demand in one hand, on the other, create employment opportunities through establishing industries. For this, we have to ensure skilled and economical use of land. We must not shrink our farmland by establishing industries indiscriminately.

We have still a lot of unfertile and fallow lands. Again, there are some areas where only one crop is produced in a year. For establishing industries, such land should be selected. We should discourage setting up industries on lands where 3/4 crops are grown per year.

For this reason, we have taken initiative to establish 100 special economic zones across the country where investors from home and abroad can invest to build industries. It is also convenient for the service providers to provide their services if industries are located on single premises.

The Mirersarai Economic Zone is formally launched today with the unveiling of the foundation plaque. Some 1,150 acres of land has already been allocated for the zone. I hope that BEPZA will demonstrate its success in running the Economic Zones like the EPZs.

Dear investors and business people,

We have provided highest facilities, including cent percent repatriation of capital and profit and tax-holidays, for attracting foreign investment. Besides, we have huge skilled and comparatively low-cost workers. We have overcome the hurdles in the fields of electricity, energy, roads and other infrastructure facilities.

We have undertaken a number of mega projects for creating conducive investment atmosphere. Work on metro-rail in the capital is underway. We have been implementing the Padma Bridge project with our own fund. The Padma Bridge, once completed, will bring a revolutionary change in the socio-economic condition of the people not only of the southern Bangladesh but also of the whole country.

We have constructed Rupsha Bridge and commissioned Paira Port. Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways have been turned into 4-lanes. Work on turning Dhaka-Bangabandhu Bridge highway into 4-lanes is underway. An international airport will be built in the country while a domestic one at Bagerhat.

Power generation capacity has been increased to 16,350 megawatt from mere 3,200 megawatt. Work on Matarbari and Rampal power plants is going on. Work on the Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant is also progressing satisfactorily.

Dependency on limited items is one of the main weaknesses of our export trade. We have been trying to remove the weakness with inclusion of new items in the export basket and boosting export of comparatively less-familiar items.

BEPZA has been sincerely working to build environmental-friendly industrial zones. It has undertaken an initiative to establish low carbon green zone.

To maintain eco-balance, central effluent treatment plants (CETP) have been established at Dhaka, Chittagong and Comilla EPZs. A garment factory of Adamjee EPZ topped the world list of green factories which is a pride for us.

Dear workers,

Our government always gives importance on workers-owners management relationship. We have enacted 'EPZ Workers Welfare Council and Industrial Relation Law 2010' for protecting the rights of the workers. Under the law, workers of EPZs can choose their representatives through secret ballots. The elected representatives have been rendering functions related to workers' rights.

During the last 7 years, we have hiked the pay and allowances of the workers of EPZs twice. They are getting healthcare services and medicines at free of cost. Women workers are enjoying maternity leave and other benefits. Wards of the workers are getting facilities to

study at the EPZ public schools and colleges. Most of the EPZs have daycare centres. I would like to thank the BEPZA and investors for ensuring all these facilities.

We are very careful in protecting the rights of the workers. We have already formed minimum wage commission for increasing the pay and allowances of the workers of garments industries. I would like to urge the workers not to be misguided by any quarter or instigation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been working to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed and prosperous one by 2041. To achieve these goals, we need to create employment opportunities through attracting investment from home and abroad. Our moral support and economic assistance will continue for improving business environment, reducing doing business and establishing priority-based industries.

We achieved desired progress in all sectors during the last nine years. The BEPZA-run EPZs, BEPZA Economic Zones and other Economic Zones have created unlimited scope for investment.

Let us come and build an investment-friendly Bangladesh. Let us build golden Bangladesh as dreamt by the Father of the Nation Banabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with our united efforts.

Extending my heartfelt thanks to the officials, employees and workers of BEPZA and EPZs, and investors from home and abroad, I declare the BEPZA International Investors Summit 2018 open.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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