

Steps taken to meet food deficit : Sattar

Following is the Third Part of the text of speech delivered by President Abdus Sattar at the Jatiya Sangsad on Monday: Side by side with the efforts for raising food production the government has already adopted an overall policy and well planned programmes for improvement of food management.

A programme has been taken up under the interim food production plan to raise total food production to two crore tons by the year 1985. Food production this year has fallen due to a long drought. Inadequate soil moisture and an untimely excessive rainfall. But record quantity of foodgrains stocked in the beginning of the year and additional imports will enable us to meet the deficit and build up the required reserve stock. Necessary steps have already been taken for this.

The internal food procurement drive has been playing an important role for the last few years. The main objective behind the programme is to provide incentive for production to the poor and small farmers by ensuring fair price and also to ensure a stable market price. Till the first week of February of fiscal 1981-82 the government succeeded in making internal procurement of about three lakh tons of foodgrains. Although the procurement drive this year was not fully successful its main objectives have been realised.

Canal digging

A programme has been undertaken to dig and reexcavate canals through voluntary labour all over the country under the leadership of late President Zaur Rahman in 1979-80 to increase food production. Being inspired by the first year's success the programme has been expanded further in 1980-81. Dry season irrigation facilities have been made available to a vast area of arable land under this programme during 1979-80 and 1980-81. As a result positive development in wheat and boro rice cultivation have been achieved. The programme has been going on in full swing during the current season and people from all walks of life are participating in the programme for increasing food production.

Extensive programme has been undertaken for developing the water resources and making proper use of the resources for attaining food autarky with a view to improving the standard of life of the countrymen. The Ganga Kobadakh Project, Chandpur Irrigation Project, Barisal Irrigation Project, North Bengal Tub-well Project and Barisal Patuakhali Project will make significant contribution in this regard. The Teesta Barrage Project, Embankment Project on the right bank of Brahmaputra river, Mohuri Irrigation Project, Monu River Project, Kharnaphuli Irrigation Project and the Ganges Barrage Project are the significant projects in the water resources development sector. Of these work of the Manu River Project, Mohuri Irrigation Project and the Kharnaphuli Project are in the concluding phase.

Besides the flood control and drainage system in 19 lakh acres of land in Rangpur, Bogra and Dinajpur districts would be improved by the Teesta Barrage Project. The primary construction work of the Barrage under the project is progressing fast.

The food-for work program-

me help in stabilising food price in the domestic market beside providing work for the unemployed labourers. A total of two lakh fifty three thousand tons of wheat as grant was received from various international agencies and friendly countries for the food-for work programme. The Government has sanctioned one lakh five thousand ton food from its own resources for this programme.

Seventyfive per cent of the country's total requirements of cloth are being produced by handlooms. The Bangladesh Handloom Board is putting in efforts to make the country self-sufficient in cloth improve the lots of the weavers and to create extensive rural employment. The Government policy in the cloth production sector is to make the four and a half lakh unutilised and running looms productive instead of setting up new textile mills. The yarn mills in the public sector are being used to meet the requirements of yarn of the handlooms to attain this objective.

Meantime permission to set up forty yarn mills in the private sector was given in pursuance of Government policy to encourage private sector side by side with the public sector. It is expected that the country will attain self-sufficiency in yarn production and will not have to spend a huge amount of foreign exchange to import yarn when these mills will go on production by 1984.

The Government is giving importance to earning of foreign exchange by exporting cloth and not only producing it. To attain this objective readymade garments worth eight crore Taka were exported last year and it is expected that readymade garments worth of Taka twenty crore could be exported this year.

Introduction of realistic education system suited to the time is essential for the development of socio-economic condition vis-a-vis the national life. With this end in view special importance is being attached to building up skilled manpower through education suiting the need of the independent and sovereign Bangladesh.

The Government has introduced universal primary education and mass literacy programme in the Second Five Year Plan in view of its constitutional duty to create scope for minimum education for all citizens. Practical steps have been taken to materialise the mass literacy programme to free the society from the curse of illiteracy.

Literacy drive

Target has been fixed to make four crore people literate in four years by 1985 under the mass literacy programme. Thirtyfour lakh people have already been given the knowledge of letters till today.

Not only in primary education sector we have in hand far-sighted development programme in secondary and higher education system.

Project has been taken to introduce science education at the thana level colleges for developing science education in the rural areas. The madrasah education has been made suitable of the age through integration of technical and science education with the religious education curriculum. Steps have been taken to introduce science and technical edu-

cation in selective madrasahs in this regard.

An Islamic University has been set up in the country for expansion of Islamic education. There is arrangement for imparting science and technical education along with religious curriculum in this university.

It cannot be denied that correct and successful application of technology is essential for solving various problems facing the national life and also for the overall welfare of the people. There are seventyfour research laboratories in different parts of the country to carry on research in various fields of science and technology. Projects for setting up more research laboratories on specialised subjects are being taken in hand.

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission has strengthened activities in atomic research and development work for improving the lots of the people through peaceful use for atomic energy.

The Bangladesh Science and Industrial Research Council has so far innovated and invented about eighty formulas and given lease of those formula to the industrialists for commercial production. A few commodities produced as per the formula have been marketed in the meantime. Besides the Council has undertaken a far-sighted programme to search for alternate source of energy to face the present energy crisis in the country.

Health is one of the basic ingredients for improving the qualitative standard of life and for this reason much importance has been given in the health sector within the framework of the development programme. The Government is determined to ensure minimum medicare facility for every citizen within the shortest possible time. The objective of health for all by year 2000 is closely linked with our health programme. The Second Five Year Plan is the first step to attain this target.

Health care

The main features of the health programme that has been formulated for the last few years include building up extensive health system in the rural areas prevention of diseases attachment of more importance for the development of health programme development of indigenous health system and integration of the system on scientific foundation manufacturing of essential medicines in the country and ensuring availability of these at fair prices and providing people's participation in the government programme.

Special importance has been attached on successful implementation of the population control and family planning programme for sustaining the country's economic development process and keeping aloft the objective of improving the lots of the people. Hopeful response has already been found among the people to resist the population explosion successfully.

Ceaseless efforts are being continued to bring down the rate of population growth from 2.36 to 1.8 per cent by 1985 and substantially increase the numbers of recipients of population control inputs.

The Government believed that the key to country's overall development and progress lies in the materialisation of the rural development programme. (Incomplete)