

48 lakh to be made literate annually

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The President and Chief Martial Law Administrator Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad said in Dhaka on Wednesday that the Government had taken up a comprehensive programme to remove the curse of illiteracy from the society, reports BSS.

Speaking at a function on the occasion of the International Literacy Day, the President said it was hoped that about two and a half crore population in the age group of 10 to 30 could be made literate within five years under this programme.

He said the programme had been planned in a manner under which 48 lakh illiterate persons would be made literate annually. The programme would be materialised through the combined efforts of the government and non-government organisations under the supervision of the Upazila Administration, he added.

The 40 thousand primary schools of the country would be the base of the programme.

The Education Minister Mr. Shamsul Huda Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion. Ministers, diplomats and high officials were present on the occasion.

The President said there would be a national implementation cell under the Ministry of Education to help the materialisation of the programme. A national advisory committee would be formed with representatives of concerned ministries and non-government organisations to help the programme and oversee its overall performance while the Education Ministry would be responsible for

coordinating the programme, he added.

He said the government had given priority to education and with that end in view it had made the highest allocation for the Education Sector amounting to Taka 470 crore for this year. He listed the steps undertaken by the present government for the development of education in the country and said greater emphasis had been given on primary education. In this context he pointed out that scheme had been taken to set up one primary school in every two square miles or for every two thousand population.

President Ershad pointed out that the literacy rate in the country was alarmingly low and said "if we can work with dedication, sincerity and patriotism. It

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Literacy drive

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will not be very difficult to spread the light of literacy among the illiterate people'. He said it was not possible to continue the march forward towards progress keeping 75 per cent of the population under the darkness of illiteracy.

Underlining the great importance of female education, he said they should be given the opportunity to take part in the country's development process. For this, it was essential to spread the light of education among women, he said adding: It is not possible to march forward keeping half the population idle.

The President said one of the main obstacles in the way of spreading education was the alarming rate of population growth. He said another bottleneck in the way of spreading education was the departure of a large number of students before taking necessary education. 'We must stop this tendency of leaving school' he said and urged the teachers and educated class to play their role in this regard.

The President said it was the national responsibility and duty to spread the light of education among the old-illiterate people side by side with the massive efforts for the spread of education at the primary level.

Referring to the various programmes taken up in the past, he said the actual implementation of these programmes was not at all encouraging. That is why, the rate of illiteracy is very high in the country, he added.

President Ershad said the government would patronise such efforts by non-government and voluntary social welfare organisations which would help remove the curse of illiteracy from the society. The government, he added, had also taken up comprehensive programmes for imparting production-oriented adult education.

President Ershad called for building up a national literacy movement by striking an effective coordination among the programmes taken in this regard by the government and those adopted by the affluent section of the society, the educated class,

students and teachers and various social welfare organisations.

He expressed his confidence that through such an extensive and coordinated movement, it would be possible to free the motherland from the curse of illiteracy.

The President said that his government was doing every thing possible to spread education and remove the curse of illiteracy from the society. He referred to the contributions made by educationists and philanthropists in the past and regretted that such initiatives are now missing in our affluent people.

He hoped that the richer section of the society would play a patronising role in spreading education.

Speaking on the occasion, the Education Minister, Mr. Shamsul Huda Chowdhury said, we must free the nation from the curse of illiteracy to consolidate our development gains. He said it was not possible to achieve overall development of the country keeping the vast majority of population illiterate.

He said the government had given priority to education and pointed out that the highest allocation in the current year's budget in the Education Sector was the manifestation of the government's policy in this regard.

Earlier, President Ershad distributed prizes among the winners in the essay and poster competitions organised on the occasion of the International Literacy Day.

The President also inaugurated a book and poster exhibition on the occasion at the Shilpakala Academy art gallery. He went round the exhibition and evinced keen interest in the books and posters put on display there.