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## Female stipend project launched

# Education major step to removal of poverty: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Thursday introduced higher secondary female stipend project to provide stipend and other benefits to the girl students at the higher secondary level, reports BSS.

Inaugurating the project, Begum Zia said that as a boost for expansion of women development her government always considered education as the first important step towards removal of poverty and unemployment with a view to building a self-reliant nation.

"To us education means development. Empowerment of women is possible through spread of education", she opined.

The Prime Minister said that from now on the government would support the female students to continue their study by bringing all girl students at school, college and madrasa levels throughout the country under this stipend programme.

She said the government would provide financial support to female students to continue their study side by side with free education for women from primary level to higher secondary level.

With the introduction of higher secondary female stipend project another political commitment of the present government to expand female education through stipend programme for girl students up to higher secondary level has been fulfilled.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for ensuring women empowerment to remove poverty and develop national economy. She called for ensuring time-befitting and quality education for women empowerment.

Describing today's launching of female stipend project as very significant for spread of education, especially expansion of women education and develop-

ment, Begum Zia said "this date will be written in red letters in the history of the development of education".

The Prime Minister inaugurated the female stipend project by handing over cheques of stipend to 17 girls students of different colleges and madrasas. Education Minister Dr Osman Farooq distributed cheques of stipend among rest of the 233 female students at the function.

## Education major step

(From Page 1 Col. 7)

provision of Taka 65 per girl per month, providing Taka 350 to each girl in eleventh class for purchasing books. Besides this, each girl student of science group will get Taka 600 while a student of business and humanities groups will get Taka 400 as board examination fees at the end of 12th class and the institutions will receive tuition fees against the stipend recipients.

Officials said, disparity in access to secondary education between boys and girls at the secondary level has been reduced after the introduction of female stipend programmes at the secondary level.

Presently, the ratio of boys and girls at the secondary level is 48:52 and the ration between boys and girls is 60:40 at HSC level, officials said. With the introduction of female secondary stipend programme for girls, participation in SSC level has been increasing day by day.

They said the project will also encourage more girl students to study science at the HSC level.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh has progressed a lot in the field of female education. She said that the government would provide books for girl students and exempt their tuition fees of all Ebtedai Madrasa.

Begum Zia said that the rate of drop-outs of girl students has re-

The female stipend programme for girl students who have passed the SSC or Dhakil Examinations is aimed at ensuring their higher education. It will help increase the social status of female in the community, their capability to enter into the job market and encourage them to generate self-employment.

The main components of the female stipend project included (See Page 15 Col. 6)

duced and the rate of pass of girl students increased comparatively.

The Prime Minister said that the government would like to ensure empowerment of women, their participation in wider working place and their role in nation-building.

She said that government would also like to ensure employment opportunities for women, both at the private and public sectors.

Begum Zia urged the teacher to impart education to students with dedication and sincerity, and help maintain congenial academic atmosphere in educational institutions.

She also asked them to help improve quality of education, and stop copying in examinations. Begum Zia asked the students to avail the facilities they have been offered by the government.

The Prime Minister said the government has a plan to expand the stipend programme in higher education in future.

The function was addressed also by Education Minister Dr. Osman Farooq, State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Huq Milton, Deputy Minister for Education Abdus Salam Pintoo, and Education Secretary Shahidul Alam and a stipend-holder female student.

Held at the International Conference Centre, the function was attended by Ministers, MPs, Diplomats, teachers and students.