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Shun armament, divert funds to education

PM calls upon world leaders at UN function, seeks global help to attain MDGs

BSS, *New York*

Putting emphasis on diversion of funds from armaments to education, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the world leaders and development partners to redouble their efforts to place education at the heart of global development mission.

"A strong political leadership and diversion of funds from armaments to education are the solution to real peace," she told at a function at the ECOSOC chamber in the UN headquarters.

The programme was organised to mark the first anniversary of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Global Education First Initiative.

Congratulating the UN secretary general for the initiative, the prime minister said Ban's ideas to "put every child to school", "improve the quality of education", and "foster global partnership for education" are inspirational.

Hasina said Bangladesh is honoured to be one of the "Champion States" of this initiative. "It matches with Bangladesh's Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration -- Education would be our first and foremost tool for national development."

She said education is a lead "agent of change"

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our vision and development agenda to turn Bangladesh into a middle income country by 2021.

The premier added: Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary schools, a target of MDG-3, by providing ICT facilities in schools, stipends to 11.90 million students every year, 915 million free textbooks to students and financial support from the Prime Minister's Trust Fund to poor students for higher studies.

The Bangladesh government, she noted, also has taken massive programmes for the school feeding programme funded by local donors, modernisation of the madrasa curriculum and education of boys and girls with autism and other developmental disorders.

Hasina thanked the development partners, UNDP and other agencies for providing support to the efforts.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also spoke.

HELP ATTAINING MDG

Describing environmental sustainability (MDG-7) as a formidable challenge for Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged world leaders to come up with their promised support to help Bangladesh attain the goal.

She also asserted that the country would remain in the forefront of global efforts in laying down the political groundwork for intergovernmental negotiations in achieving the post-2015 development agenda.

She was addressing a session on "Special event to follow-up efforts made towards achieving the MDGs" at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The premier co-chaired the session with Irish Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore.

"The MDG-7 is a formidable challenge for Bangladesh. However, the country has already met or is on track to meet the MDG-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6," she mentioned.

Bangladesh is a low-lying coastal state, fraught with natural disasters, which made it difficult for the country to achieve the MDG-7, added Hasina. "Our government has been implementing a 134-point Action Plan in line with our mitigation and adaptation policy."

The global community should positively respond to their promises, she told her audience.

Recalling her association with the adoption of the historic UN Millennium Declaration in September, 2000, she said, "As the prime minister of Bangladesh, I was here [New York] at that time. It gave a Development Vision and set goals on reducing poverty, hunger and inequality, among others, by 2015."

"In 2010, I was here again as the prime minister and termed the Millennium Declaration as the Magna Carta for a world free from hunger and underdevelopment. I am now here at this special event to share our experiences on the MDGs, and thoughts on the post-2015 agenda," she mentioned.

Hasina mentioned that after returning from the Millennium Summit in 2000, she decided to include the MDGs in the mainstream of Bangladesh's development agenda and poverty reduction strategy.

As per the decision, she said, the government integrated the MDGs in its annual, mid-term and long-term development plan. "Our actions have proved to be success stories that are being acclaimed universally....

Our efforts have led to making us honoured with the MDG Award 2010, South-South Award and FAO Diploma Award for reducing hunger by 2012."

As far as the MDG-3 is concerned, the premier said, Bangladesh had achieved gender equality in primary and secondary education in 2009.

On MDG-4, Bangladesh has achieved under-5 mortality rate of 36 per 1,000 live births in 2012, against the targeted 48 by 2015.

"We did well in MDG-5 by reducing maternal mortality from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010," she said.