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Decentralisation

New subdivisions are coming into being. The country's 71st subdivision at Lalmonirhat in the Dinajpur district has been inaugurated by the President. In the foreseeable future, we may see yet more subdivisions created. The government has taken steps to remove the head offices of some corporations outside of Dacca. The outlook and policy now is clearly decentralisation.

What would be the benefits coming to people and the government from these decentralisation moves? The most important gain seems to be bringing the administration to the doorsteps of the people as the President has said. The government offices in the new subdivisions shall cut down on distances and people should have easier access to these in purely physical terms. Creation of new subdivisions mean also spreading out of the arms of the government. Government officers in the new subdivisions shall get a better chance to learn the peculiar problems of the areas to which they are posted. They would become familiar to these problems at close range and thus be in a position to tackle the problems more efficiently and promptly. A new administrative centre or sub-centre produces catalytic effects. It can start, for instance, the process of urban growth in that particular territory. Industrial and commercial enterprises are gradually attracted to it and the hinterland areas also develop from this evolution. The several big cities we have seem to be already too congested. One of the objectives of the government's decentralisation plans is to ease pressures away from these cities.

What kind of character the new subdivision towns ought to have? Clearly, more is expected from them than their just being the centres of magistracy, adjudication and land records. To be really useful, these towns must develop as major service centres. Every such town should have a good hospital, education facilities and also maintenance and supply centres for supporting irrigation systems, drinking water supply, agricultural input supply, animal husbandry and the like.

Everything of course depends on the service attitude of administrative personnel. In the backward communities of our semi-urban centres, government officers enjoy plenty of power and are regarded as social elite. But some of them sometimes misuse this privilege by their arbitrariness and selfishness. This mentality has to change. A corps of energetic and dedicated officers and men should be posted to these areas who would be willing to do more than carry out only routine administrative duties. They should concern themselves with finding out the potential of the regions under their jurisdiction and take the initiative to turn possibilities into realities.