

Massive canal digging programme for '80-81

The countrywide canal digging programme on self-help basis for 1980-81 will be three times the size executed during 1979-80, an official source said in Dacca on Sunday.

Disclosing this to BSS the Central Canal Digging Control Room source said out of 250 schemes 192 were reexcavated in the first phase of the "peaceful revolution" launched by President Ziaur Rahman, success being 90 per cent.

The source said more than 450 schemes with a total length of 1200 miles were received so far from all the 20 districts for approval under 1980-81 programmes. These would be able to provide irrigation facilities for five lakh acres of land.

President Ziaur Rahman, however, expressed his desire that more schemes should be included in the next dry season's programme to bring 24 lakh acres of land under irrigation command in the districts the source added.

The canal covering a total length of about 650 miles would provide irrigation to nearly seven lakh acres of land to grow at least three crops, including two paddy a year.

A total of about six lakh tons of additional foodgrains had already been produced during the current harvesting season as an immediate benefit of these canals, the source added.

Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) had already fielded nearly three thousand power pumps at the site of the newly-excavated canals for irrigation purpose.

Meanwhile, Government had

taken a good number of measures to strengthen the supply of implements and logistic supports.

Thousands of people particularly the peasants and direct beneficiaries of the canal digging programmes offered their voluntary labour under the supervision of the local administration.

The source said although there was provision of utilising wheat at the rate of 15 per cent of the total cost of each project about 20 projects were dug completely on voluntary basis.

The canal digging programme marked the beginning of a new era of utilising the idle labour forces during the lean period.

Thousands of people particularly the peasants and direct beneficiaries lifted over 70 crores cubic feet of earth through voluntary basis.

They had dug a total length

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of seven miles in 192 canals and brought seven thousand acres of land under the irrigation to increase agricultural productivity.

With irrigation coverage of 7.20 million acres had been set for 1984-85, compared to the benchmark level of 3.1 million acres in 1979-80. The special canal digging programme sets the target for irrigation 24 lakhs of acres, the source said.

The vast labour force which made the remarkable success in the programme, would otherwise remained unutilised the source said and added enthusiastic people at the call of President Ziaur Rahman spontaneously participated in the programme with the motto of attaining self-reliance in national and individual levels.

Hundreds of landless peasants and day labourers also found job opportunity in the canal digging programmes under the 15 per cent Government provision of the total estimated cost of each project.

Besides, two paddy crops cultivation of a large number of winter crops namely wheat millets barley potato pulses tobacco cotton oil seeds including sunflower and varieties of vegetables would also be possible.

The newly excavated canals would also serve the rural people as waterway in movement

and marketing at a cheaper cost.

Freedom fighters, members of the village defence party, ansars Government official students teachers national youth and women organisations and different political parties participated in the earthwork to make the programmes successful.

With a view to producing 20 million tons of food grains in the now available 255 lakh acres of cultivable land annually by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, a programme has been drawn up to provide irrigation facilities to 72 lakh acres and drainage and flood control protection facilities to 63 lakh acres of land the source said.

Bangladesh Water Development Board and Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) are the public sector agencies responsible for supplying irrigation waters to increase agricultural productivity.

Other agencies involved in the agricultural productivity include Bangladesh Krishi Bank and Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP).