Nasrul Hamid says Al Gore’s Davos remarks on Rampal based on internet info

Minister of State for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid has said that former US Vice President and climate change activist Al Gore’s concerns on Rampal power plant are based on information available on the internet, and not on ‘practical knowledge’.

Al Gore termed the Rampal plant the 'dirty coal plant' at a plenary session in recently concluded World Economic Forum and urged Bangladesh not to go ahead with the project.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who was also a participant at the same session in Davos put up a strong defence to the project.

On Saturday, Hamid said that Al Gore’s recent reactions to the joint Bangladesh-India power plant that he shared during a plenary session at Davos was nothing but lack of ‘practical knowledge’.

"I think Al Gore is saying all that while sitting somewhere else. And that is why the prime minister invited him to come and see the project site for himself," Hamid told journalists.

He added, "It's not possible to sit there, read from the internet and give verdicts on everything. You must come to the site and practically see, if a project 69 km away really poses any threat or not."

Al Gore is the recent voice to add on to the 'chorus of opposition' against the project.

The UNESCO, besides several environmental groups, both within and outside the country, has asked the government to jettison the plan to set up the coal-fired electricity generation project.

They say that any environmental-threatening project within 15 km of the Sundarbans could harm the abode to the world's largest standing mangrove forests and the iconic Royal Bengal Tiger.

The government has been maintaining that the project is however safe as it is situated about 70km away from the ecological hotspot recognised as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

Determined to go ahead with the project, the government has been trying to mount a counterattack on the detractors of the project saying that the project is powered by cutting edge technology that makes it absolutely safe.

Hamid pointed out that the developed nations pushing for the cause of renewable energy also depended on coal as the staple source of energy.

Predicting that the world could not quickly shrug off coal as a key source of power, he said, "The Al Gores and others speaking of renewable energy have become developed nation today by using coal as a source of power."
Highlighting the differences between such nations and Bangladesh, he pointed out that the per capita income of Bangladesh is $1400 against $22,000 and above in renewable energy advocating countries like Denmark and Netherlands.

"Their power consumption is to the tune of 17,000 kilo watt per hour and ours is 350 kilowatt per hour. So, you cannot cite the sky for the example of the earth," he said.

He expressed confidence that although the environmentalists are opposing the project at present, they will accept it in the long run.

He also said that the government is committed to protect the environment and reiterated that the Sundarbans would not be harmed by the project.

He also said that despite a cut in global oil prices, there would be no slashing of prices of fuel at the moment.