



Education Minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam addressing the inaugural function of a 3-day long national workshop on Universal Primary Education by 1990 arranged by the Education Ministry at BARD, Comilla on Saturday.

Next plan should include pragmatic strategy for literacy

COMILLA, Apr 2: Education Minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam Saturday called for fulfilling the constitutional obligation of mass literacy by adopting pragmatic strategy during the coming plan period, reports ESS.

Inaugurating the three-day national workshop on Universal Primary Education at Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) here the Education Minister said the problems in fulfilling the obligation in the past should be identified. Recommendations should be formulated by taking into account the existing socio-economic realities, he added.

Sheikh Shahid said the participants should also investigate why despite their intentions the past governments failed to achieve the goals in the field.

He urged the participants not to make very ambitious recommendations which could not be implemented. The inaugural session of the workshop presided over by the Education Secretary Hedayet Ahmed was addressed by former Presidential Adviser Mr. Azizul Haq former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and Member, University Grants Commission Prof. Shamsul Haq, Senior Programme Coordinator, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Ms. Selly Kellock, First Secretary Swedish Embassy in Dhaka Ms Eva Berg, and Additional Secretary, Education Ministry Mr. Nooruddin Al-Masud.

The workshop was sponsored by the Education Ministry in cooperation with UNICEF and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Ninety two participants from home and abroad are participating in the workshop, where five papers on the problems of Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh will be presented.

Sheikh Shahid stressed formulating plans which have long time utility. "Only thing

to be taken into consideration is the reflection of the will of the people," he said.

The Education Minister said there was a need for creating a massive social movement for realising the goal of Universal Primary Education in the country. It would help motivate parents to send their children to schools, the teachers to become more responsible towards their duties and also help in fully utilising the inputs and logistics, he said adding that such a movement could make maximum use of educational institutions.

He urged the participants to go deep into the prevailing situation, before making recommendations and formulating strategies for the fourth five year plan.

DROP-OUTS

On checking drop-outs, the Minister said schools should be made attractive and existing educational institutions should be utilised also for adult literacy programmes.

"poverty was not alone responsible for drop-outs," he added.

Mr Azizul Haq said the political will of a government in respect of basic needs like food and education should be expressed in terms of realisation of national target and should not be affected by power-changes in the government.

Ms. Kellock urged for adopting non-conventional methods and tapping new sources for the spread of Universal Primary Education.

Ms Berg called for linkage with NGO's which have scored in the field and said the Swedish Parliament expressed anxiety to learn about the progress made by Bangladesh in Universal Primary Education.

In his Presidential speech, Mr Hedayet Ahmed gave a brief account of the experiences and bottlenecks, realised during implementation of the plan. However, he said the drop-out rate had reduced lately.

Referring to the comparative successes in mass-literacy countries like India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, Mr. Ahmed suggested extension of shift-hour at least by another two hours.