

Bangladesh embarks on nuclear power programme

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Bangladesh on Wednesday embarked on a nuclear power programme as the prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, inaugurated the first phase work of the much-awaited Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant Project in Pabna.

'After decades of speculation, plans and programmes, commissioning of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is going to be a reality heralding a new era for Bangladesh. This is indeed a joyful day for the countrymen,' the prime minister said inaugurating the project.

Mentioning that safety is the top-priority for the Rooppur NPP Project, the prime minister said the government will never compromise with safety standards.

'Our nuclear energy programme is very transparent as Bangladesh has signed all the major international treaties, agreements and protocols related to the nuclear non-proliferation,' she said.

For embarking on a nuclear power programme, Sheikh Hasina said, her government has given top priority to the issues of the development of an appropriate nuclear infrastructure based on the IAEA Safety Standards 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- Rooppur NPP,' she said.

Held under the auspices of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology, the function was addressed by former Russian prime minister Sergey Kirienko, also director general of Russia's State Atomic Energy Commission (ROSATOM), planning minister AK Khandakar, state minister for home Shamsul Haque Tuku and Head of Department of Technical Cooperation of IAEA Osqar Acquino.

The prime minister said an independent nuclear regulatory authority called Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority has already been formed.

Besides, she said, 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.

The prime minister said during her bilateral talks with the Russian President in Moscow in January last, she requested Vladimir Putin for consideration of an innovation-friendly approach in constructing Rooppur NPP with the safest reactor design.

She said this could be capable of tolerating any severe man-made or natural events, namely seismic events, tsunami, flooding and other natural events and generate electricity in a safe, secured and economic manner in the reactor's life time.

Sheikh Hasian said the Russian president assured her of providing the latest and safest nuclear

technology for Rooppur NPP.

'We believe that the Russian Federation will follow international standards in every stage of Rooppur NPP implementation and also provide Bangladesh with a technology that will operate safely and effectively under any climatic condition,' she said.

'We are also happy and satisfied with the development of manpower for operation and maintenance of Rooppur NPP as well as management of radioactive waste and taking spent fuel back to the Russian Federation,' she said.

Sheikh Hasina said her government recognises that electricity is a key ingredient for socio-economic development of the country. So, the government has under taken a plan to make the self reliant in power generation by 2020.

Over the last four and half years a total of 34 power plants were constructed and 54 now remain under construction. Eleven coal-based power plant with capacity of 1,300 MW each would be constructed jointly with India, China and Malaysia and 250 MW power out of 500 MW purchased from India will be added to national grid on Saturday next.

'Adequate and reliable supply of electricity is an important pre-requisite for attracting both domestic and foreign investment. That's why, we have set up a goal of providing electricity to all citizens and economic sectors,' she said.

The prime minister said although there are many arenas of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the generation of electricity by using nuclear energy has been given top most priority by the present government considering the chronic power shortage of the country.

Presently, she said, the country is evolving an energy-mix diversification, where generation of 10 per cent of electricity from nuclear energy by 2021 through early implementation of nuclear power project is assumed as one of the choices to meet the growing energy needs.

Dhaka inked a crucial framework agreement with Moscow for construction of the nuclear power plant on May 21, 2010. Under the agreement, ROSATOM will construct two units of the Rooppur NPP, each of 1,000 MW capacity, at a cost of \$1.5 to 2 billion.

The groundbreaking ceremony took place two years after Bangladesh signed a landmark deal with Russia on November 2, 2011 finalising arrangements to install the country's first ever nuclear power plant.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha

P.S.

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