

Top priority with highest allocation

Wastage rate in primary education must go : PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Sunday reiterated the political commitment of the present government to give stress on education which, she said, is complementary to the development of the country, reports BSS.

Inaugurating a two-day conference on "Primary Education: Problems and Remedies", sponsored by Primary and Mass Education Division at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Begum Zia said the government wants to ensure accountability and responsibility in the education sector. She said there is no scope for negligence in the field of education, which is a national issue.

Begum Zia said the goal of

the government is to achieve "education for all by the year 2000." To attain this objective to highest allocation has been given to education. She said in the fourth-five-year-plan 52 per cent of the total allocation for the education sector has been earmarked for primary and mass education sub-sector.

Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman, Education Minister Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar and State Minister for Education Principal Yunus Khan were special guests at the conference. Additional Secretary in charge of Primary and Mass Education Division Kazi Raquib Uddin Ahmed and Joint Secretary Khondker Shahidul

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Islam also spoke.

The inaugural function was attended among others, by ministers, diplomats, representatives of international agencies, experts and high officials of concerned ministries and departments.

The Prime Minister said Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman was the first to attach topmost priority to education. She said he had taken initiatives to widen the base of primary education to eradicate illiteracy at the quickest possible time. She said mass literacy programme, which was the second phase of Shaheed Zia's historic peaceful revolution, had been dropped by the autocratic regime.

Begum Zia said the government has introduced compulsory primary education throughout the country and mass education programme has been reintroduced in full swing. She said to make the compulsory primary education programme successful, action programmes are underway in the present plan period to build, reconstruct and repair a total of thousand government and non-government primary schools all over the country.

Begum Zia said, a high-

powered task force is now working to identify the problem's standing in the way of eradicating illiteracy. She said a separate division—primary and mass education division—has been created and placed under the direct control of the Prime Minister. She said, double shifts have been introduced in a number of schools and large number of primary teachers are being recruited on emergency basis.

The Prime Minister said, committees have been formed with people's representatives at various levels to carry forward the programme. She said, it has generated enthusiasm throughout the country and the Compulsory Primary Education Programme has been turned into a social movement. She underlined the need for further coordination and integration of the programme through concerted efforts. She said those who want welfare of the country should come forward as it is not the responsibility of the government alone.

Begum Zia emphasised the need for strengthening supervision at all levels in view of very high rate of wastage in primary education. She said mere construction of schools and recruitment of teachers are not the only solution. She said our

wastage rate in primary education is 65 per cent which has to be curbed and the people have to be motivated.

She reminded the teachers of their responsibility for the success of education. She said, special care should be taken for women education as the success of primary education largely depends on their education.

The Prime Minister had words of praise for some non-government organisations for their services in the field of mass education. She expressed the hope that others would follow their examples to make the government initiatives successful. Begum Zia said, in our environment spread of education is a great challenge. He said, "however difficult the challenge may be, we shall have to overcome it. There is no short cut to it if we want to stand high as a self-respecting nation. We may differ on other issues. But regarding education there can be no two opinions."

Begum Zia said education is acclaimed as a fundamental human right. She said education is also the pivot of patriotism and democratic values. Referring to the present literacy rate which is 25 per cent she said if we move at this speed it will require 700 years to make

the entire population literate.

Referring to some neighbouring countries which have made rapid progress in the field of education, she said literacy rate of SAARC countries like Sri Lanka and Maldives has gone up to 90 per cent. She described widespread illiteracy as the root cause of our poverty and backwardness. She said resource constraints can only be overcome by educating the masses.

The Prime Minister said by using science and technology we can achieve progress like Japan, Korea and Singapore. Human resource development is the main factor behind their present affluence, she mentioned.

She expressed the hope that the conference would contribute towards identifying problems confronting the education sector and in suggesting remedial measures.

Jamiruddin Sircar said, the government has been doing everything possible to remove session jams in the Universities.

Mr. Saifur Rahman said proper utilisation of funds is the great problem in the education sector. He said, we should look for the maximum benefit out of the resources spent for primary and mass education.