

Int'l seminar on education

# Govt to ensure primary education for all by 2015

Education Minister Dr Osman Farruk on Monday said the government is sincere in providing support to the students, especially the females, as it wants to achieve the target of sending equal number of boys and girls to primary and secondary schools by 2005 and ensure primary education to every child by 2015, reports BSS.

He said the Bangladesh government is one of the first governments in the world which is providing stipends to girls and the country is ahead of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the motto "every girl in the developing world has the right to education".

The education minister was inaugurating as the chief guest a two-day international seminar on "Partnerships for Gender Equality in Education" at a city hotel.

"Beyond Access, a project of UK Fund for International Development (DFID), in coordination with Oxfam GB and the Institute of Education, University of London, organised the seminar.

Head of DFID Bangladesh David Wood addressed the function as the special guest and presented key recommendations from the DFID strategy paper for girl education titled "Girl's education: ...

... towards a better future for all."

British Chancellor of Exchequer Gordon Brown and Minister for International Development Hilary Benn with Carol Bellamy of UNICEF launched the strategy paper in London last week.

David also elaborated various aspects of the strategy and explained its implications in Bangladesh.

The strategy reaffirms DFID's commitments to education, equality between men and women, boys and girls, and also works out what action the UK government will take together with others in the international community, David highlighted.

Under this strategy, DFID's annual support to education in Bangladesh will rise to US dollar 45 million in the next year from the previous US dollar 32 million, and to US dollar 1.4 billion over the next three years, he said.

DFID will increase support to governments and civil societies in developing countries to prioritize girls' education, including providing financial help to those countries that are taking steps to remove school fees, he added.

DFID is committing US dollar 2.6 billion to education over the next three years globally, David said and added that the UK will use its presidencies of the Group 8 (G8) and European Union (EU) this year to push for greater gender equality in education.

Bangladesh has attained success in boosting the number of girls attending school and its girls' primary school enrolment has increased significantly since 1990, and there are now approximately equal number of boys and girls in schools, he said.

This success has been due to a variety of government strategies, as also to the innovative pro-

grammes introduced by NGOs such as the BRAC.

However, Bangladesh also experiences many of the problems that prevent true gender equality in the education sector, including poor retention of girls in schools, under-investment in teachers and wider gender inequalities in higher education and the job market, the seminar was told.

The number of female teachers in primary schools in Bangladesh has increased by 200 percent since the 1990s, David mentioned quoting the DFID strategy paper.

Dr Elaine Unterhalter and Dr Sheila Aikman, coordinators of the Beyond Access, also spoke.