

Human Development Index Bangladesh goes down to 150th position due to fall in GDP

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has fallen into 150th position from last year's 146th among 174 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) despite marked increase in the literacy and life expectancy factors.

Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita went down compared to other countries during the last year, which contributed to the four-point downward shift in the country's position, according to the Human Development Report of the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is calculated on the basis of three indices: life expectancy, literacy and per capita GDP.

Andre Klap, UNDP country director, released the report at a press conference in the city as part of global circulation, yesterday.

"Shifting of Bangladesh's position from 150th to 146th does not mean that human development suffered a setback in Bangladesh, rather it has done well in life expectancy and literacy," Klap said. "Position of 43 countries improved and 48 countries dropped in the HDI report" Klap said, adding that the cause of the shift might be

the adoption of a new methodology for incorporating data about income and purchasing power by the World Bank. Regarding problem of globalisation in the Bangladesh context, Klap said Bangladesh should proceed towards globalisation in a systematic way and the government should have an integrated policy on the issue.

Among others, acting UN resident coordinator Kiene Wiener, and UNDP's Ismet Zerin Khan, Kazi Ali Reza, Shams Mustafa and Shamim Hamid were present at the press conference.

The report says Bangladesh's GDP per capita was 218 US Dollars in 1997, higher than 179 dollars in 1990, 165 dollars in 1985, 145 dollars in 1980 and 134 dollars in 1975. All values are in 1987 US dollars.

The HDI value rose to 0.440 in 1997 from 0.318 in 1975, 0.336 in 1980, 0.369 in 1985 and 0.400 in 1990, the report said.

Life expectancy in Bangladesh rose to 58.1 years in 1997 from 44.2 in 1970, the report said.

Among south and south-east Asian countries, Malaysia at

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the 56th position, tops the list. It is followed by Thailand — 67th, Sri Lanka — 90th, the Maldives — 93rd, Indonesia — 105th, Vietnam — 110th, India — 132nd, Pakistan — 138th, Nepal — 144th and Bhutan — 145th position. China was ranked at the 98th position.

Canada with 16,525 US Dollars per capita GDP topped the human development list, followed by Norway with 27,620 dollars, the United States with 21,541 dollars, Japan with 25,084 dollars and Belgium with 16,809 dollars. Other rich countries on top of the list are Sweden — sixth, Australia — 7th, the Netherlands — 8th, Iceland — 9th, United Kingdom — 10th, France — 11th and Switzerland — 12th, the report said.

Potraying both the negative and positive aspects of globalisation, the report underlines the need of giving globalisation a human face and termed the results of the current globalisation process as "grotesque." Present trend of globalisation is causing dangerous polarisation between people and countries benefiting from the system and those that are merely passive recipients of its effect. The report says that the current pace of globalisation should be changed as it is dominated by the market bringing benefits for some and marginalising many.

Due to the current type of globalisation, people's lives are becoming less secure, job insecurity is increasing, people feel culturally threatened by its predominant one-way flow and disparities are glaring, the report said.

A fifth of the world's population living in the highest income countries have 86 per cent of the world's GDP, 82 per cent of world export markets, 68 per cent of foreign direct investment and 74 per cent of telephone lines, it said.

The number of internet hosts rose in a decade from under 100,000 in 1988 to over 36 million in 1998. The income gap between the richest fifth of the world's people and the poorest fifth, measured by average national income per head, increased from 30 to one in 1960 to 74 to one in 1997. Industrialised countries hold 97 per cent of all patents, worldwide, the 200 richest people in the world more than doubled their net worth in the four years to 1998 to one trillion US dollars; women occupy more than 30 per cent of parliamentary seats in only five countries, in 31 they occupy fewer than five per cent, the report said.

The report stressed on a code of conduct for multinational corporations, establishment of independent Legal Aid Center and Ombudsman, international public program to fund the development of bio, information and communication technologies.

The report suggested establishing mechanisms in every country to coordinate policy on globalisation and a complete overhaul in governance.