

Utility of literacy workshop questioned

By A Staff Reporter

The much publicised 6-day national Workshop on "Removal of Illiteracy from Bangladesh by 1985" ended on Thursday with a question about the utility of such workshops and seminars.

The workshop consumed over 300 man-days of "experts" to produce a set of recommendations, and ultimately to face the tarse observation from the organisers themselves that "seminars and workshops could actually do nothing."

A total of 39 participants from about 20 organisations—government and non-government—associated with the mass literacy drive, and several nationally reputed educationists had deliberated on mass education issues during the six days.

The concluding session also heard the suggestion from a

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high official that the workshop should also have invited representatives of illiterates, whom the mass literacy drive was meant for.

The organisers of the "important workshop" — Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO, and the Primary and Mass Education Directorate — were not physically far away from each other to be able to discuss such things earlier.

The assemblage of the participants and experts, and supply of inputs for the workshop cost over Taka 60,000 and the day and night services of four assistant directors of the Primary and Mass Education Directorate.

Maulana M A Mannan, State Minister for Education, was the chief guest at the concluding function and gave away certificates to the participants. Presided over by Mr. Hedayetul Huq, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, the function was also addressed by Mr. Abdur Razzak, Director General of Primary and Mass Education, Dr A K M Obaidullah, Director, Education Extension and Research Institute, Mr K M Khalilur Rahman and Kazi Siraj, Assistant Directors of Primary and Mass Education.

In his address Maulana M A

Mannan called for finding out the ways and means to attract the people to the mass literacy drive. The illiterates should be inspired to acquire literacy, their participation could not be ensured only through enactment of laws.

The State Minister for Education said that the number of master's degree holders in Bangladesh would make the populations of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates taken together, and there was no reason why the mass literacy drive would not succeed if all educated people of the country participated in it.

Maulana Mannan called for utilising the services of students and teachers of the universities, colleges and schools, during their vacations for the purpose.

The State Minister for Education called for cautiously motivating the illiterates to co-operate with the drive so that there was no immediate conflict between the drive and their interests. They should be made to feel that acquiring literacy was their sacred duty, he added.

Dr A K M Obaidullah outlined the activities during the six-day workshop and read out the recommendations.