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13th session of Executive Board meeting begins **Noor Uddin seeks UNESCO aid to develop IT village**

The 13th session of the executive board meeting of Asian-Pacific Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations (AFUCA) began yesterday at a city hotel, reports BSS.

Participants and observers from Japan, Republic of Korea, China, Thailand, Mongolia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Russia, the Philippines, Malaysia and host country Bangladesh are attending the five-day meeting.

Besides, hearing the country's reports the meeting will discuss preparation for the World Conference of World Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations (WFUCA) and elect office bearers of AFUCA for the term 1999-2002. The board meeting is held every two years.

Inaugurating the meeting Minister for Science and Technology Lt. General (Retd) Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan sought cooperation and assistance of UNESCO to promote science and technology in the

country to build a richer Bangladesh.

He pointed out that the aims of UNESCO are to make the countries richer and happier.

The inaugural session was also addressed by UNESCO representative in Bangladesh Dr Ansar Ali Khan, Secretary of Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO Kafiluddin Ahmed and Secretary General of National Association of UNESCO Clubs in Bangladesh (NAUCB). Mahbubuddin Chowdhury, while president of AFUCA Prof. Yuji Suzuki was in the chair.

Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh Kaneko was present at the inaugural session.

Referring to the importance attached by the government for development of computer science and information technology (IT) Noor Uddin Khan said 47 acres of land at Mohakhali had already been given for development of an IT village and he sought UNESCO assistance in this regard.

He said that realising the necessity of scientific research and development for prosperity of the country, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had sanctioned Tk 12 crore in the last budget and this might be enhanced further in the coming budget.

Pointing to the contributions of UNESCO to increase the literacy rate of Bangladesh, he said in the last three years the literacy rate had increased to 56 per cent. He said to boost the economy of the country it was essential to make the huge population literate.

AFUCA president Prof Suzuki gave a brief historical background of UNESCO club movement to promote science, education, culture and peace and said Japan took the initiative in 1947 in the ashes of war.

He said the grassroots people were contributing their time and resources to the activities of UNESCO clubs which are working hand in hand with the respective governments in the Asian Pacific region.