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Adopt universal edn plan: Hasina

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Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina on Monday called for adopting a massive programme on universal education and for implementing that programme on the basis of national consensus.

Inaugurating a two-day seminar on "education for all" organised by Education and Cultural Affairs Committee of her party at the Engineers Institution, she said that vast illiterate population and sub-standard education had become the main obstacle to speedy economic growth and national development.

She said that Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and China had implemented universal primary education programme and illiteracy eradication programme at the initial stage of their miracle development.

She also cited Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia where literacy rate was much higher than in Bangladesh. Even literacy rate in war-devastated Vietnam was higher than in Bangladesh, she added.

"Bangladesh exists like a dark island without education alongside the fast-developing nations enlightened with education," she deplored.

Leader of the Opposition termed education an essential precondition for economic emancipation of the people and called for building a skilled, educated and laborious manpower for economic progress and overall development of the country.

She identified what she said failure in the implementation of the primary education programme as the fundamental and buring problem in the country's education sector. "Despite tall talks of the Government who came to power after August 1975, about 2.20 crore school going children remain outside the primary and secondary education, she blasted.

Quoting a UN statistics, she said that a total of 4.20 crore adult men and women are illiterate at present in the country. "Such situation is not only a matter of shame but also a cause of concern for us, she said and questioned the sincerity of post-75 governments' initiatives for eradication of illiteracy.

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ing illiteracy. "We must try to understand why Bangladesh failed to achieve the desired literacy rate in comparison with other Asian countries."

Sheikh Hasina said that Awami League had adopted a programme to remove illiteracy from the country within next 10 years and emphasised the need for proper planning to free the country from the curse of illiteracy.

She also attached importance to women education for the implementation of the universal primary education in the country. Education for girls up to class eight must be given without tuition fee, she added.

In this connection, she mentioned Awami League government's initiative to restructure the education system in post-independent Bangladesh and said that the Bangabandhu government had set up an education commission headed by renowned educationist and scientist Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda.

Sheikh Hasina called upon her party leaders, workers and supporters to work hard for the programme for eradicating illiteracy from the country within next 10 years.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was critical of the present government for its claim to introduce the universal primary education in a number of places of the country, saying that it was nothing but a sheer bluff that the universal primary education would be implemented at the mere declaration by the head of the government when the number of schools, teachers and enrolment of students were not increased over the last two and a half years.

She said that the present government had already proved its failure in many sectors in the last two and a half years of its rule. In view of such situation, an important sector like education could not be protected under the "aimless and weak leadership of the present government, she said.

The inaugural session of the seminar was presided over by presidium member of Awami League Principal

Muhammad Qamruzzaman, Education and Cultural Affairs Secretary of Awami League Obaidul Kader also spoke on the occasion.

The two-day seminar is divided into four sessions.

Shortly after the inaugural function, the first session was held.

Dr Addullah Al-Muti Sharfuddin read out a key-note paper titled "education for all in Bangladesh" while, Dr. Neelima Ibrahim, Prof. Khandakar Bazul Huq and A.S. Sadek were discussants. Prof. Kabir Chowdhury presided over the session.

Dr. Sharfuddin in his paper made some recommendations that included extension of physical facilities, improvement of standard of education and syllabus, appointment of more teachers, adopting programme for adult education and more allocation in the education sector.

Discussants called for adopting a pragmatic education programme and for making the programme a social movement.