

Ershad lays foundation of IIESDM

World aid to control disasters sought

Staff Correspondent

President H.M. Ershad on Thursday made an appeal to all Governments and international organisations to assist the International Institute of Environment Studies and Disaster Management (IIESDM) in contributing to the global and regional environmental problems. There is urgent need for return to sustainable development through international cooperation, he added.

President Ershad said this while addressing the opening ceremony of the International Institute of Environment Studies and Disaster Management (IIESDM) held at the International Conference Centre on the day.

Earlier, he laid the foundation stone of IIESDM at Mirpur at a simple ceremony. The foundation-laying ceremony was attended, among others, by Noble Laureate Professor Abdus Salam, Vice-President Justice Nurul Islam, Deputy Prime Ministers Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain and some experts.

President Ershad in his opening address at the International Conference Centre also announced Bangladesh's contribution of Taka one crore (ten million) to the IIESDM in addition to three acres of land. He said turning to Professor A. Salam

that the Government was committed to the betterment of the condition of the people and also improvement of the environment.

We are deeply concerned over environmental degradation and attach much importance to the ecological impact of development planning, he said. We are in search of an environmentally safe technology, President Ershad said. The government attaches much importance to the role of science and technology in economic progress. The government is also making efforts to lessen the impact of natural disasters. President Ershad recalled the context of the formation of a National Disaster Prevention Council comprising representatives. Turning to last year's catastrophic floods, he recalled the joint task forces which have been set up with regional countries to study the problem of floods. He expressed satisfaction to the response of international community to Bangladesh's efforts to the response of international community to Bangladesh's efforts to face the floods. He thanked Mr. Javier Perez de Quellar, Secretary General of UN, for his personal initiatives at the UN to mitigate sufferings of the people of Bangladesh.

President Ershad dwelt at length

on different aspects of the justification behind Bangladesh's initiative for setting up of IIESDM. Bangladesh offers certain unique opportunities for studying certain environmental situations like flow of the rivers and geo climatic processes taking place in the coastal region, he said. Scientists from all over the world, working in the Institute's multidisciplinary units, would get a close view of these environmental phenomena, he hoped.

He expressed the hope that the Institute would make contributions to environmental research about ecological disasters for planning. He had words of appreciation for the cooperation of the country's scientific community in organising it.

Terming the whole world as a global village, he said the health of the earth's inhabitants cannot be separate from that of the planet itself. He expressed concern over Green House Effect on the planet as a whole and on Bangladesh particular. The rise in the sea level poses the problem of enhanced inundation globally and it could take up even 30 per cent of the arable land of Bangladesh, he said.

President Ershad, citing examples of environmental degradation in

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Science neglected

Nobel laureate Prof. Abdus Salam on Thursday said establishment of the International Institute of Environment Studies and Disaster Management (IIESDM) is one of the most important of all endeavours that have been made recently in the field of science and technology.

He was speaking as the guest of honour at the inaugural ceremony of the IIESDM held at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Dhaka.

Prof. Salam said it was also a political decision on the part of those who want to use science and technology in the half of human being. They should take such steps to utilise modern science and technology in any developing country, he said.

Emphasising the need for increased expenditures on the development of science and technology, he said physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology and medical sciences, the five basic branches of science, were completely neglected in the Third World countries. The economists would not agree that basic sciences, high and low technology and the industries were the four basic areas where human endeavour could be utilised, he added.

Prof. Salam said the developing countries on an average were spending

5.6 per cent of their Gross National Product (GNP) for defence which was exactly the equal percentage spent by the developed countries in this sector.

He said on the other hand, the developing countries were spending 3.7 per cent of their GNP for education, 1.41 per cent for health and 2 per cent for science and technology against the expenditure of 5.1 per cent for education, 4.8 per cent for health and 2.5 per cent for science and technology made by the developed countries.

As a basis for industrialisation of the Third World countries he emphasised the need for development of livestock, forestry, irrigation, health and environment.

Referring to his talks with Prime Minister Behazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India and President Premadasa of Sri Lanka during his current tour, Prof. Salam said his objective was to see science and technology flourish in this region. It was "so beautiful that they were very fond of it", he added.

Giving importance to high technology, Prof. Salam said being ravaged by natural calamities repeatedly Bangladesh also should consider development of high technology for

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Nobel laureate Prof. Abdus Salam, speaking as the guest of honour at the inaugural ceremony of International Institute of Environmental Studies and Disaster Management in Dhaka on Thursday. President Ershad and Deputy Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

Science neglected

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improve its economic condition. He said the high technologies like communication sciences, micro processor, photonics and biotechnology contributed 30 per cent to the GNP of the USA and Japan and 20 per cent to that of European countries. Japan, Korea and Taiwan became wealthy because of high technology, he added.

He told the audience that one-eight of the holy book (the Quran) discussed science and technology and added that the Third World countries should adopt the knowledge and bring about a renaissance like the period of Ibn Sina.

He said years of negligence had suppressed the inventing capabilities of the scientists in the developing countries and called upon them to come forward and utilise the available facilities at their hand.

Prof. Salam, who is the head of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste in Italy, assured of his full assistance and cooperation for development of the IIESDM in Dhaka as an international institute like those in the Philippines, India, Canada and Nigeria. He also assured a substantial financial assistance from the fund received from the government of Italy for his centre.

He also suggested that 10 per cent of the aids to the developing countries should be requested for the development of science and technology.

Innovations by young scientists stressed

Staff Correspondent

Nobel Laureate Professor Abdus Salam said on Thursday that he was "a part of Bangladeshis" and that he felt proud of it. He said he always tries to give Bangladesh a special place in all forums.

Praising the talents of the Bangladeshi scientists in wide range of research activities, Prof. Salam said innovative practices must be carried out by the young scientists of the country in order to develop their skills and efficiency.

Inaugurating the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences Foundation Trust Fund at the BARC auditorium in Dhaka Prof Salam said it was brilliant idea to have a foundation like this and he shared joys with it.

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World aid

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Africa, said the famine that looms large over parts of Africa was the outcome of a mixture of politics, economic compulsions and the worsening relationship between growing population and the natural system on which they depend.

We would take programme to prevent the decline of the quality of the environment in view of recurrence of floods and droughts, he said. He stressed the need for concerted efforts for the protection of environment. We are involved in the same basic environmental issues, whether it is the destruction of a forest in Europe by acid rain or the accelerated siltation of rivers of Bangladesh by deforestation in the Himalayan foothills, he observed. He recalled the international seminar organised by Bangladesh Research Bureau and held in Dhaka immediately after last year's devastating floods.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Deputy Prime Minister and Political Adviser to the President, described the foundation-laying of the IIESDM as a big leap forward towards realising the lofty goal enunciated in the Dhaka declaration in the international seminar, organised by Bangladesh Research Bureau about two months ago. He said Bangladesh offers an excellent testing ground and a vintage point to seek solutions to environmental disasters management problem. This can be done by drawing together the threads of sustainable development, appropriate technology and human scale economics, the Deputy Prime Minister maintained.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed expressed his gratefulness to President Ershad for Noble Laureate Professor Abdus Salam for his presence, at the function. Vice President Justice Nurul Islam, Prime Minister Maudud Ahmed, members of the Cabinet, heads of diplomatic missions, high civil and military officials were among others who attended the function.

Professor Syed Safiullah, Secretary General of IIESDM also spoke.

Disaster Studies, Instt body meets

The first meeting of the international board of advisers of the International Institute of Environment Studies and Disaster Management (IIESDM) was held on Thursday at the international conference centre in Dhaka with the Deputy Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed in the chair, reports BSS.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed one of the patrons of the institute, briefing the press in the afternoon said the draft constitution of the IIESDM based on the "Dhaka declaration" was presented at the meeting and discussions on it were continuing.

He said the board decided that the IIESDM would be a non-governmental, non-political international institute. It will have a 35-member advisory board with at least 18 foreign and 10 local members. The chief patron of the institute shall be the President of the Board and the patrons shall be its Vice-President.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed said the foreign members to be elected from the six continents shall cover different disciplines of sciences. The term of the board shall be four years it will meet once a year.

The President of Bangladesh Academy of Sciences and two persons nominated by Bangladesh Research Bureau will also be included in the board. The Secretary General of the Institute shall be the Member-Secretary of the Board.

Innovations

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Bangladeshis on this happy occasion. Saying that no noble work goes unrewarded, he announced an yearly grant for the Foundation from the Third World Academy of Sciences, of which he is the founder.

Citing example of Imam Gazzali's mission for Foundation for Islam, Prof Salam said the Imam, after migrating from Iran to Iraq, had preached for the Foundation for Islam. He was a great debator but he was punished by Allah the Merciful for an apparent offence and he lost his voice. Prof. Salam said the Imam had strenuously worked for many foundations in Iraq and today Iraq could boast of so many foundations and endowments which were working as the promotional venues for the budding scientists.

Prof Salam said there are 22,000 scientific foundations in the United States and many of the major foundations like Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation have been funding the research activities of the young talents for many consecutive years. As a result, the United States and countries in the west have developed a lot. Their activities should serve as model for the Foundation of Islam, he added.

A mismanagement witnessed the BARC auditorium to remain without air cooling system (which collapsed a month ago) and ceiling fans leaving the audience in complete disarray. As Prof Salam could not move to the second floor of the auditorium due to extreme exhaustion, the meeting venue was shifted to the open lawn of the BARC. Ironically, the authorities concerned could not arrange any microphone and, as such, the audience could not hear the distinguished guest.

Earlier, in his welcome address, professor Innas Ali, President, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences, paid rich tributes to the Nobel Laureate. Terming him as a great Muslim of the subcontinent, Prof. Ali said Prof Salam's writings and speeches are frequently illustrated by the teachings and wisdom of the Holy Quran. Saying that the Nobel Laureate was the greatest scientist and philosopher of the world today.