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HERE is a cry all over the world in favour of mass education and some world organisations have declared the year 1990 as an International Literacy Year just to give an effective drive to this benevolent movement.

The common popular term 'literacy' generally stands for one's acquaintance with the three Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic. Or, in other words it means one's capacity to read and write in one's mother tongue or national language and to effect mathematical calculations. According to UNESCO, a person is literate when he can read and write and knows enough mathematics "for effective functioning in his group or community and is capable of using these skills towards his own or community development".

As illiteracy aggravates poverty, and stands in the way of one's participation in politics and useful projects and hampers the development of an individual, it is considered to be a curse for all practical purposes. There are many instances of frauds committed in rural areas of Bangladesh which show how illiterate poor people are often cheated with their thumb impressions on documents which have no reference to the reality of transactions. As a matter of fact education for literacy, in a sense may be construed as primary education which is the basis

of further education in all spheres of life. The UN General Assembly in 1948 adopted a resolution on Universal Declaration of Human Rights according to which every one has the right to have education i.e. any citizen in any state has the right to have education. This gives the responsibility of education to the state to which he belongs.

As a matter of fact, every state has its programme for primary education in consonance with the spirit of this resolution of the UNO but the success depends more on the attitude and cooperation of the public than on government measures. Hence, in spite of UNO's stress on education and individual state's measures for primary education, yet the absolute number of illiterates continues to grow because of population boom in our country and in similar other underdeveloped countries of the world.

In our country, as we find, the family planning is not yet functioning satisfactorily among the poorer classes including those living in slum areas of the city dwellers. In view of the imperative necessity for mass education the Bangladesh go-

vernment has recently made free upto class VIII level.

## Cooperation

The President in his recent public meeting has appealed to the public to offer their full hearted cooperation in sending their children to schools. Because, without having the attitude of the masses in favour of 'education as the best investment in human resources', the success of the projects of mass education cannot be ensured. The Ministry of Education already took a project of mass education for three years (1986-89) and provision of sufficient amounts of money was also made in the budget as well. But it is not known whether all the money could be fruitfully utilised within the specified time. There are sixtyeight thousand villages with about forty-four thousand and five hundred primary schools. Even now there are about twentythree thousand and five hundred villages where there are no primary schools.

This undoubtedly hampered the progress of primary education as contemplated by the government to bring to school at least 70 p.c. of

children between 6-10 years of age. Again out of the existing primary schools, most are non-government, lacking in qualified teachers, and in useful materials for students and teachers.

Again, even in most of the government primary schools which are not attached or close to high schools, punctuality and regularity in attendance on the part of teachers is found wanting. The present system of appointment of local persons in such schools is one of the main causes of such a situation. Many teachers are mostly found engaged in their personal domestic affairs. Effective supervision of their work is also found lacking.

Under the auspices of such organisations as the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, the year 1990 has been declared to be the literacy year and an International Seminar on education for all will be held in Bangkok in March 1990, among nine countries of South and Middle Asia. Prior to this, there are provisions for holding nine regional conferences among these nine countries. In response to this, such a three days Conference on 'Education for all' was held at Dhaka recently.

The conference was inaugurated by the President

said that measures had already been taken to reach the goal of "Education for all".