President urges varsities to help build digital Bangladesh

President Zillur Rahman on urged the country’s specialised universities to play a supportive role alongside the government’s endeavours in building digital Bangladesh. He gave the call while presiding over the fifth convocation of Ahsanullah University Science and Technology (AUST) held on 15 February 2012 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid attended the convocation as special guest while Prof Dr Jamal Nazrul Islam was the convocation speaker.

Addressing the convocation, President Zillur Rahman said the specialised universities could play supportive role along with the government in identifying the areas of building digital Bangladesh. He said, "The country’s science and technology-based universities can help the government realise its goal of building an IT-based prosperous Bangladesh." The President noted that a new horizon of opportunity accessing higher education has opened up in the country through the expansion of the private universities.

Presently, around 50 private universities are functioning in the country of which many are being operated successfully, he said. Describing universities as non-profitable social organisations, Zillur Rahman said making profit like a business enterprise can't be the key goal of a university. Referring to the Private University Act, he said this law has been enacted to improve the standard and environment of higher education.

The President stressed the need for bringing basic changes in the university's curriculum for ensuring time befitting education for the students so they can face the global challenges. He said, "There is no alternative to acquiring modern education on science and technology to face the challenges of the 21st century." He added, "We would like to build such a new generation, which will be competent in science and technology, imbued with ethical values and patriotism, and responsible to people."

During the convocation, 1837 students were conferred bachelor and master degrees in different disciplines while three meritorious students received KhanBahadur Ahsanullah Award from the President for their outstanding academic results.

The university's vice-chancellor Prof Dr AMM Safiullah and chairman of the board of trustee Kazi Rafiqul Alam also spoke on the occasion.
DAM at work

3-day DAM annual confce 2012 held in Jessore

The 3-day annual conference of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) concluded at RRF Centre in Ramgarh, Jessore, on 2 February, 2012. The theme of the conference, which began on 31 January, 2012, was 'Excellence and Innovation'. DAM Executive Director Dr M Ehsanur Rahman delivered the Welcome Address at the inaugural session. DAM Programme Division Director and Convener of this year’s conference Shafiqul Islam highlighted the objectives of the conference. DAM Programme Officer Sina Chowdhury and Senior Programme Officer of Microfinance Md Rezaul Islam highlighted the annual activities during 2010-11 period. This was followed by an opening announcement of the Annual Conference-2012 by DAM President Kazi Rafiql Alam. On the second day, a documentary film on the life and works of the founder of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (R), was exhibited. Later, representatives of six regions placed their respective reports. On the third day, convergence and synergy of the sectors, units and divisions were placed. On the same day, seven thematic reports were presented. This was followed by comments of the participants. Finally, DAM Executive Director Dr M Ehsanur Rahman formally announced closure of the conference.

Build a greater social movement at nat'l, int'l level

-Kazi Rafiql Alam

In his address, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) President Kazi Rafiql Alam said, he who is in charge of an organisation, should know about each and every colleague as well as all about his/her family. Our annual conference is the time to evaluate last year’s activities. We shall succeed if we compare our accomplishments with those of our lives. Bondage with the Mission is most important. In DAM, one leadership will succeed another leadership. Here I seek a good transaction. Good work is possible through establishment of solidarity with the organisation. Your honour depends on the honour of the organisation. If we are unable to show excellence in our activities then it will be a shame.

Everyone knows that Ahsania Mission works well. Today it is our great challenge to uphold the image through generational leadership. We shall have to survive in this era of competitiveness. We shall have to attain self-sufficiency. I think there is no substitute to hard labour. There is no short cut to achieve something. Everyone should know individual activity well. He who is realistic will move forward. We are engaged in an anti-tobacco movement. Gradually, usage of tobacco is decreasing. We are going to implement a project on children city comprising street children. Although initially it will be built in Panchagarh but ultimately the project will be implemented in every district. Very soon, Ahsania Mission University will be established in Khulna and Rajshahi. We had a desire to create dairy farms in all areas of our activities but we could not implement the project. About two years ago, we delivered a good news to all. It was about creation of a training centre in Jessore. But we were unable to do the job. We already bought 18-20 bighas of land. Because of financial constraint, we could not commission Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital. Despite the fact, we are trying to open the ground floor by the year-end. ITVET was under Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) but now we are renaming it under central management & sustainable institution. Our drug treatment centre has been turned into the best organisation. Our book distribution house runs with own financial resource. Nagordola boutique centre also runs well. Finally, I want to tell that Ahsania Mission is our own organisation. We all have to think in this manner. Those who are detouched will merely work here and exit shortly.

There are two types of trainings. One of them is basic training; which helps raise skills. It may be imparted once or twice. But there exists another type of training which is continuous through work. He/she who is in charge of a project, will ensure proper functioning of the project. None should depend on anyone. Zonal teams must have to be more responsible. Everyone should attain required qualifications. These activities both at national and international level should be turned into a greater social movement.

Attain ability of self-evaluation to know that services reach the downtrodden

-Dr M Ehsanur Rahman

DAM Executive Director Dr M Ehsanur Rahman termed the annual conference as a meeting ground for self-evaluation and closer mutual activities where future guidelines are formulated.
Drinking water will be valuable just like oil in next decade

-Shafiqul Islam

The Director of the Programme Division, Shafiqul Islam said, we are trying, as development workers, to reflect on our duties and responsibilities. We are working both within the sector and out of sector. Every activity is interrelated. We have divided the main three sessions of the conference into three parts. We have already done a great job in water and sanitation sector. Drinking water will be valuable just like oil in the next 10 years. Our project worked for ensuring safe drinking water as well as sanitation for the hard-to-reach people.

We shall have to treat education not just a programme but we shall have to build a movement on education. Human trafficking is still in an alarming state. At the same time, safety of migrant workers is also important. There are many opportunities to work for stoppage of human trafficking as well as ensuring safe migration. You are well-aware that the juveniles are at great risk in Bangladesh. We shall have to work for their safety and security.

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Attain ability of self-evaluation

The significance and importance of this year's conference is quite different from those of the previous years. Because of untiring efforts during last few years, we have been able to achieve several major accomplishments. Our good practices helped earn good name and fame at home and abroad. We shall have to work in an innovative manner for coping with the new challenges arising out of the technological change at national and international level. We shall have to think about new innovations. We shall have to think more so that we can work at field level in an innovative manner. This is why, this year's theme of the conference is 'Excellence and Innovation.' This session gives due importance to our duties and responsibilities towards the downtrodden segment of society.

When this organisation was founded in 1958, its founding objective was service to the downtrodden. We shall have to self-evaluate our activities to know that our services reach the downtrodden. We have various strategy papers. Various thematic groups will work through reviwal of the papers. Not only we shall have to materialise the ideas at field level. An opportunity has come to work institutionally for social change with the changing atmosphere.

In the meantime, some of our institutionas, enterprises have been able to contribute significantly at national level. Now, it is our duty and responsibility to reach our services to the general mass through horizontal and vertical development of the institutions. We have assembled here from six regions. All have equal opportunities for interaction. Through discussions, we shall formulate strategies to reach our services to the doorsteps of general people through mutual cooperation and coordination.

All must work together to reach healthcare services at people's doorsteps

All must work together to reach healthcare service to people's doorsteps. This is why, non-governmental organisations' support to government efforts is essential. Vigilance on enactment of Anti-Tobacco Act will be geared up. The law and order enforcement authorities have been instructed to this effect.

Home Minister advocate Shahara Khatun MP said this while addressing as chief guest at a cancer awareness seminar held at Dhammondi Mission Bhaban auditorium under the aegis of Ahsania Mission Cancer and General Hospital marking World Cancer Day on 04 February, 2012. This year's theme is 'Together, We Are Stronger.'

She also said, healthcare service should be treated as public service, not as commercial one. I welcome Ahsania Mission for its efforts to reach healthcare service to the doorsteps of people. Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam presided over while Safia Khatun, MP, and Deena Haque, former Director General of Prime Minister's Office were present as special guests.

Prof Dr Harun-ar Rashid, Surgical Oncologist of Mirpur Ahsania Mission Cancer and General Hospital presented the key-note paper. Brig Gen (retd) Dr Syed Fazle Rahim, Director of Mirpur Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital delivered the Welcome Address.

In his presidential Address, Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam said, media should come forward to build awareness on prevention of cancer. This should be turned into a social movement. Prevention of cancer is possible if government and non-government organisations work in a concerted manner. Efforts are underway to initially commission the Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital by the end of this year. Cancer specialists, doctors, nurses, media personalities and high officials of various government and non-government organisations attended.
**DAM at work**

**Reception to Ekushey Padak winner Dr Mansural Alam Khan**

**Nation itself is honoured by honouring the men of qualities**

A nation itself is honoured by honouring the men of qualities. Each and every man has dreams. Someone dreams of oneself while some others dream of others. Fulfillment of dreams brings positive change in society as well as nation.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) President Kazi Rafiqul Alam said this while addressing his presidential address at a reception accorded to Dr Mansural Alam Khan, President of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, USA and member of the Board of Trustees of Ahsania University of Science & Technology (AUST) for winning the prestigious Ekushey Padak-2012 at Dhanmondi Mission Bhaban auditorium at 11 A.M. on 23 February, 2012.

He further said, Allah helps him/her who has a good intention. Life and works of the founder of DAM, Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (r) is our inspiration. Former official of the Board of Revenue Abu Rushd Hossain, DAM USA Chief Advisor Naima Khan and Dhaka Ahsania Mission Executive Director Dr M Ehsanur Rahman spoke on the occasion.

Speakers said, Dr Mansural Alam Khan has been carrying on teaching in Russia, USA, UK and Bangladesh for the last 30 years. About 12,000 Bangladeshi girls and boys got an opportunity of higher education in last 16 years through establishment of Khan’s Tutorial in New York by Dr Khan. As a result, they acquired the qualification of admission in noted high schools, colleges and universities of the western world. Khan’s Tutorial has eight branches in various places of New York City.

Alongside, he is adviser of various government and non-government organisations, chairman, president, general secretary, life member, Syndicate member and founder.

In recognition to his contributions in the field of education and carried the social responsibilities, he got Lifetime Achievement Award 2010, New York, Non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) Award 2009 and 2010, Proclamation by the Mayor 2009 New York, Educator Recognition Award 2008 New York, Mentor Award by New York City and Bangabandhu Foundation Award 2007 etc.

Ekushey Padak award winner Dr Mansural Alam Khan said, I have come at this stage through hard struggle from the beginning of life. This is why, I am called the King of Odd Jobs. I am specially grateful to the countrymen for awarding an expatriate Bangladeshi the highest state award of Ekushey Padak for the first time.

**Restaurant Owners’ Association leaders say**

**All restaurants across country to be made smoke-free soon**

All restaurants will be made smoke-free soon across the country. About 28% people are being affected due to smoking in restaurants. Restaurants must be included as public places through amendment of the existing law.

Speakers said this at a Sensitization Meeting with the members of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association organised by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) with financial assistance from Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids at the Conference Room of DAM at 11 A.M. on 19 February, 2012.

The Project Coordinator of AMIC, A K M Anisuzzaman, presented the key-note speech. Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids Coordinator Taijfur Rahman, DAM Assistant Director Iqbal Masud, Bangladesh Restaurant Owners’ Association’s Joint Secretary General Aminur Rahman, Joint Organising Secretary Shah Md Ibriham and Publicity Secretary Abdul Khaleq took part in the panel discussion.

In his presidential address, Kazi Rafiqul Alam said, we are eager to continuously work with the Restaurant Owners’ Association in anti-tobacco movement. He called upon all to turn anti-tobacco activities into a social movement.
KNH delegates on field visit to see DAM activities

South Asia Representative of Kinder Not Hilfe (KNH), a child rights based donor agency of Germany, David Kowertz and Country Representative of KNH in Bangladesh Rumi Montaz paid a field visit to various projects to see the activities of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) on 27 February 2012.

The representatives visited the multi-grade teaching-learning process of non-formal primary education of UNIQUE Project at Mirpur-14 and the Vocational Training Centre at Pallabi and the Drop-in-Centre of Mohammadpur in the capital. This was followed by an opinion exchange meeting with the high officials of DAM. At that time, DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Centre for International Education Development (CINED) Shahnewaz Khan, Project Coordinator of Ahsania Mission Children City Tariq Masud, Project Manager Jahangir Hossain and high officials of Mission were present.

DAM President Kazi Rafiqul Alam said, ten thousand orphan street children will soon get shelter in Ahsania Mission Children City in phases. At present, there are about 13 lakh street children across the country. Future of these children who are deprived of love and care is bleak. If we are unable to rehabilitate these children in society properly then none will be able to lead a decent life.

He also said, the hapless children would be imparted job-oriented technical, educational as well as skill development training through regular exercise, games and sports and cultural activities. There will be facilities for rearing poultry birds, livestock, pisciculture and crop cultivation. In this manner, the children will stand on their own feet and become self-reliant. In future, they will be able to earn a living through suitable jobs. The first childrens' village would be built at Jalapara village of Panchagarh union in Panchagarh Sadar upazila. There will be 10 such children villages. One thousand street children will reside in each village.

During the visit, South Asia Representative of KNH David Kowertz said, we want to help Dhaka Ahsania Mission in rehabilitation of the street children through children city. We shall extend our cooperation from every nook and corner of the country.

PPVD Project's training on tailoring

Dhaka Ahsania Mission's Promotion of Human Rights for Preventing Violence and Discrimination against Women (PPVD) Project has undertaken a two-month long training course for poor, distressed and women victims of violence, discrimination and torture to raise their standard of living in Barguna district.

Twenty women from three unions of Sadar upazila and three unions of Patharghata upazila have been selected for participation in the training course. Training on tailoring such as cutting, sewing, handling of machine and care will be imparted to the trainees.

Besides, general and special sessions on selection of materials, sorting, profit and loss and matters relating to pursuing small trade, improvement of mental health and stability will also be held. A session of sharing experience between the participants and those who are engaged in various activities after taking training from here earlier will also be held.

48th Urs Sharif of Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (R) held

The 48th Annual Urs Sharif of the founder of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, noted educationist, reformer of education, Asheke Elahi, Asheke Rasul, practicing spiritual leader of Sufism, Hazrat Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (R), was held on the premises of his Raoza Mobarak at Nalta Sharif in Satkhira on February 8, 2012.

Besides Doa Khair (prayers), night-long Waj Mahfil held every day during the entire 3-day programme.

Professor Maolana Md Salauddin, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, Maolana Muhammad Abu Sufian Khan Abedi Al Quaderi, Khalifa of Gaosul Azam (R) Darbar Sharif of Baghdad Sharif of Iraq, were among other internationally reputed Islamic thinkers and Ulamae Kerams who took part in discussions on the philosophy of life of Hazrat Rasule Karim (SM) and Oli-Awlias in the light of Holy Quran.

Programmes of the Urs Pak was concluded through Ankheri Munazat after Fazr prayers (Baad Fazr) on 10 February. Every year, lakhs of devotees of Pir Kebla Hazrat Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah (R) from home and abroad, take part in his Urs Sharif.
Study to depict real picture of govt's judicial system at grassroots level

Dhaka Ahsania Mission's (DAM) Promotion of Human Rights for Preventing Violence and Discrimination against Women (PPVD) Project has conducted a study on the activities of NNPC and village courts being run in 17 unions of two upazilas in Barguna district on 14-19 January, 2012. The study was conducted to depict a real picture of the judicial system of government at grassroots level. A questionnaire was used to collect information. Detail information was collected from chairman, member, secretary and people who were present on the spot. Besides, eight focus group discussions (FGD) were held in and outside the working areas. People's opinion, their impression on the subject, getting justice and finally their recommendations were collected. A total of 256 participants expressed their views during focus group discussions.

PPVD Project's painting competition for juveniles in Barguna district

A 10-day painting competition for juveniles titled, 'Alokito Prithibi' (enlightened world) was held under the aegis of PPVD Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) in Sadar and Amtali upazilas of Barguna district on 13-22 February 2012. A total of 1200 students of 24 secondary schools in six unions of two upazilas took part. Participants also included juveniles of ACCESS-CAFOD Project and students of UNIQUE Project. Union Parishad chairmen, headmasters, NGO representatives, journalists and local elite were present as guests. Besides, PPVD Project's Monitoring and Documentation Officer Dipak Kumar Sarker, Auditor Md Alamgir Hossain, Upazila Coordinator Rafiquil Islam, Union Facilitator Saleha Khanom Lata, Md Farid Uddin and Kaberi Howlader were also present. The PPVD Project is being funded by the European Union with technical support from Concern Universal.

10th triennial meeting of CMDRR Forum

The 10th triennial meeting of Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) Forum Bangladesh was held at the central office of POPI on 19 January, 2012. The Executive Director of POPI, Murshed Alam Sarker, presided over while the Forum Adviser and Director of Programmes of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Shafiqul Islam, was present as Chief Guest. Forum Coordinator Khan Muhammad Mujahid ibne Habib acted as moderator. Representatives of ADD, CARITAS Bangladesh, CEUB, FFH, Friendship, PGUK, IPSA, PIDIM Foundation, RDRS Bangladesh and VERD were present.

Training course on cow rearing in Mohonganj

A two-day training course on cow rearing concluded at the training room of UNIQUE office in Mohonganj upazila of Netrakona district on 29 January, 2012. Netrakona Area Manager of Microfinance Programme Md Ruhul Amin presided over while Mohonganj upazila Veterinary Surgeon Dr Md Abdur Rahim was present as Chief Guest. Branch Manager Dulal Chandra Deb Nath was also present. Dhaka Ahsania Mission Programme Officer Agriculturist Md Niamul Kabir and Micro Enterprise Programme Officer SM Iqbal Hossain played the role of trainers. Twenty-five entrepreneurs underwent the training. Dhaka Ahsania Mission has been emphasising on cow rearing for ensuring food security across the country. Dhaka Ahsania Mission has a plan to train up 22 small entrepreneurs on cow rearing till June 2012. Later, such training courses will be organised for other entrepreneurs in various branches.

Training course for Jhenidah farmers

ACCESS (Health & Empowerment) Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission organised a 7-day training course on utilisation of granular urea was held for farmers in Maheshpur upazila of Jhenidah district on 16-22 January 2012. The training course was aimed at lessening wastage of Nitrogen fertiliser while it was conducted through International Fertiliser Development Centre (IFDC) with fund from the USAID for accelerating agricultural productivity. A total of 280 farmers, both men and women, took part in the training course in seven batches at Natima Godhuli CRC, Jadabpur Sonali CRC, Mandarbaria Swaranika CRC and Jogihuda Parashmoni Ganokendro. Field Monitoring Officer Agriculturist Syed Zahirul Islam and Dhaka Ahsania Mission Area Coordinator Quamruzzaman acted as trainers. On conclusion of the training course, 10 kg granular urea was distributed among the farmers free of cost.
An attractive session of Jarigaan enthralled a large number of people at Haldibunia Secondary School under Chila union of Mongla upazila in Bagerhat district on 9 February, 2012.

The Jarigaan was organised in the disaster-prone Haldibunia to make people aware about the adverse effect of climate change as well as prepare them to bravely face the natural calamities before, during and after their occurrence.

The choir girls consisting of community action group (CAG) and community volunteers (CV) highlighted issues on climate change and disaster management. This was followed by an integrated disaster risk reduction simulation exercise participated by the members of CV, CAG and union disaster management committee (UDMC). The participants exhibited their skills on evacuation, search, rescue and first aid. The activities proved to be very effective in raising general awareness on safety issues relating to disasters.

Local people are the main actors in disaster risk reduction and disaster response. When a disaster strikes, immediate response (i.e., search and rescue care for those injured, traumatized and homeless) is often carried out by family members, friends and neighbours and grassroots organisations. In cases of many small-scale events triggered by natural hazards, there may be little or no external support at all. Community based disaster preparedness forms the backbone of any disaster management initiatives in societies with low government capacity.

The mock drill taught people to identify high-risk and low-risk areas as well as the most vulnerable people including the elderly, disabled and sick, lactating mothers, pregnant women, and young children in rural areas. They were also taught to take care of disaster warning, rescue, evacuation, first aid, water and sanitation. People also learnt how to prepare a survival kit (dry food for several days, candles, matches, kerosene oil) and the safe keeping of valuables and important documents. An orientation programme meant for students was also held at the school. As schools are the nerve centers of a community, the students have been involved in such disaster management initiatives. Participation in dissemination activities on awareness and capacity building are routine work of students. The awareness also reaches their parents.

The colourful events were organised as part of a climate campaign being conducted under a project titled, 'Improved Food and Livelihood Security (IFLS) in Bagerhat District in the Context of Increased Disaster Risk and Climate Change Project' in Bagerhat district. The upazilas are Mongla, Rampal and Sharankhola. Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Caritas Bangladesh, ADD International and ITN-BUET have been jointly implementing the project being funded by the European Union (EU) and CAFOD, UK.

The project is being implemented for development of agriculture, fisheries, and livestock, enhancement of income of beneficiaries through substitute livelihood pursuits, enhancement of food production and nutritional values, strengthening advocacy initiatives like climate change and food security, greater collaboration with the government for undertaking joint initiatives, capacity development at family, union and upazila level in management and preparedness of disasters. The three-year project was launched in March, 2010 and will conclude in February, 2013. The beneficiaries include poor, disabled and women.

IFLS Project Coordinator Mukhlesur Rahman told journalists in Mongla that 36 CAGs consisting of 432 members were formed to ensure food security as well as overall development in the project area. Thirty Six Community Volunteer Groups (CVGs) consisting of 252 members were formed to reduce the risk of disaster and lessen the loss arising out of climate change. They were provided with necessary trainings and orientations. Courtyard meetings, sessions of Jarigaan and discussion meetings are regularly organised at family level. Activities like food and medicine preservation, first aid treatment, oven making, cash savings and raising ground of homesteads are also being done. About 10% beneficiaries of DAM and CARITAS are physically challenged people while all the beneficiaries of ADD International are physically challenged people.

ITN-BUET is providing solar power to the beneficiaries at a nominal cost. During the field visit, it was observed that an exhibition plot of winter vegetables of Kanon Bala Mollick created great enthusiasm among her neighbours.

While talking to this correspondent, Mongla Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Dr Md Mizanur Rahman said, people are being encouraged to do shrimp cultivation in a planned manner. The project also encourages local people to do saline tolerant cultivation and find out substitute employment.

DAM has been sensitizing both the decision makers and implementing agencies to highlight adverse effects of climate change and community preparedness to mitigate the risk of disasters.

CAFOD Programme Coordinator Umme Kulsum said that 7,500 families of coastal areas were brought under the project.

DAM’s Field Coordinator Uzzal Kumar Kundu said, owners of shrimp enclosures, shrimp cultivators, policy makers and decision makers are being encouraged to cultivate shrimp in a planned manner.
DAM in frame

NFPE progressing in far-flung areas of the country

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