

## Ethnic children still lack access to proper edu

*UN experts say ahead of int'l day of indigenous peoples*

UNB, Dhaka

Though it has been nearly 10 years since the United Nations has adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous children and youth still lack full access to adequate, accessible and appropriate forms of education.

A group of four UN experts on indigenous issues made the observation in a joint statement made public on Friday, according to a message received here from Geneva.

Speaking ahead of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People that falls on Tuesday, the experts called on governments to ensure discrimination-free and culturally-sensitive education systems for indigenous peoples, taking into account their languages and histories.

They observed that it is imperative that educational institutions are built on a human rights framework that is inclusive and respectful of indigenous peoples'

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cultures, worldviews and languages.

States and indigenous people must work together to fulfill indigenous peoples' right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, said UN officials.

Claire Charters, chair of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, stressed that education is empowerment, and critical to the realisation of all of the rights contained in the declaration and international human rights treaties. "Unfortunately, indigenous children and youth often do not have access to adequate, accessible and appropriate forms of education."

Special Rapporteur Tauli-Corpuz drew attention to the situation of indigenous women and girls, and called on governments to give special priority to ensure they have access to relevant education.

She also cautioned that "the available data shows a consistent pattern of disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in terms of educational access, retention and achievement in all regions of the world."

"States must engage and work constructively with indigenous peoples to address barriers to education, including stigmatisation of indigenous identity, discrimination in schools..." Alvaro Popo, chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, stressed.