

# 'Country-wide canal digging starts tomorrow'

By A Staff Reporter

The first phase of the peaceful revolution — voluntary canal-digging for doubling of food production — initiated last year, is re-starting throughout the country tomorrow (Saturday) with an ambitious target of excavating or re-excavating about 700 canals totalling a length of 1,800 miles.

President Ziaur Rahman, who had already great pains to inspire all classes of people for participating in nation building programmes on the basis of voluntary labour to overcome the handicap of resources constraints, will set the pace of this year's programme with formal inauguration of seven miles long Chirir River project in Dinajpur district.

This year's canal digging programme, which is starting one month earlier than last year aims at bringing 15 to 20 lakh acres under winter irrigation.

The President is expected to

personally initiate digging programmes of three more projects in Rangpur, Bogra and Tangail districts. Works of many other projects in different areas are expected to begin simultaneously.

Main feature of this year's programme is re-excavation of ditches alongside main roads to make these full fledged canals for irrigation, drainage and navigation.

On December 1 last year, President Zia inaugurated the voluntary excavation and re-excavation of canals as the first phase of his peaceful revolution.

Main objective of this programme is to double or triple food production by providing irrigation during dry season and drainage during monsoon. Other benefits, which are expected to be derived from the programmes, includes plantation of fruit trees on the embankment of the canal and pisciculture in the water.

Basically the canal-digging programme is based on voluntary labour. But for the benefit of poor and landless participants, it was decided that 15 per cent of the work should be on the basis of payment in the form of wheat.

The programme when started last year, generated so much enthusiasm that it had to be expanded from original target of 103 canals with total length of 600 miles and command area of five lakh acres it was expanded to 250 projects with total length of 900 miles and command area of eight lakh acres.

*Due to early monsoon works of eight projects could not start and 40 others could not be completed. At the end of the working season a total of 193 canals with total length of 675.18 miles*

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## Canal digging

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have been completed. During dry season these canals will be able to provide irrigation facility to 5.52 lakh acres of land.

In all 9,890 pumps were purchased and 2,926 pumps were distributed for irrigation from these canals. In fact 779 pumps have so far been installed and commissioned.

According to official source though the good effect of last year's canals are expected to be felt during the coming dry season, these had already resulted in increased production of boro, aus and wheat. In 1979-80 total boro production was 19 lakh tons but in 1980-81 the production had increased to 25 lakh tons.

The additional irrigation facilities that those excavated and re-excavated canals would provide were expected to result in additional food production of 60 lakh tons valued Taka 2.5 crore during the coming dry season, the source said.

Of the total canals completed last year 36 were in Dacca Division, 41 in Chittagong, 39 in Rajshahi and 77 in Khulna. These canals would provide irrigation facilities to 1,05,103 acres of land in Dacca Division 1,36,252 acres in Chittagong, 1,42,099 acres in Rajshahi and 1,68,183 acres in Khulna.