



In Defense Of Electricity Generation In Bangladesh

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In 2010, fewer than six in ten Bangladeshis had electricity. Today, more than 99% of households are connected—a transformation that has touched every corner of life. Factories run shifts, students study under light, mothers deliver babies in powered clinics, and life expectancy has risen above 72 years.

From boro rice, which is entirely irrigation-dependent, to aquaculture that relies on aeration, pumping, and cold-chains, Bangladesh’s near-universal electricity access has been a quiet force behind our rise from ~32 million metric tonnes to ~37 million metric tonnes of rice (milled), and from ~3.1 million metric tonnes to ~5.0 million metric tonnes of fish since 2010. These gains in food security are as vital as the gains in manufacturing and services.

This achievement is often overshadowed by criticism of “capacity payments”—fees paid to power plants for being available, even when underutilized. These payments rose to around Tk 260–280 billion

annually. Yet what did the nation gain in return?

Bangladesh’s economy expanded from US\$115 billion in 2010 to nearly US\$450 billion today. Exports tripled to US\$55–58 billion annually, powered by electricity-reliant industries. Almost 48 million electricity customers—homes, farms, and factories—depend daily on this reliability. Studies consistently show that electricity consumption drives GDP growth, not the other way around.

The challenge now is not to undo progress but to optimize it. Retiring costly rental units, cutting system losses, and integrating renewables could save over Tk 138 billion annually.

Bangladesh ended the darkness. The next step is efficiency—ensuring that every kilowatt we generate continues to fuel growth, dignity, and resilience. **EP**

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