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## 25,000 more pry. schools needed

Bangladesh needed another 25,000 primary schools in addition to existing 44,000 approximately to ensure the total enrolment of school-going children, reports BSS.

This was stated by Mr Qazi Azher Ali Secretary Ministry of Education while inaugurating a five-day sub-regional Seminar on "School failure and wastage in primary education" at a local hotel on Saturday morning.

The seminar jointly organised by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with UNESCO Paris is being attended by representatives from China India Nepal Pakistan Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Presided over by Dr Zahru Islam Bhuiyan Director-General Primary Education the inaugural session was addressed by Mr. Mahmood A. Aminul Islam, Seminar Co-ordinator, Mr. Nigel Ringrose Senior Deputy President Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Dr Iraj Ayman, UNESCO representative based in Bangkok and Mr S.M. Saifuddin Secretary Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO.

The grinding poverty of the masses in Bangladesh and the lack of attitude of the society to education and the absence of motivational campaign to encourage parents to enrol their wards to primary school were identified as some of the major stumbling blocks in the realisation of the goal of universal primary education in the country.

The need for universalising primary education is all the more greater in Bangladesh where only 67 per cent of the age group (6-10 years) children are enrolled in primary school. Crude wastage ratio for Bangladesh calculated on the basis of drop-out and repetition rate is currently 50 per cent it was stated in a paper at the inau-

gural function of the seminar. The Education Secretary, who is also Secretary General, Bangladesh National Commissioner UNESCO (BNCU) underlined the need for launching a sort of popular mass movement involving community participation for achieving Universal Primary Education.

He said that in the Third Five-Year Plan 1985-90 of Bangladesh development of primary education had been included as a priority goal more than 46 per cent of the total allocation for education had been set aside for the promotion of primary education, he added.

Qazi Azher Ali told the seminar that the strategy for primary education was built around construction of school buildings, provision of school furniture, text-books learning materials, improvement of teacher training and strengthening of field supervision in this connection, he referred to the decentralisation of primary education at the Upazila level.

The Education Secretary re. (See Page 8 Col. 4)

### Pry. schools

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gretted that even 25 years after the adoption of the "Karachi Plan" in which the regional countries set their goal for universal primary education (UPE) many of them including Bangladesh were yet to achieve the cherished objective. We are still suffering from the vicious cycle of low enrolment and high wastage in primary schools. It is more rampant in rural areas and among women and the disadvantaged groups in our communities" he said.

### Call to identify crucial factors

He called upon the experts to examine in depth and identify crucial factors at the roots of the problem of wastage. He also laid stress on going beyond the known factors and looking for hidden factors to get to the bottom of the things and evolve strategies to overcome them.

In his speech Dr. Zahru Islam Bhuiyan attributed the drop out repetition and wastage in primary education to poverty of the people stating "poverty gives rise to illness, malnutrition and absenteeism".

In this connection, he pointed out that there were other important factors that went beyond the poverty factors. These are socio-psychological, pedagogical and curriculum factors influencing wastage and dropout in primary education, he said and called for formulating a curriculum in a way that would attract students and make primary education joyful and satisfying.

Underlying the paramount importance of the role of class room teacher in primary schools Dr. Bhuiyan noted "often there is much to be desired in the performance of a primary teacher, at least in Bangladesh".

Mr. Mahmood Aminul Islam urged the participants to map out strategy to bring the children of disadvantaged families under UPE. He thought that institutions like Mothers Clubs NGOs, and youth organisations could take active part in this endeavour under financial support and patronage of the Government.

Mr. Nigel Ringrose said UNDP fully supported Bangladesh Government's prioritization on primary Education. His organisation considered education and literacy as crucial components for integrated development he said.

Mr. Ringrose urged the participants to ponder "when money becomes really tight, how important are buildings compared to arousing curiosity of children".

Dr. Iraj Ayman lauded the endeavours of Bangladesh to universalise primary education.

He placed emphasis on creating a learning community to make the UPE programme a success and said "without creating a learning community we can't create learning students".

Dr. Ayman also called for changing attitude and changing of course of action for universalisation of education. The teachers also must be made accountable to parents, guardians and community to get the desired result, he said.