

Zia opens countrywide canal digging programme

First phase

From M R Rousseau

SHIVALAYA, Dec 2 With the inauguration of the Kashadaha-Ichhamati irrigation canal re-excavation on the basis of voluntary labour by President Ziaur Rahman here yesterday morning, the nation entered the first phase of the revolution called for by the President.

President Zia termed the self-help re-excavation project, as the later formally pumped water from the Jamuna river into the canal, as "the beginning of a new chapter for the nation."

The 23,600 feet Kashadaha canal under the Shivalaya police station is a part of a bigger, 88-mile long canal under the Manikganj subdivision which falls into the Ichhamati River under Nawabganj police station under the same subdivision.

An estimated 30 thousand men and women including volunteers from all 65 union parishads under the Manikganj subdivision and the neighbouring subdivisions of Dacca district took part in the inaugural day's earthwork.

The President was also joined by Prime Minister Shah Azizur Rahman, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Secretary General Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Capt (Retd) Abdul Halim Chowdhury, Information and Broadcasting Minister Mr Habibullah Khan, Health, Population Control and Family Planning Minister Prof Abdul Matin, Women's Affairs Minister Dr Mrs Amina Rahman, the Information Consultant to the President Mr Daud Khan (Majlis, State Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Mr Nur Mohammad Khan, Deputy Minister for Health and Population Control, Mrs Kamrunnabha Zafar, in the inaugural day's work.

In his brief address moments before the spadework, the blue-decked President urged the people to start digging irrigation-cum-drainage canals

throughout the country for increasing food production.

HIGH SPIRIT

A high spirited President Zia told volunteers comprising local people, youth, government officials, members of the Bangladesh Rifles, Police, ansars and village defence party, that the only way to make the independence meaningful was getting busy with spades for building up a network of irrigation canals.

The President reminded the people that they have had to fight a war for achieving national independence in 1971, as he explained the urgency of the work on hand. Round the year availability of irrigation would not only help wipe out national foodgrains deficit, but also leave adequate surplus for exports.

He said while increased productions would help increase incomes of individual cultivators four/five folds, export of foodgrains on a national level would fetch the Government enough to construct roads and set up industries, schools and the like for the rural people.

ONE PROBLEM

President Zia said that one need not wait for others to

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