

Turn mosques, pry schools into literacy centres: Shah Aziz

By A Staff Reporter

Prime Minister Shah Azizur Rahman on Saturday called for turning the 42 thousand primary schools and one lakh mosques in the country into mass-literacy centres to remove illiteracy by 1985.

He asked the Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADCs) (literacy) to chalk out district wise programmes in cooperation with respective district development coordinators by ensuring participation of all voluntary organisations for the purpose.

The premier was inaugurating a 6-day national workshop on "removal of illiteracy from Bangladesh by 1985." The workshop is being organised by the Primary and Mass Education Directorate with assistance from UNICEF.

Prof. Abdul Baten, State Minister for Education was the special guest at the inaugural function which was presided over by Education Secretary Kazi Fazlur Rahman. Mr. Abdur Razzak, Director General of Primary and Mass Education Directorate also addressed the function among others.

Shah Azizur Rahman said that the government was considering the question of ensuring transport facilities to the ADCs (literacy) to help them organise their districtwise programmes for mass literacy.

He, however, said that government efforts alone could not lead the mass-literacy drive to

a successful conclusion. As such the services of retired government officers, voluntary organisations, and the youth clubs should be mobilised.

The Premier said that mass-literacy drive could not hold its initial enthusiasm because it did not give immediate returns.

CANAL DIGGING PROGRAMME

The enthusiasm for canal digging programme, the first phase of peaceful revolution initiated by shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, could be sustained because it directly benefitted the farmers, he said.

Nevertheless over 40 lakh people could be given functional literacy during the past two years. And if all the educational institutions, voluntary organisations and youth clubs unitedly pursue the programme it was bound to meet with success, he said.

GRANTS

He said that the Government had already asked all schools, colleges and madrasahs to open mass literacy centres. In future sanction of special government grants would depend on performances of these institutions on mass-literacy.

Prof. Abdul Baten called for proper motivation of the educated people of the country so that the mass-literacy drive was turned into a national movement. "All of us who are educated have improved our lot

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by way of education financed by taxes from the toiling masses. It is time that we give the people something in return in national interest", he said.

The State Minister for Education called for proper evaluation of the programme during past two years for chalking out more realistic programmes in the light of experiences, for next three years.

He said that the enthusiasm for mass-literacy had reduced to some extent after the tragic assassination of President Ziaur Rahman. Although the target for the past two years were not fulfilled the results were quite encouraging, he said.

Prof. Baten called for organising the mass-literacy programme in a more systematic way by achieving co-ordination between the efforts of the government, the voluntary organisations, clubs, and other educated persons.

PUBLICITY

Prof. Baten also invited suggestions for adequate publicity in favour of the mass-literacy drive, for popularising it among the people, and motivating the educated people to whole-heartedly participate in it.

Education Secretary Kazi Fazlur Rahman said that the mass-literacy drive was the only development effort where no foreign expect or consult was involved. We should go forward room for flexibility to change or modify the programme in the light of experience. "We ourselves would have to take the credit or the blame for the success

or failure of the drive", he said.

Kazi Fazlur Rahman said that the mass-literacy drive in Bangladesh was unique in that it was not being pursued "under a certain political system making participation compulsory", nor with deployment of enormous resources, as was done in other countries.

He said that our mass-literacy drive was based on the cooperation of the people. The government only supplied some claim that the programme, and inputs like books etc, he said.

The Education Secretary said that the govt. did not claim the methods employed for it were free from mistakes. "We had no time to spare to guard against mistakes before launching the drive." He called for evaluating the experiences of past two years, if necessary by strong criticisms, to make the drive more effective.

The workshop is being participated by the Additional Deputy Commissioners (literacy) Literacy officers, representatives of different teachers' associations and eminent educationists of the country.