

PM urges E-9 countries to integrate EFA initiatives with SDG-4

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha · Dhaka

PRIME minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday urged the E-9 countries to align and integrate their initiatives of 'Education for All' with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 to achieve the goal of universal education.

'We have to align and integrate our initiatives and strategies with the SDG-4 (Education-2030) taking along the lessons and achievements of MDGs and EFA,' she said, while inaugurating E-9 ministerial meeting at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden hotel.

'We are living in a world where we depend on each other despite our diversity in culture, religion, race and language. Education can play a bridging role in promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and friendship,' she said, adding that education also gives the foundation of right values and dynamism of aspirations and required competencies.

The E-9 is a forum of nine countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan - to achieve the goals of the UNESCO's 'Edu-

cation for All' initiative.

Representing over half of the world's population and 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults, the E-9 forum was launched in 1993 at the EFA Summit in New Delhi.

Education minister and new chairperson of E-9 Nurul Islam Nahid, primary and mass education minister Mostafizur Rahman, among others, spoke on the occasion, while UNESCO director general Irina Bokova was in the chair.

Pakistan's state minister for federal education and professional training and outgoing chair of E-9 Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman presented the progress report of the forum since the last meeting in November 2014 and handed over chairmanship to Bangladesh's education minister.

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina said that the SDG-4 aimed mainly at ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning while E-9 had become a common platform for North-South-South cooperation in the context of the new Global Education 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

'Keeping these global aspirations in mind, I hope, the esteemed educationists and policy makers present here will revitalise the past efforts and deliberate adjustments and new orientations for these nine countries sharing their aspirations, commitments, and priorities based on SDG 4-Education 2030,' she said.

'E-9 ministerial meeting in Dhaka gives us a historic opportunity to collectively explore our response towards achieving SDG-4,' the prime minister said.

Highlighting Bangladesh's success in achieving most of the MDGs Sheikh Hasina said the MDGs guided us for development efforts over the last decade and a half. It also helped achieving gender parity in the area of education which has also been a key element in the newly formed SDG-4, she said.

'Ensuring equitable and quality education, we believe, Dhaka meeting will lead the E-9 countries to effective learning outcomes as stated in SDG-4,' she said.

Sheikh Hasina said inclusive, equitable and quality education and lifelong learning by 2030 might prove challeng-

ing to achieve. 'But we have to overcome the challenge by sharing our respective initiatives, practices and plan of action for future,' she said.

'Concerted efforts would give us the most effective results. E-9 has to work in close cooperation for that,' she said.

In this regard the prime minister highlighted the present education policy of Bangladesh saying that all strategies and policies with regards to education were being formulated according to the policy framed in 2010.

Under those policies, she said, steps were taken to bring poor students under stipend schemes, allocate additional resources to ethnic, physically-mentally challenged and other disadvantaged groups, strengthen partnerships with private sectors/NGOs in hard-to-reach areas, increase scholarship programmes for secondary and tertiary education, emphasise on technical and vocational education and improve quality and ensure inclusiveness of general education as well as lifelong learning.

Innovative methods and means, including application of information technol-

ogy in learning, interactive classes, use of open and distance learning systems, were adopted, she said.

Sheikh Hasina said that over 2.25 billion textbooks had been distributed since 2010 to the students at primary and secondary levels, setting probably the example of the largest of its kind in the world.

Laying importance on enhancing quality of education, the prime minister said special emphasis must be given on teachers' education and training programmes.

'Attracting competent teachers for teaching is important,' she said adding that considering the challenge, a qualified workforce for teaching profession, policy options and incentive plans should be explored for motivation.

Expecting timely and pragmatic recommendations and pathways from the E-9 meeting for realising the SDG-4, the prime minister hoped that the Dhaka meeting would start the process of sharing the best practices, devising action plan and programmes, finding new modes of partnership as well as welcoming regional and international dialogues on education.