

## Plan to remove illiteracy by 2006 taken: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday said her government has taken extensive programme for the spread of education with a view to achieving the target to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2006, reports BSS.

"We are working to fulfil our pledge to remove the curse of illiteracy from the country by the year 2006", she said while inaugurating the Mosque-based Primary Education Programme at Osmany Memorial Hall in Dhaka on Monday morning.

She said her government has attached the highest priority to poverty alleviation. She said it is an important task to remove illiteracy from society through developing human resources to alleviate poverty.

Sheikh Hasina lauded the efforts of the Religious Ministry in taking up the Mosque-based Primary Education Programme to supplement the government's commitment to remove illiteracy.

She said as per statistics of the Primary Education Department there are two crore school-going children aged between six and ten. Besides there are about 50 lakh children who go to 'baby class'. She said the "National Primary Education Committee" has recommended to construct one lakh additional class rooms and appoint additional 25 thousand teachers by the year 2000 to bring the increasing number of children to schools. She said the committee also recommended to set up private schools in every ward to bring all the children under the institutional education system.

Justifying the introduction of Mosque-based Primary Education in the country, the Prime Minister said it would solve to a great extent the dearth of class rooms and the number of teachers. She said that education courses upto class two standard could be started very easily by utilising the educated imams, the mosques

and the vacant period in between Fazr and Zohr prayers.

She said the previous governments did not work for the development of Islam despite utilising people's religious sentiments for political purposes. She said her government has started the construction work of the Islamic Foundation's own building at a cost of Taka 10 crore. "We have also decided to set up office of Islamic Foundation in 42 districts in the country", she said.

Referring to the permanent Haj Camp built at a cost of Taka 40 crore, the Prime Minister said that a permanent Imam training centre would also be run from the camp where they would be imparted training on religious and welfare activities. She said the government has also taken effective measures so that

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the Imams could play their roles in various socio-economic activities including health, environment and education.

Sheikh Hasina said that the Imams would educate our posterity in the light of Islam. She expressed the hope that the participation of Imams in various welfare activities would give them a place in the hearts of people. She said the programme would also create job opportunities for those studying in madrasahs.

The Prime Minister urged upon all to contribute to the success of compulsory primary education. She expressed the confidence that the programme would soon emerge as a national movement in the field of primary education.

She also urged the organisers to impart complete education to the children so that there was no scope for fanaticism about religion.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, Director General of the Islamic Foundation Moulana Abdul Awal, Joint Secretary of the Religious Ministry Sohrabuddin Ahmed and Project Director Sirajul Islam Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.