

Some Thoughts On Canal Digging

—Md. Rafiqul Islam—

RIVERS and canals have paramount influence on our agricultural system. They provide water for our irrigation. The irrigation system of a country renders facility to produce crops in the dry season and at the time of droughts. The canal digging and re-excavation campaign which launched throughout the country is one of the fruitful and pragmatic steps to accelerate the pace of our agricultural development. It has gained increased momentum with the people of all walks of life participating in the programme. What is remarkable is the spontaneous response of the local people whose main philosophy is to be self-reliant in food and doubling the production of it.

The prime objectivity of canal digging is expansion and remification of irrigation facilities all over the country for doubling the food production. The present irrigation system of our country is not, however, satisfactory due to the lack of availability of water all the year. The situation is further aggravated owing to droughts and other natural calamities like floods, tidal bore etc. Canal digging and re-excavation would give permanent solution to those natural contingencies and cala-

minies and would conserve water for regular supply for round-the-year cultivation.

To make the canal digging programme a success the following things may have to be taken into consideration.

1) Canal digging programme is to be chalked out in such a way that people of all walks of life get inspiration to participate in it spontaneously and voluntarily.

2) Politicians and high government officials must participate in the digging and excavation to motivate general people with a sense of devotion and dedication.

3) The programmes should be carried out with the help and advice of the local people.

4) Reward may be awarded to the areas for best performance.

5) Maximum people should be benefited with the canal digging and utmost care must be taken so that coteries may not enjoy the benefits.

6) The programmes must be properly planned from top to bottom and there shall be no room for chaos and confusion and haphazardness.

7) To induce and motivate the youths of the rural areas those among them who would render valuable services towards the success of the programmes may be considered for employment

in the Village Defence Party, Ansar, Police and other government establishments according to their qualifications and fitness.

The sole aim of canal digging is the conservation of water which is very much essential to boost our food production. The irrigation facilities so far built by Water Development Board and Agriculture Development Corporation is not sufficient to meet our requirements. Bangladesh is, however, bestowed with many rivers and canals. It is easier and less expensive to conserve water by digging and excavating canals and rivers. If the canal digging programme could successfully be performed that would make water available to the farmers for proper irrigation and they would also be able to produce food production three or four times in a year from our agricultural lands. With this end in view, a special project has been taken up by the government in the districts of Barisal and Patuakhali to produce quick yielding rice to maximise our food production. Government is framing and evolving a sound agricultural plan and programme to ensure rapid agricultural development and popularise the slogan "more water for more food" and the best use and conservation of

water in the country.

In perspective of the campaign it has been opined by the experts that it would make possible for the cultivators to produce the crops throughout the year and save them from the clutch of floods. The campaign has multifarious utility—preserving water for irrigation during the dry season and draining out flood waters during the monsoon. It is plausible that if moribund and dead canals can be revived thousands of maunds of food grains are expected to be harvested from our agricultural lands by improving rural irrigation system. It would not only double our food production but would also bring prosperity and progress in our rural areas.

President Ziaur Rahman has launched the programme with the objective of establishing viable and proper irrigation system whose beneficiaries will be chiefly the rural people and the nation will be able to save sufficient amount of hard-earned foreign currencies which we now spend for importing foodgrains from abroad. So the President appeals to the nation to render all out co-operation to make the campaign a success in order to be self-reliant in food and ensure rapid pace of development of the country.