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Water withdrawal causes environmental damage: Khaleda

Hillary all praise for Food for Education programme

Visiting US First Lady Mrs Hillary Rodham Clinton Monday highly appreciated Bangladesh's Food for Education Programme terming it as a unique venture, reports BSS.

"I do not know whether such an excellent programme exists in anywhere in the world," Mrs Clinton said while narrating her experience to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia after visiting a number of socio-economic development projects.

She had a meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda

Zia at 30, Hare Road just before attending the dinner given in her honour by Begum Zia.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia welcomed Mrs Clinton when she along with her daughter Chelsea reached at 6:45 pm at Hare Road to attend the dinner.

During the talks, the US First Lady, said that she was impressed with all the programmes she saw in Dhaka and Jessore. She was particularly enthusiastic about the Food for Education Programme as she believed the venture would be very effective in spreading literacy among the rural masses.

The US First Lady lauded the cooperation existing between the government and non-government organisations, saying they were supplementing each others' efforts in various socio-economic development projects.

Expressing her happiness over the scenic beauty and landscapes of Bangladesh Mrs Clinton said that she was impressed to see the excellent use of the land under cultivation in the countryside.

The US First Lady said the US journalists accompanying her had widened their experience by what they saw today in

Bangladesh.

The US journalists, she said, would convey the messages of achievements and excellent work being done by the Bangladeshis in various fields to the American people to better understand the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia briefly apprised Mrs Clinton her government's socio-economic development activities for the benefit of the people.

Begum Zia said food production could have been even better had there been no shortage of water and prevalence of drought condition in the northern parts of Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister said there had been serious environmental damages caused due to diversion of water during the dry season from the upstreams of international rivers. It was important, Begum Zia said, to solve this problem.

Ms Clinton expressed the hope that this problem would be solved by Bangladesh and its neighbour through discussions.

Ms. Hillary also commended participation of Bangladesh's armed forces in the UN peace keeping forces in various parts of the world.

Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman, US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister ANM Eusuf, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan and US Ambassador in Bangladesh David N Merrill were present.

After the talks, the Prime Minister introduced Mrs Clinton with the guests at the dinner. Political leaders, diplomats, and representatives from different professional bodies attended the dinner.

Mrs Clinton witnessed a cultural show after dinner.