

## Political Consensus Needed For Education For All

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THE problem of illiteracy is not confined to Bangladesh but is spread over the countries of Asia and the Pacific. Therefore, 'Education for All' has become a prerequisite of development in this region.

Bangladesh participated in the conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and signed the universal declaration on Education for All adopted at the conference. The objective of the conference was to create worldwide awareness about the need for ensuring basic education for the children, the youth and the aged. The conference had set a few objectives. The principle objectives related to primary education were:

\* To expand community-based development programmes for the families

\* To guarantee the right to basic education. To ensure facilities of formal and semi-formal education for at least 80 per cent children of primary school-going age. At the same time to lay emphasis on removal of the gap between the enrolment of boys and girls.

\* To bring down the rate of adult illiteracy to at least half the 1990 level and to give greater attention to female education

\* To rouse the interest of every individual and family in education and higher standard of life. To press

into service all the communication and mass media, whether modern or archaic, for moulding peoples' ways and habits following the needs of higher standard of living.

At the conference Bangladesh committed itself to attaining these ends.

Meanwhile, there was held in New Delhi on December 16, 1993 the first world summit on education. The conference sponsored first by UNESCO, UNICEF and the UN Fund for Population was a historic venture. The conference was attended by education ministers from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan. The aim of this first world conference was to carry forward the objectives of the Thailand conference. Another important aim of this conference was to sanctify primary education as a basic right of citizens in these countries. The sponsors think that if primary education can be sanctified as a basic right, it will not only lead to human development but also contain population explosion, infant mortality and accelerate general development.

James P Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, expressing his

satisfaction at the outcome of the New Delhi conference said, the conference at Jomtien, Thailand, has not limited itself to making a commitment for basic education but also laid emphasis on the attainment of education up to a certain level following the peculiarities of each nation.

The aims of the summit were: The leaders of participating nations pledge to undertake such pragmatic, attainable and bold programmes as can be easily evaluated. Secondly, to introduce a method through which these countries can compare with each other their strategies, results, etc. Although each country has its own target, the conference also fixed certain targets. These are:

\* To ensure primary education for all children. To remove all inequalities in the field of children's education in respect of ethnicity, social and economic status.

\* To remove the literacy gap between men and women by the year 2000. For example, in Bangladesh the literacy rate for males is 52 per cent but that for female is 18 per cent.

\* To improve the educational system of all participating countries, make them result-oriented and ac-

cessible to all. For example, in Pakistan only 29 per cent children are privileged to go to school.

\* To promote female education. If women are educated, development of human resource follows logically from it. In Nigeria it is found that female education alone has accounted for 20 per cent fall in infant mortality.

\* Practical steps for bringing to school children of appropriate age and retaining them. In Brazil only 63 per cent of children who enter primary school reach the secondary stage and only 47 per cent reach the third stage.

Political Parties : The ruling BNP in their election manifesto spoke of spreading education and removing illiteracy. They held out this programme before the people in the light of Shaheed President Zia's 19-point programme, i.e., When they were campaigning for the general election of February 27, 1991.

1) Under the head "Constitutional and Administrative", it is mentioned in clause 10: the education system will be overhauled, educational facilities will be expanded, practical steps will be taken to remove illiteracy, implement compulsory primary education and relate Madrasah education to the mainstream of society.

(To be Continued)