

ICSTED will help tackle Third World problems : Salam Science will be the weapon for economic growth : PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Saturday described science as the weapon of economic emancipation, saying only the scientific and technological advancement could help the people of developing countries overcome their challenges for survival, reports BSS.

"The people of Third World countries are facing today a great challenge—the challenge of their survival. They need increased employment, facilities of education, housing and medicare," she said and called for attaining scientific and technological development to get over these problems.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the foundation laying ceremony of the International Centre of Science, Technology and Environment for densely populated regions (ICSTED) at the centre's site near Science Museum at Shere-e-Banglanagar.

Begum Zia said she felt happy and encouraged for setting up ICSTED in Bangladesh as one of 20 such centres and added "it is the manifestation of sympathy and love of Prof. Salam for Bangladesh".

She thanked Prof. Salam for

his presence at the foundation laying ceremony of ICSTED and said the people of Bangladesh regard him with high esteem. Begum Zia termed Prof. Salam's initiative to set up 20 international centres in densely populated countries including Bangladesh as a timely step.

She expressed the hope that the densely populated countries and their people would be benefited from such centres and the South-South cooperation be forged in the field of science, technology and environmental development.

Begum Zia urged the United Nations and other international organisations and countries to cooperate with this international initiative for maintaining ecological balance worldwide.

The Prime Minister began her speech with a quotation of Prophet Mohammad (SM) which said, "Science is my weapon." We are realising the truth of the Prophet's (SM) memorable quotation every time after 1400 years, she said.

Turning to Bangladesh's efforts for reaching the target of economic self-reliance, Begum Zia said there was no alterna-

tive to the dependence on scientific and technological development to rid the nation of her innumerable problems.

Besides the problems of poverty, illiteracy, inadequate health facilities, she said, Bangladesh was also facing the natural disasters, environmental degradation, desertification and salinity.

She said that her government

had attached importance to science and technology and linked the development programmes with science, technology and linked the development programmes with science, technology and environment. She also said that her government had taken an integrated national science policy, announced a balanced envi-

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ronment policy and decided to form separate Ministry for Science and Technology.

The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the ICSTED would help in the Bangladesh's development efforts and enable our scientists to have direct contacts with the outside world and effective exchange of experience on the research of science, developed technology and environment.

At the concluding part of her speech, Begum Zia quoted a statement of the 67-year-old Pakistani physicist Prof. Salam which said "War is evil, war is cruel, war is inhuman. Still more evil, still more cruel and still more inhuman is the slow and agonising death of daily hunger." She said a hungry man could not give adequate labour and service and could not think freely and fairly.

Begum Zia said man can become the main driving force behind development and science and technology are the main regulator of the human resources development.

Addressing the founding stone laying ceremony of the ICSTED, Nobel Laureate Prof. Abdus Salam who is the special guest on the occasion hoped that the proposed centre would function as an outstanding research organisation to contribute to tackle the problems of Third World countries including Bangladesh.

Prof. Salam who is also President of the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) and Director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste, Italy, said the

ICSTED would be a centre of research for developing countries having a mission to utilise the results of successful and expensive research performed throughout the world to the context of densely populated regions of the world.

Prof. Salam said the goal of ICSTED would be precisely to see that through science and technology the conditions of regions such as Bangladesh were brought at par with the faster developing regions. The people living in high density countries like Bangladesh need, for their well being, examine their problems with this basic fact in mind, he added.

Prof. Salam said he had always felt that the real problems of the Third World needed to be solved at local level. In this connection, he recalled that he first mooted the idea of setting up 20 centres of excellence in Third World countries for their development through science and technology at the bi-annual meeting of the Third World Academy of Science held in Caracas, Venezuela in 1990.

He said densely populated did not mean underdevelopment and pointed out that the entire South-East Asia including China was a collection of densely populated regions that were experiencing the highest sustained growth rate that the world had ever seen.

Prof. Salam said the ICSTED would also focus on the problems of women in terms of the betterment of their condition through utilisation of science and technology and added ICSTED would have a wing to look exclusively at this aspect.

He thanked the dem-

government of Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for taking keen interest in hosting the centre in Dhaka and providing necessary help in this regard.

Recalling his association with Bangladesh, Prof. Salam said "as a physicist I cannot forget that here in Dhaka, the Bose-Einstein statistics, so important to understand nature, was born". He said, the University of Dhaka has a tradition that is hard to equal in the entire sub-continent. "I always look forward to renewing my fond association with Dhaka which is now the capital of a proud nation," he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Naseem Rahman, Coordinator of ICSTED, Trieste, Italy, said the proposed centre in Dhaka would be a thoroughly international institute not as much for the fact of prestige but for the quality of work of international standard to be performed in Dhaka. He also pleaded for placing the activities of ICSTED in the purview of SAARC countries and added each of which had reasons to contribute to the success of ICSTED.

Dr. Rahman, a Professor of Theoretical Chemistry, Department of Chemical Sciences, University of Trieste, Italy said the ICSTED would soon be in a position to start work in the defined areas and contacts were being established with relevant scientists and technologists of the SAARC countries so that regional projects could start immediately.

After the inaugural function, the Minister and Prof. Salam

dation of the ICSTED near the Science Museum. The government of Bangladesh has allocated land for the centre and will provide necessary facilities and support for its functioning.

Initially, research will be conducted at the centre on five broad areas like environment and natural disaster protection, population control and bio-technology, computer software development and research in material science which will include development of the natural products like jute and also semiconductors and other solid state technologies. Both local and foreign scientists will be working in each of the five areas. The total workforce at the centre will be around 150.

Major part of the expenses in running the centre is expected to be available as donations from friendly countries and the World Bank and UNIDO are likely to finance the centre's projects. All research will be done through international contract.

The 20 countries selected to be sponsored as networks of such centres include Pakistan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Egypt.

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, State Minister for Education Principal Eunus Khan, Coordinator of the International Institute for Pure and Applied Chemistry, Trieste, Italy Prof. Naseem Rahman, Additional Secretary in-charge of Science and Technology Division Abdulla Haroon Pasha and Joint Secretary of the Ministry Dilip Kumar Biswas spoke on the occasion. Minister, MPs, scientists, academics and diplomats also attended the function.