

First Concrete Pouring Ceremony of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant Inaugural Ceremony

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a Very Good Morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the First Concrete Pouring Ceremony of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

This is a joyful day for us. Bangladesh enters into the nuclear world with beginning of the construction work of the main structure. It's a pride and joy for us as a nation.

I pay homage to the memory of the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of our Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. My respect goes to the four national leaders. I also pay my respect to 3 million martyrs and 2 hundred thousand women who lost their innocence. Salam to the valiant freedom fighters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Construction of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is our long-cherished dream that was sown in 1961 in the then Pakistan era. At that time several physical works, including land acquisition, were completed. But the Pakistan government abruptly stopped the work and shifted the plant to West Pakistan showing step-motherly attitude to the East.

After liberation, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman undertook reconstruction of the war-ravaged country alongside construction of Rooppur nuclear plant. He ordered to establish contact with the nuclear power plant construction firms. As per his directive, work was started but with his brutal assassination on 15th August 1975, the entire process was abandoned.

No government took initiative till 1996 when our government revived the project for its implementation.

You know, establishment of a nuclear power plant is a complex and lengthy process. Nuclear safety and waste management are very critical. So, the construction process goes through a lot of international rules and regulations. We included the nuclear power generation programme in our energy policy of 1996.

We sought cooperation of IAEA for commissioning the Rooppur nuclear power plant. A time-bound plan has also been worked out with the help of IAEA. But before completion of the entire process, our 1996-2001 tenure ended.

After coming to power in 2001, the BNP-Jamaat government stopped implementation of many people-centric programmes. Rooppur power plant was such a project that was not implemented.

After assuming office in 2009 again, we have taken up the project again and Russian Federation has come forward to help implement the project. I convey my gratitude to the Russian government and its people for extending the support.

As a trusted friend, Russia not only extended material and moral support to our liberation war in 1971, but also took part in rebuilding war-ravaged Bangladesh after the independence. I recall with deep gratitude the contribution and sacrifice of the Russian people.

Our government recognizes that electricity is a key ingredient for socio-economic development of the country. Adequate and reliable supply of electricity is an important pre-requisite for attracting both domestic and foreign investment. Electricity is in the priority list of the demands of the people.

We have taken initiatives to meet the high demand of people after taking office in 2009. At that time, the total electricity production was 3200 megawatt which was too small compared to the demand.

We undertook short, mid and long-term plans to meet the demand. Now the total electricity production capacity rose to nearly 16,000 megawatt. About 83 percent people have come under electricity coverage. Solar home system was introduced in the areas where power transmission line is yet to be installed.

In order to have a sustainable power supply, we have laid emphasis on alternative sources of energy like solar power, nuclear power, wind energy etc alongside fossil fuels in our energy policy.

We would get 1200 megawatt of electricity from Rooppur power plant by 2023 and another 1200 by the following year totaling a 2400 megawatt by 2024. Nearly 10 percent of the total production will come from nuclear energy source by that time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Government has given top priority on the issue of nuclear safety and radiological protections while implementing the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant. We are strictly following IAEA safety standard and other relevant guidance as well as international good practices.

We have promulgated Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Act-2012 to strengthen national nuclear regulatory infrastructure to ensure safe and secured applications to nuclear techniques and building the country's first nuclear power plant.

An independent nuclear regulatory authority styled as Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority has already been formed and bilateral relationship with the nuclear regulatory body of Russian Federation as well as the IAEA has been established for the capacity building of our national nuclear regulatory authority.

Our nuclear energy program is very transparent. The country has signed all the major international treaties, agreements and protocols related to the nuclear non-proliferation.

Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority has been continuously supervising and monitoring the safety aspects at every step of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant construction as per Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Act-2012 and IAEA guidelines.

The design of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant has been developed in such a way that it will not succumb to any accident, natural or manmade.

We have also taken proper initiative for training of manpower for safe operation of the plants. All measures have also been taken so that it does not cause any harm to human beings and environment.

One of the main concerns of any nuclear power plant is waste management of the plant. Russia will take the wastes and we have struck a deal in this regard with Russia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh has made her mark within the domestic framework in the realms of socio-economic developments. Today, Bangladesh is a success story and role model for the developing world in areas such as poverty alleviation, universal education, women empowerment, improvement of child and maternal health care, and in maintaining commendable economic growth and macro-economic stability.

We have a record 7.28 percent GDP growth last year. At present the poverty rate has been downed to 22 percent compared to 41 percent in 2005. Nearly 50 million people were elevated to the middle class. Per capita income has risen to USD 1,610 from a mere USD 543 in 2005 and foreign currency reserve over USD 32 billion from a meager USD 3 billion. We have been implementing the mega project like Padma Bridge project with our own resources.

We want to transform Bangladesh into a middle income country by the year 2021, the Golden Jubilee year of Bangladesh's Independence, and a developed one by 2041. I hope that Rooppur Power Plant will play an important role in achieving the goal.

With these few words, I declare the first Concrete Pouring work of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant Project open.

Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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