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President Hussain Muhammad Ershad inaugurating a 3-day South and Central Asia conference on Education for All in Dhaka on Saturday.

Ershad opens South, Central Asia confce

Education for all vital for Third World progress

DHAKA, Dec. 9 (BSS): President Hussain Muhammad Ershad today said the aspirations of the developing nations to achieve progress and prosperity could only come through universalisation of education in its broadest sense.

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 here today.

The Dhaka conference is one of the nine regional conferences being organised worldwide 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 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

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Third World progress

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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.

The President said it was not only the developing countries which were now reviewing their educational systems with a renewal sense of urgency, but the industrially and technologically advanced nations

were also re-appraising their policies in the light of diminishing natural resources, uncontrolled inflation, mounting unemployment and large spending in arms race. Meanwhile,

the President said, the less advanced and developing countries were looking for a new and equitable international economic order.

President Ershad said we of

the South and Central Asian region are enthusiastic participants in the renewed global

concern for ensuring education for all. "We reassert in union with the economically and technologically advanced nations of our world that everyone has a right to education," he added.

The President noted that with the help of the rich and prosperous nation we could mobilise the resources of an entire world to ensure literacy and basic education for all in our countries during our life time.

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 door step, he said.

In this connection, the Pre-

President referred to the forma-

tion of Pathakali Trust in

Bangladesh which is dedicated

to the education and develop-

ment of under-privileged work-

ing children.

In addition to increasing

access to primary education

through public school system,

President Ershad said, greater

enrolment of girls was also

encouraged.

The percentage of female

primary school teachers has

been raised and efforts are

made to extensively involve

communities in support of

existing schools at the prima-

ry level.

President Ershad referred to

the declaration of 1990 by South

Asian Association of Regional

Cooperation (SAARC) as 'year

of the girl child' and said

this has special significance

for the member states.

The President said Bangladesh was also taking necessary measures to honour and fulfil the objectives of the international literacy year — 1990

He expressed his satisfaction

that the international organisa-

tions like UNDP, UNESCO,

UNICEF and the World Bank

had decided to jointly launch

a worldwide education initia-

tive to meet the basic learn-

ing needs of both children and

adults and explore realistic

means to rapidly extend the

coverage and quality of basic

educational services.

President Ershad said the

South and Central Asia Regio-

nal Conference on Education

for all, last among nine pre-

paratory regional conferences

prior to the world conference

in Thailand next March, had

provided us an opportunity to

bring ourselves together, pool

our resources and share our

experiences with those of

other countries.

Addressing the conference,

Education Minister Sheikh

Shahidul Islam noted illiteracy

as a crucial factor for the

ever widening differences bet-

ween developed and develop-

ing countries since the prob-

lem was peculiar to the de-

veloping nations "Education

is the basic human right" he

said, adding that feeble and

isolated efforts were made in

the past to see vast multitude

attain this right with little or

no headway made towards

that direction.