

EDUCATION FOR ALL BY 2015

E-9 education ministers meet today in Bali

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN,
from Bali, Indonesia

Education ministers from nine high-population and low to middle-income countries including Bangladesh will kick off the seventh E-9 meeting at Bali today.

The objective of the meeting is to brainstorm and find better solutions for achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015 -- a key component of the Millennium Development Goal.

Themed "Improvement of Teacher Education and Training as a Focus of Educational System Reform," the high-level biennial meeting is designed to receive

political will behind education policies and strategies, exchange best practices and monitor progress towards reaching the EFA.

The E-9 ('E' for education and '9' for nine countries) Initiative was launched in New Delhi, India, in 1993 to provide citizens of the nine countries with basic education as a fundamental human right and as a way to curb population explosion.

The E-9 countries comprise Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Experts from these countries met yesterday at The Westin resort in Nusa Dua to thrash out the agenda of the high-level

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

E-9 education

FROM PAGE 16

meeting commencing today.

The experts yesterday discussed the problems surrounding the shortage of teachers and their lack of training in the E-9 countries as the situation threatens to undermine the quality of education over time.

The biggest problem identified by the education experts was difficulties in retention of teachers and failure to attract teachers to the profession due to low salaries and diminishing "prestige of teachers" in the society.

Middle-income countries shared their success in training teachers with the aid of information and communication technology -- television and the Internet -- which a number of low-income countries including Bangladesh are trying to replicate.

As a means to manage and control madrasa education in Muslim countries, Egypt and Indonesia shared their experience in scaling up "religious educational institutions" to mainstream the students through offering uniform education agendas and curricula.

The experts also said despite pressing priorities to meet basic educational standards, there is plenty of room for experimenting with education policy, allowing more innovative projects.

Primary education secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan is leading the Bangladesh delegation that also includes the department's deputy secretary and Manzoor Ahmed from Brac University.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman and Primary Education Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury opted out of the meeting.

Primary Education Secretary Musharraf said Bangladesh has made progress on a number of fronts that offer examples to other E-9 countries.

"Bangladesh has decentralised both deployment of teachers and follow-up trainings which are best practices that can be replicated by other E-9 countries to good effect," he added.

Although Bangladesh is one of the best performers among the E-9 countries in universal primary school enrolments and achieving gender parity, it is lagging far behind other countries in tertiary enrolments, dropout rates, and illiteracy.