

সাবিত্রী 09 SEP 1993  
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## Literacy rate shows 4 pc increase Education must for uplift: Khaleda

The country's rate of literacy registered an increase of 4 per cent in last two years as a result of the present government's pragmatic policies, the Prime Minister said on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Begum Khaleda Zia, speaking at a function on the occasion of the International Literacy Day, said there has been encouraging "signs of significant improvements" in education in which people's interest has grown tremendously.

The country had a 24.8 per cent rate of literacy until 1990 which, according to a recent survey conducted by the United Nations Development (UNDP) rose to more than 28 per cent in 1993.

The Prime Minister hoped that the country's literacy rate would continue to increase as the present government has been able to create a favourable atmosphere for promoting primary education.

She was addressing the inaugural session of a day-long discussion on "Strategy for Implementing Education for All", organised by the Primary and Mass Education Department at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka on Wednesday morning.

Terming illiteracy as a curse and the cause of backwardness, the Prime Minister observed that "our huge manpower would have turned into human resource if the nation was free from the curse of illiteracy".

The present government has started its campaign against illiteracy from the villages where the majority

of the population live, she said.

She mentioned different programmes of the government, including "Education for All" to increase the literacy rate, "Food for Education" for the poor and underprivileged children and the Compulsory Primary Education Programme.

The Prime Minister said education is a prerequisite for development of human resources which brings about progress and prosperity of a nation.

She recalled that late President Ziaur Rahman had introduced the Mass Education Programme to enable the people of all ages to read and write, but the programme was abandoned by the autocratic regime. "We have reintroduced the Mass Education Programme and have taken steps to transform it into a mass movement."

Begum Zia sought cooperation from every conscious citizen, political party as well as social and non-government organisations for suc-

cessful implementation of the programme. The Mass Education Programme is a huge arrangement which cannot be implemented by the government alone, she added.

"We want every individual to come up with equal contribution to the national issue of education. Everybody should have equal participation in the programme," she emphasised.

The Prime Minister said it should be our national pledge today to emerge as an educated nation in the 21st century.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda and Secretary of Primary and Mass Education Division Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed also spoke at the inaugural session.

Parliament members, diplomats, representatives of voluntary organisations and senior government officials were present on the occasion.