

## Education, training of women stressed

CHHATRAGRAM (Mymensingh), Jan. 13.—First Lady Begum Raushan Ershad yesterday stressed the need for education and training of women to achieve their rightful place in the society, reports BSS.

She said "we must ensure a better life for the rural women who have been long neglected and I would do everything possible to ensure that."

The First Lady was addressing the foundation-stone laying ceremony of the "Raushan Ershad Training and Rehabilitation Centre" here.

Begum Ershad said rural women of Bangladesh were leading neglected and economically hard life. Training and education would help them establish their own identity, she said adding, the training centre would help them acquire different vocational skills which would finally help them get employment.

She said the socially handicapped women would get a new lease of life after their stay at the training centre. The centre would go a long way in helping women achieve economic freedom, she hoped.

The First Lady said crimes against women was a problem in the country and the movement against those would continue. Those committing such crimes should be identified and punished. "We will not tolerate any leniency in this regard", she stated.

Begum Ershad urged the members of the law enforcing agencies to be vigilant against criminals harming women.

She said the present government has taken a number of steps to ensure women's liberty. Laws on crimes against women and dowry were some of the major steps, she said adding, such laws have already given positive results.

Begum Ershad said the government would continue to do its utmost to improve the quality of life of women, especially those in the rural areas and handicapped. "I hope soon these would change the fate of rural women", she said.

The function presided over by the Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs, Mr. Azizul Huq, was addressed, among others, by the Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Rezanul Huq Chowdhury, State Minister of the same Ministry A.T.M. Ghyasuddin Ahmed and Begum Mamata Wahab MP.

Begum Ershad said, the present government is a government of the rural people working relentlessly to improve the lot of people. In the past seven years the country has seen revolutionary changes and better and positive steps have been taken to increase employment opportunities,

she added.

She said, decentralisation of the administration and the upazila system have taken development to the remote areas. The people of those areas are also getting the opportunity for justice through the courts set up in the districts, she noted.

Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister Rezanul Huq Chowdhury gave an outline of the centre to be established at a cost of over Taka five crores. He said 500 handicapped and distressed women would be given vocational training at a time initially and provide a scope to earn their livings with the sale of their products. When they finally leave the centre, they would be returned their savings made from these sales, he said.

He said the project was taken up with the directives of the first lady, who later, unveiled the centre's plaque.

Earlier, on her arrival at the venue, Begum Ershad was given a warm welcome. Children in traditional colourful dressed profusely garlanded her.

The centre located about four kilometers from Mymensingh town is a project under the 1988-89 Annual Development Programme. Socially handicapped and distressed women would spend three years at the centre and then join the mainstream as self-employed persons, official sources said.

It will have a legal aid cell and a central employment and sales centre.