

'Dhaka Water Summit-2017'

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair,
Colleagues,
Hon'ble Minister, Sherpas, Delegates from participating countries,
Representatives of Development Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a Very Good Morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the 'Dhaka Water Summit-2017'.

The 6th goal of the 17 goals of the 'SDG-2030' declared by the United Nations is 'Ensuring safe water and sewerage system for all'.

I hope that the inter-active dialogue of the experts at the 3-day 'Dhaka Water Summit-2017', Delta Conference and Sherpa meetings will help formulate future strategies to face the challenges of safe water management, sewerage and sanitation.

At the outset of my deliberation, I pay my deep homage to the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I recall with gratitude the four national leaders, 3-million martyrs and 2-hundred thousand women, who lost their innocence, in the war of liberation in 1971.

Dear audience,

Water is responsible for the 90 percent disasters in the world. 70 percent deaths in natural calamities occur owing to flood and other water-related disasters. Potable water is not only essential for human being but also for the entire animal kingdom.

Less than 1% water resource of the earth is considered as safe for drinking. As a result, the accessibility to drinkable water could not be ensured for about one billion people of the world till now. The form of water usage has been changed due to the increase of population, fast urbanization and technological differences. However, the threat to the availability of drinkable water still persists. About 40 percent people of the world are suffering more or less from the problem of safe drinking water.

More than 1.7 billion people can't meet their demand of water even though they live in the river basins. Over 80 percent of wastes created by human beings are creating greater environmental pollution after returning to water and the nature.

Bangladesh is a land of rivers. One-third of its total area is water resources. There are over 800 small and big rivers, and 57 trans-boundary rivers in our country.

After the independence, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman realized that proper management of rivers and water resources is closely inter-linked to all sorts of development of Bangladesh. Realizing the importance of water in overall development of the country, the Father of the nation constituted 'Joint River Commission-JRC' in 1972 on trans-boundary water management.

In continuation of the process, the Awami League government in 1996 resolved the water sharing dispute of the Ganges with neighboring India through signing of the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Agreement.

Our government has already made remarkable success in ensuring safe water for the people. As per MDG, 84% people were set to bring under safe water by 2015. But 87% people

were brought under safe water supply in Bangladesh by the stipulated timeframe. At present, 98% urban population of Bangladesh is getting safe water.

On the other hand, 99% people of the country have been brought under sanitation coverage. Of them 61% people have been brought under cent percent healthy sanitation. The rate of excretion in open places has dropped drastically below 1% during the last 8 years. It was 42% even in 2003. Setting new target, a time-based action plan is being implemented in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have laid special emphasis on preserving and using surface water decreasing the dependency on underground water.

We have taken multi-fold programs for special communities, like children of educational institutions, saline or arsenic-affected areas, remote-hilly areas well ahead of announcing the directives of SDG-6. Safe water is being supplied to the grassroots people of remote areas through these programs.

The achievement of SDG-6 will make easier attaining at least 7 other goals. These are: End hunger (SDG-2), Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all (SDG-3), Ensure access to affordable energy for all (SDG-7), Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization (SDG-9), Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG-11), Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG-13), Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources (SDG-14).

As Bangladesh is a Deltaic country, its water management is identical from the other regions of the world. A total of five hundred million people live in the delta region which comprises only five percent of world's total land area. The delta area is densely populated. Many large and big cities, ports, big industrial belts and agriculture-based areas are built in the delta region.

Our government has initiated a 100-year exemplary plan titled 'Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100' for the coordinated water resources management. Under the plan availability of water, its uses and ecological issues have been brought under consideration. Besides, Bangladesh has been divided into six divisions under the plan considering the geological diversity and water features where plane-land, hill and coastal areas are designed in different plans. The ambitious is being implemented with the assistance of 12 development partners.

Generally, the main problems in daily safe water use and management arsenic and salinity pollution, reduction of ground water, scarcity of preservation of surface water, misuse of water and pollution by industrial wastages and other sources. Our government has been implementing short-, mid- and long-term plans to overcome these problems.

A few significant programs among many such ones being implemented by our government in the water management are listed below:

- Formulation of National Water Policy 1999;
- Formulation of Water Supply and Sewerage Act 1996;
- National Water Supply and Sanitation Act 2014 formulation;
- National Policy for Arsenic Mitigation and Implementation Plan (NAMIP) to mitigate arsenic related problems;
- A project on Implementation Plan for Arsenic Mitigation for Water Supply 2016 is underway;
- The government allocated BDT 14 thousand 9 hundred crore for these projects during the last eight years;
- Under these two programs, various projects costing BDT 32 thousand crore are now being implemented;

- Seven thousand ponds have already been desalinated by filtering the pond water and 32 thousand 6 hundred deep tube wells have been installed in the saline-affected areas;
- 4 thousand and 7 hundred reservoirs have been constructed to preserve rain waters;
- In the capital Dhaka, new canals are being excavated, and initiatives are on to re-excavate the old one and preserve the reservoirs
- Steps are underway to build reservoirs in industrial and housing areas, installing rainwater harvesting system and draining out wastes and polluted water;
- Programs are underway for ensuring safe water from surface water sources by 2021 in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and other divisional cities;
- Dredging is underway in important rivers for maintaining navigability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The foreign policy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was "Friendship to all, malice to none". We have to pay attention to safer water management considering the present-day world scenario and the spirit of friendship to all.

Some 2.4 billion people across the globe are still deprived of sanitation facilities. Besides, a total of one million people, most of them are children, are dying every year for scarcity of safe water. On an average, one thousand children die every day for lack of pure drinking water.

I have raised the issue in the international forums earlier. In the Climate Summit held in Marrakesh of Morocco on 15th November 2016 I also proposed for creating a fund for safe water and sanitation for the countries whose water management systems are adversely affected by climate change.

Bangladesh is one of the members in the special panel for water and sanitation constituted by the United Nations. A high powered panel, jointly initiated by former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, comprising the heads of government and state of 10 countries, was formed on 21st April 2016. I am also a member of the panel.

Bangladesh became a role model in achieving MDGs. The poverty rate has decreased to 23.2 % from 41.5% in 2005-06. We have achieved significant success in decreasing income gap, lowering the number of underweight children and also attaining gender equity in primary and secondary education. Mortality rate of under 5-year children has decreased to 4.1% from 15.1%.

Bangladesh is also very successful in lowering maternal mortality rate, increasing enrollment in primary education, empowering women and achieving other goals.

Bangladesh has been honored with United Nations' MDG Award, South-South Award, Champion of the Earth and UNESCO Peace Tree Award as reorganization of these successes.

We want to supply safer water to all people before 2030 set by SDG's timeframe. By implementing Vision-2021, we shall ensure safer water supply for all within 2021.

Our aim is to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 on the Golden Jubilee of our independence and a developed one by 2041.

I would like to thank the High Level Panel on Water for their important discussion on water security for all. I would especially like to thank the Sherpas for their dedication in representing the needs of the people in our Delta region. I am hopeful that through the dedicated work of the Delta coalition members, we can hope for a better and brighter future for everyone.

I would also like to thank all the hon'ble ministers, representatives of development partners and distinguished participants. I hope that your stay in Bangladesh is going to be a pleasant one and you will enjoy sharing your experience with others once you return home.

With these few words, I declare the Dhaka Water Summit-2017 open. Thank you all.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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