



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 Co-ordination 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

Contd on page 2 col. 4

## Third World progress

Contd from page 1

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 marshal 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 own 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 President referred to the formation of Pathakali Trust in Bangladesh which is dedicated to the education and development of under-privileged working 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 primary level.

President Ershad referred to the declaration of 1990 by South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as 'year of the girls 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 organisations like UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank had decided to jointly launch a worldwide education initiative to meet the basic learning 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 Regional Conference on Education for all, last among nine preparatory 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 between developed and developing countries since the problem was peculiar to the developing 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.