

24000 more primary schools needed

By A Staff Reporter

Speakers at a seminar on Saturday underscored the need for launching mass movement to popularise Universal Primary Education.

Organised jointly by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the government of Bangladesh, the 5-day sub-regional seminar on "Causes of school failure and strategies to reduce school wastage at primary level" is being participated by experts from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh and the UNESCO.

The inaugural session, held at Hotel Sheraton, was attended by Education Secretary Qazi Azher Ali who is also the Secretary General of Bangladesh National Council for

UNESCO as the chief guest. Presided over by Dr Zahrul Islam Bhuiyan, Director General of the Directorate of Primary Education, the inaugural session was addressed by Mr Mahmood Aminul Islam, Senior Co-ordinator, Mr Nigel Ringrose, Senior Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Dr Iraj Ayman, UNESCO Representative based in Bangkok and Mr S M Saifuddin, Secretary, Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO.

The speakers identified poverty of the masses of Bangladesh, lack of social awareness and absence of motivational campaign to encourage parents to enrol their wards to primary schools as some of the major barriers to the suc-

cess of universal primary education.

In his speech Qazi Azher Ali said that 24,000 more primary schools were needed in Bangladesh to bring all primary school age group children under enrolment. At present there are about 44,000 primary schools in the country's 68 thousand villages.

The Education Secretary said that the government had put special emphasis on primary education and more than 46 per cent of the total allocation for education in the Third 5-year Plan had been set aside for the promotion of primary education.

He said that the strategy for primary education was built around construction of school buildings, provision of

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school furniture, text books, learning materials, improvement of teachers training and strengthening of field supervision.

Qazi Azher Ali said that we were still suffering from the vicious cycle of low enrolment and high wastage in primary schools. He called upon the experts to go beyond known factors and look for the hidden factors at the root of the problem of high wastage in primary schools and evolve strategies to overcome it.

In his speech Dr Zahrul Islam Bhuiyan said that drop-out, repetition and wastage in primary schools were mainly caused by poverty and malnutrition. He said that there were some socio-psychological and curriculum factors which also influenced wastage and drop-out in primary schools. He called for reformulating curricula to make education joyful to the young learners.

UNDP REPRESENTATIVE

The UNDP Representative Mr Nigel Ringrose appreciated Bangladesh government's stress on primary education and said that without basic education the impact of all other development programme would be diluted. He suggested spending of money in proper way to derive the best results.

Dr Iraj Ayman of UNESCO called for modernising methodologies for the success of education programmes.

The inaugural session was followed by three plenary sessions which heard a country paper on Bangladesh and discussion on general problems in methodology of educational wastage. Besides the Bangladesh experts, Prof P K Das of India, Mr Sarfraz Khawja of Pakistan, Mr L S Kuruppu of Sri Lanka, Mr Prateep Rajanakat of Thailand and UNESCO experts Dr Iraj Ayman, Mr G Nascimento, Dr J R Huntington, Dr K C Basu and Dr A Khanna took part in the discussion.

The country paper on Bangladesh revealed that in 1980 a total of 93 lakh 50 thousand out of one crore 43 lakh and 56 thousand children of primary school age group were enrolled in the primary schools, the percentage of enrolment being a little above 65. The paper noted that the difference in the ratio of the enrolment of boys and girls was also reducing over the last five years.