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Two-third children outside schools

President Hussain Muhammad Ershad on Saturday said the aspirations of the developing nations to achieve progress and prosperity could only come through universalisation of education in its broadest sense, reports BSS.

The President expressed his note of optimism that the international community and the United Nations system were coming forth, resolute and determined to help eliminate illiteracy and spread basic education all over the world.

If this international commitment could be implemented, our world might enter the 21st century with confidence and pride. President Ershad said while inaugurating the three-day South and Central Asia Conference on Education for all

which began in Dhaka on Saturday. The Dhaka conference is one of the nine regional conferences being organised world-wide as preparations for the world conference on education, to be held in Thailand in early March next.

President Ershad said, "the coming century may be one of universal education, justice and prosperity in that order. Without learning there is usually no justice. Where ignorance dominates, injustice rules, and when injustice rules because ignorance dominates, prosperity and progress only remain distant dreams".

Held at the International Conference Centre, (ICC), the inaugural session was also addressed by Minister for Education Sheikh Shahidul

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Children

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Islam, who presided. Secretary Ministry of Education, Hedayet Ahmed, Director of Programmes Division, UNICEF, New York, Dr. Nyi Nyi, Executive Secretary of Inter-Agency commission of the World Conference on Education for All, Wadi D. Haddad, and Director of Bureau of the Coordination of Operational Activities of the UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Akihiro Chiba.

The world conference will be organised by the Inter-Agency Commission of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank.

The Dhaka conference has been sponsored by Asian Development Bank in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Commission.

Vice-President Moudud Ahmed, Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Ministers, senior officials, planners, eminent academicians, delegates of the participating countries and members of the diplomatic mission attended the inaugural session.

President Ershad said attempts were being made in Bangladesh for a pragmatic mix of the conventional with the innovative of the formal with the non-formal education approaches toward achievement of literacy and basic education.

We are trying to marshall the resources of the entire society—government and non-government—to spread literacy and education, he said.

President Ershad said it was indeed a matter of great concern for us all that a billion people in the world cannot read or write and almost a hundred million children have no chance of schooling and their numbers were increasing everyday.

In Bangladesh alone, he said, two thirds of the children who should be in school work in the fields, or roam in city streets—most of them live in abject poverty.

The ruthless disparity between knowledge and ignorance, skill and inadequacy around our very homes was an urgent reminder to us of the need to take literacy to every doorstep, he said.

In this connection, the President referred to the formation of Pathakali Trust in Bangladesh which is dedicated to the education and development of under-privileged working children.