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HDC Survey report on Bangladesh

Edn improved, but its steps facing challenges

Staff Correspondent

The key education-indicators of Bangladesh have improved significantly in the recent years, but the measures to achieve the target of universal primary education have been facing formidable challenges.

This was observed in a survey on Human Development in South Asia conducted by Dr. Mahbub ul Haq the former Finance and Planning Minister of Pakistan and President of the Islamabad-based Human Development Centre (HDC).

The survey report, which will officially be launched in April has also focussed on the Bangladesh education sector. It said that Bangladesh had achieved an impressive progress in education since its independence but so far out of every five adults, three are illiterate (45 million among 120 million population). "The sheer number of illiterates in the country reflects the magnitude of the problem," the report said.

It observed that the equality of education in many schools was extremely poor due to lack of sufficient teachers. The student-teacher ratio at the primary level remained at

71:1, the highest in the South Asia region, the report pointed out.

The report said the policy makers of the country had not realised the importance of technical education. As a result, less than one per cent of primary school children got themselves enrolled in vocational and technical schools, over half of them dropped out before completing their courses, and less than one-third of the graduates found worthwhile jobs.

"This is a technological nightmare," Dr. Mahbub ul Haq commented adding that Bangladesh would not be able to compete successfully in the 21st century with such a little technical education.

The HDC report emphasised on the efforts to expand vocational and technical education. The report recommended to ensure equivalence of degree in technical institutions and general universities, by making technical education part and parcel of secondary education, undertaking comprehensive surveys and tracers studies to link technical training to the requirements of job market and mobilising adequate budgetary support.

It also proposed a five-year action plan to bring back the 5 to 6 million drop-out children to study by the year 1999. The recurrent cost of the plan would be 700 million US dollars which was less than 0.5 per cent of the gross national income of the country, it said.