

# Where angels fear to tread

ABDUL HANNAN

At a time when many advanced countries including Germany, Japan, Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain are scaling back and phasing-out nuclear power production and banning new nuclear energy plants in the wake of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of Rooppur nuclear power plant on October 2.

The plant will be built with Russian technical and financial assistance. The prime minister and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the \$ 2 billion agreement in Moscow in January 2013 to build and operate two nuclear power reactors of 1,000MW each.

Yet, over two dozen eminent Bangladeshi scientists, academics and nuclear experts at home and abroad, in their writings in Bangladesh newspapers, sounded alarm bells and voiced concerns about safety and the devastating consequences of an accident in the plant in a densely populated country like Bangladesh. They pointed out potential problems in radioactive waste management, transport, and storage facilities in the country, and expressed concern about the danger of environmental damage because of radiation contamination of air, soil and water in the event of an accident in the reactor.

I am no scientist, let alone a nuclear expert. But I have read with deep apprehension those concerns and deem it my moral responsibility as a concerned citizen to recount the warnings of the scientists in order for the authorities to be able to review the decision.

A nuclear power plant is complex, sophisticated and high-tech. Bangladesh does not have skilled manpower and technical expertise to efficiently operate the plant and chances of accidents are extremely high. All the major nuclear power plant accidents in the past -- 3-Mile Island in Harrisburg, America in 1979, Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011 -- were caused by faults in operation and mismanagement, and not necessarily because of earthquake or tsunami.

Bangladesh, which cannot efficiently manage solid waste of the city and does not have the capacity to manage factory safety and building construction in the garment industry, should think many times before undertaking such a high-risk venture.

The existing gas-based power plants are regularly tripping due to faulty operation.

Nuclear power plants are normally built in remote, sparsely populated areas. Bangladesh is a densely populated country. Authorised discharge of solid liquid and gas will expose the surrounding area of Rooppur to high doses of radiation. Any accident will engulf the people in the vicinity with radioactive fallout which will affect the entire population of the country and beyond, causing cancer, miscarriage, birth deformity and impaired nervous system. Large swaths of arable land will be contaminated.

Fukushima disaster displaced 150,000 households after radiation leaked into air, soil and water. Thousands died and many more were maimed in the Chernobyl disaster. The economic cost of clean up, evacuation and medical treatment is estimated to be more than \$ 100 billion. The Chernobyl accident seems to have put the nail on the coffin of nuclear power in Europe. The decision to go for nuclear energy plant in Bangladesh is beyond comprehension.

A nuclear power plant needs steady availability of water for cooling the reactor. Because of recession of the Padma river from the site of the plant, particularly during dry season, water flow will be a matter of serious concern. Bangladesh does not have the capacity or the sophisticated storage facility to dispose-off radioactive nuclear waste. The geological structure of Rooppur is woefully inadequate to store the nuclear waste, which cannot be dumped anywhere outside Bangladesh. Russia will take care of spent fuel only and there is no agreement about nuclear waste management and transport. This is a matter of grave concern.

There is no infrastructural facility in Bangladesh for industrial production of materials needed for the plant, and we will have to depend on Russia for supply of such materials. Besides, the Russian VVER-1000 reactor is an outdated, unsafe and discarded model susceptible to accidents.

Political unrest and upheaval, and

militants engaging in violence, together with poor security and enforcement apparatus, could be threats for the plant.

These are matters of deep concern indeed. They just cannot be wished away. The prime minister's anxiety to redress the critical energy deficit of 5,000 MW against the current demand of 7,500 MW, which causes serious setback to economic development, is well understood.

But people question the compulsion of the government to rush to the

*A nuclear power plant is complex, sophisticated and high-tech. Bangladesh does not have skilled manpower and technical expertise to efficiently operate the plant and chances of accidents are extremely high.*



*There is no death of nuclear fuel in the world, with prospect of endless new fuel from the fast breeder reactors. Global energy economists suggest that nuclear power is the cheapest way of power generation.*

decision without public hearing and popular consensus on the issue, which are really crucial. The economic gains from the plant at the expense of threat to life of people needed to have been seriously discussed and debated.

The decision to go for a nuclear plant should be reviewed in favour of other renewable sources of energy like solar, wind and biomass. There is no denying that much of energy shortfall is due to waste, mismanagement and theft -- popularly known as 'system loss.' The existing power plants should be renovated and repaired.

We are already being slowly poisoned by adulterated food, air pollution and contaminated water. We can very well do without a nuclear power plant for prosperity. As *The Daily Star* columnist Mohammad Badrul Ahsan so eloquently said in his article on Rampal power plant on Friday last: "But one less project cannot be a disaster for this country when immediate illumination threatens to leave long term future in the dark." The quotation could not be more relevant to the issue.

The writer is a contributor to the *The Daily Star*.

# Rooppur is far from Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashion

A.T.M. ABDUL WAHAB

ROOPPUR is far away from Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashion in respect of safety features, security and protection system. The owners of Rana Plaza and Tazreen fashion constructed the factory buildings without obeying the building codes. Rana Plaza building

post-operation period our engineers will achieve experience, knowledge and skill to take over the operation and maintenance of the plant. Dhaka University has already opened a nuclear science course and I urge the Buet authority to open nuclear engineering course.

Russia has designed, constructed and operated hundreds of nuclear power plants at home and abroad

natural gas is depleting in Bangladesh. On the other hand, there is no death of nuclear fuel in the world, with prospect of endless new fuel from the fast breeder reactors. Global energy economists suggest that nuclear power is the cheapest way of power generation.

Bangladesh has signed nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Safeguards Agreements and protocol additional to the Safeguard Agreement and Bilateral Agreement on peaceful uses of atomic energy with USA, France, Japan and other countries. IAEA has always supported Bangladesh in its search for nuclear and agreed to provide all technological support for implementation of nuclear power plants.

The Pakistan government before 1971 and Bangladesh government after liberation accorded formal approval for setting up a nuclear power plant at Rooppur. The project could not, however, be implemented for various reasons. Nuclear power plant could not see the light of the day in the '60s because the central government in Pakistan had shown step-motherly attitude. After liberation of Bangladesh, a proposal was made in 1974 for construction of a nuclear power plant.

I congratulate the government of Sheikh Hasina for undertaking the bold step and implementing the cutting edge technology Rooppur power plant in her present tenure.

With addition of 2,000MW nuclear power in our grid, the Bangladesh economy will be boosted and poverty can be reduced. Bangladesh will attain the status of elite state in the committee of nations. In the next 20 years, with acquired experience and knowledge from Rooppur, we could build another nuclear plant to invigorate the economy, remove poverty and achieve prosperity of Bangladesh.

The writer is a retired Major General, and was sub-sector commander in the Liberation War.

# SONY

make.believe

## শনি - র্যাংগ্‌স

ঐদ উপলক্ষে - এ

## বর্ষসেরা

# শ্রেষ্ঠ অফার

ব্রাভিয়া, সাইবারশট, ব্লু-রে প্লেয়ার হোমথিয়েটার, হাইফাই সিস্টেম, প্রজেক্টরে মেগা ডিস্কাউন্ট

ব্রাভিয়ার সাথে বাডল অফারে

এক্সপেরিয়া মোবাইল সেট ক্রয়ে **৫০%** ডিস্কাউন্ট + FREE 2pcs 3D Glasses + up to Tk. 20,000 Music System Bundle Discount

70" 3D @ Tk.5,20,000  
60" 3D @ Tk.3,15,000  
+ Bundle Discount Tk. 20,000  
+ এক্সপেরিয়া মোবাইল সেট ক্রয়ে **৫০%** ডিস্কাউন্ট

### NEW ARRIVAL BRAVIA PREMIUM MODELS

|                               |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                               |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |
| X9004A/9000<br>65", 55" & 84" | W954A<br>55" & 46" | W904A<br>55" & 46" | W804A<br>55, 47" & 42" | W704A<br>50" & 46" | R550A<br>70" & 60" |

Call for Eid Special Price

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  |  |   |   |
| Eid Special Price<br>+ Bundle Discount Up to Tk. 10,000<br>+ ৩২" সাথে মাত্র ৭০০০ টাকায় এক্সপেরিয়া ই-ডুয়েল সেট | Eid Special Price<br>+ Bundle Discount Up to Tk. 5,000<br>+ মাত্র ৭০০০ টাকায় এক্সপেরিয়া ই-ডুয়েল সেট | Eid Special Price<br>+ Bundle Discount Up to Tk. 5,000<br>+ Sony DVD Player Worth of Tk. 3000 with 32" & Head Phone Free with 24" | Eid Special Price<br>+ Bundle Discount Up to Tk. 10,000<br>+ মাত্র ৭০০০ টাকায় এক্সপেরিয়া ই-ডুয়েল সেট |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   |  |
| Eid Special Clearance Price<br>TK. 46,000<br>+ Sony Cassette Player Worth of Tk. 7000 + Bundle Discount Tk. 5000 | Eid Special Clearance Price<br>+ Sony DVD Player Worth of Tk. 3000 + Bundle Discount Tk. 5000 | Eid Special Clearance Price<br>+ 2pcs 3D Glasses + Bundle Discount Up to Tk. 20,000 + 3D Blu-ray Player Worth of Tk. 10,000 + MP3 player Free with 55" |

### Eid Special Discount

|                                |                           |                           |                                 |                   |   |            |            |            |            |                          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
|                                |                           |                           |                                 |                   |   |            |            |            |            |                          |
| Special Discount + 8GB SD Card | Special Discount Tk. 1500 | Special Discount Tk. 5000 | Special Discount Up to Tk. 2500 | Special Eid Price | Special Eid Price 2600 Lumen Tk. 58,900 2300 Lumen Tk. 44,900 | TK. 44,900 | TK. 49,900 | TK. 49,900 | TK. 64,900 | Booking Price Tk. 59,900 |

### Available at SONY RANGS Outlets

Sonartori Tower : 9663556, Shimanto Square (Old Rifles Square) : 9650901, Airport Road : 8124986, 01727083909, Farmgate: 9139200, Sony Center Bashundhara City : 9111440, Ext. 106013, Patton Mor : 9555519, 9563433, Stadium-1: 9555594, Stadium-2 : 9552376, Stadium-3 : 9554749, Mouchak : 9331870, 01816747841, Lalmitia : 9118328, Mohammadpur : 8112970, Sony Center, Gulshan-1: 9883344, Gulshan-2 : 01911485695, 9880516, Uttara : 8911971, Lalbag : 8629567, Luxmibazar: 7167548, Bashoba : 7252018, Holland Centre : 8850545, Mirpur-10 : 9010878, Mirpur-11 : 9005843, Ibrahimpur : 9872098, Shewrapara : 9015324, Dholairpar : 7443236, Jirjira : 7772026, Savar : 7742831, Narayanganj : 7632704, Norshingdi: 63086, Gazipur : 9256925, Chowrasta Gazipur : 9262381, 01751864508, Maowna: 01711871717, Mymensingh: 01712969980, Jamalpur: 0171787154, Kishoreganj: 55540, 0171673632, Sirajgonj: 65044, Comilla : 66567, Laksham: 51184, Maljdee: 63467, Chittagong Waza Corner : 611334, Agrabad: 712810, Halishahar : 710995, Feni: 61147, Feni-2 : 01711235174, Cox' Bazar: 51130, Chalk Bazar : 2553774, Khagrachari: 62429, Bandarban: 62164, Rajshahi : 774675, 775864, Khulna : 722605, 731698, Jessore : 67331, Jessore-2: 62154, 01712664041, Kusthia : 63121, 01710747889, Chourmuhoni : 52007, Barisal : 64062, Kailatia, Bogra : 01818305105, Nababbari Bogra: 51444, 60066, 01718942733, Sylhet : 710171, 725355, Moulalabi Bazar : 53707, Hobigonj: 62289, Narail: 62126, 01913-250752, Shalakhira: 62424, Magura: 62597, 01716436680, Chapainobobgong: 01712095267, Natore: 62189, Naogaon: 01715041616, Ishwardi: 63057, Patnab: 51813, Brahmanbaria: 52799, 01717105938, Ramgonj: 01712268370, Chuadanga: 62131, Rangpur: 0521-62141, 01199380344, Dinajpur 61087, Faridpur : 66111.

Official warranty NEW! 1 YEAR

Buy Smart, Be Assured! Insist on Official Warranty, It makes a difference!