

A PLEDGE FOR TECHNOLOGY

Islamic countries are getting together for developing a new generation of technologists who can help their own nations in triggering an economic revolution. The most significant milestone in the endeavour to cover up the lag in technology has been the setting up of the Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research near Dhaka. It is the first joint action by 44 member-countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference to deal with a problem which is common to all of them and where a pooling of resources and talents can speed up a solution. President Ershad addressing a convocation of the Centre on Thursday underscored the need for bolstering collective Islamic efforts for the further growth of this vital institution. He said it could develop into a truly Islamic institute for higher engineering and technology which would produce the right kind of skill for the Muslim nations.

Bangladesh as a member of the OIC has been at the vanguard of the campaign for developing appropriate technologies within the Islamic countries. It is in recognition of that role that the OIC decided to choose Bangladesh as the site for the ICTVTR where students from all Muslim countries can converge for advanced studies and training. This confluence of learners is in itself useful in the transfer of technologies within the OIC forum. It is a fact that some Muslim countries are more advanced than others in certain areas of technology and engineering skills. The mere coming together of students from diverse Islamic regions will provide the scope for exchange of information and know-how.

There is another aspect of this exchange of ideas. The Centre helps forge links among Muslim countries by developing cooperation among the students. This has a political bearing on the strengthening of unity of the community of Muslim countries. It is for this also that the ICTVTR must develop further and continue to receive support from the OIC and the individual member-countries. As the Centre grows, there will be more students on the campus and the scope for offering courses would be widened.

It is obvious that if the Muslim countries want to achieve a level of technology which can speed up their economic development and build up self-reliance, they will have to work more vigorously for acquiring modern technologies. There has to be a genuine transfer of technology — not the hiring of it. There seems to be a tendency among some Muslim countries to buy advanced technologies without taking appropriate steps for developing these themselves in time and assimilating them. Buying technologies can never create the conditions for self-reliance nor can it lead to sustainable development. Buying also creates a new dependency which may in the long run create further complications slowing down or subverting growth.

The importance of acquiring technologies stems from the fact that it creates the right environment for an industrial take-off. What the Muslim countries (all of which belong to the developing world) require is the enhancement of the general level of the technological skills of their peoples. The fact that the OIC had decided to set up the technical and vocational training centre goes to prove that there is an increasing realization that the technical skills of the man-in-the-street has to be raised. It is key to an accelerated progress. One is reassured that the OIC Secretary General Dr. Hamid Al Gabid who attended the convocation ceremony pledged his organization's commitment to the growth of technology.

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