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A very important step

A countrywide canal digging programme on self-help basis starts from the first week of coming December. Preparations for making a good beginning of it are reportedly going ahead fast, and the government is determined to make it a success.

On the eve of launching this programme in about two weeks' time, President Ziaur Rahman has called upon the public in general, and the Union Parishad chairmen and members, Village Defence Party men, political workers and all government agencies concerned in particular, to join it in an organised way. He is now meeting up chairmen and members and representatives of relevant agencies in conferences in different parts of the country to impress upon all the importance of this work and the necessity to mobilise the people. In the first of such meetings at Dinajpur on Tuesday, the leaders of local bodies of Rajshahi Division took a fresh vow to devote their energies and resources towards the fulfilment of this massive task.

There can be no two opinions about the imperative need of developing and utilising our water resources for boosting agricultural production. It is also important to note that we must make the maximum possible use of surface waters for this purpose. Subterranean supplies we would tap. But this has so many limitations. Canal irrigation being most suitable in our geophysical conditions, we must go all out for the projected excavation and re-excavation of canals wherever possible. As these provide an effective answer, in many areas, to the problems of drought, drainage and inundation, all have to put their best in the work so that the country may have good many canals. These canals should be so designed as to ensure supply of the necessary minimum quantity of water during the next dry season.

Meanwhile, the President has given an outline of the policy and method of work in the programme. We would particularly underline the emphasis laid by him on the active, energetic and sincere role of union councils in the work. He has rightly said that as elected representatives of the people, they can best ensure the mass participation, provided they maintain "honesty and integrity" in their job. We would like to add here that there has to be sufficient inter-union co-ordination between concerned unions in matters of digging or re-digging a canal, as and where one involves more than one union; and also adequate supervision on their work at thana level. We hope, the authorities would include, if they have not already done, these two tasks in their overall programme and in their preparatory works.