

Let voices of girls be heard through education

Says Cherie Blair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair, has called on all to ensure education of girls as well as women to let their voices be heard and opinions be expressed through harnessing talents.

She made the call while addressing a public reception accorded to her at the proposed permanent campus site of Asian University for Women (AUW) at Pahartali in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

The programme was organised by Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, who also hosted a dinner in honour of Cherie, a patron of AUW, leading international lawyer and human rights advocate.

Cherie said Chittagong was the right centre of the new venture of women education. Terming Chittagong a city of universities, she said it (Chittagong) would now have AUW, a university of ambition, which would educate carefully selected young women

to turn this part of Asia into one of the dynamic growth regions of the world.

In Bangladesh, boys and girls have equal access to education up to higher secondary level. But at the tertiary level, the access of girls is very limited, she added.

Cherie said women education gets much importance as the country is governed by women for most of the time under democracy.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself has been supporting the idea of educating women and committed to women education, said Cherie, referring to what she realised at her meeting with Hasina on Friday.

Later, the mayor presented a golden key of Chittagong city to Cherie at the reception programme.

AUW Support Foundation Bangladesh Board of Directors Chairman Rokia Afzal Rahman, AUW Bangladesh Chief Executive Officer Kamal Hossain, Monowara Hakim Ali of Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs, directors and

teachers of the university accompanied Cherie.

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Abdus Salam, also president of Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, pledged all-out support of CDA to develop the permanent campus of AUW.

Acting Vice Chancellor (VC) of AUW Hun Ann Ku said the university started its academic calendar with a preparatory Access Academy Programme on its temporary campus in four rented buildings in the port city on April 6, 2008.

It began with an enrolment of 129 students from 12 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The students of the first batch are now doing their under-graduation programme at AUW under 35 professors.

The number of students rose to 300 students with admission of a new group of 141 students in August last year. The number would rise to 450 and teachers to 55 from August this year, said the VC.