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World Bank's Assurances

The implementation of the Second Five-Year Plan will go a long way in achieving the objective of self-reliance. The World Bank Chief, Mr. McNamara, during his visit to Bangladesh expressed his confidence in the efficacy of the present programmes of mass mobilization and the roster of projects that have been put under the forthcoming Plan. Those who know it will agree with him that the rate of social and economic development has accelerated under the dynamic leadership of President Ziaur Rahman. The recent developments especially in regard to revival of democratic institutions and setting up of other institutions like the various boards for subjects and areas of development have put the country on the firm institutional bases needed for socio-economic progress.

The visit of Mr. McNamara was preceded by missions which did the spade work for formal meetings and appraisal. It is heartening that the World Bank have recognised the positive aspects of our development programmes. And with the given priority to agriculture, including irrigation, mass mobilization programmes, population control programmes and the export promotion activities, the country's economy appears to have been put on correct balance. The policies announced in favour of investment by the foreign investors in collaboration with the public and private sectors, have cleared off the mass that blurred the investment climate in the past. The visit of the World Bank Chief has been timely also in view of the launching of the Second Five-Year Plan.

It is expected that more and more aid and technical assistance would be forthcoming from the World Bank. These will naturally be utilized in high priority areas. The topmost priority goes to

agriculture where both input and irrigation facilities have direct bearing on increased production and per acre productivity. With further rational use of resources, the manpower engaged in agriculture could also be made more productive. The World Bank may support the exploitation of natural resources which will demand more of aid and technical services. The other priority programme that shows favourable response is population planning and the support envisaged for it should also be forthcoming from various sources. Obviously the emphasis is on augmenting services for entrepreneurs as well as facilities and inputs for the farmers who will ultimately emerge as the vanguard of the move for growth.

Mr. McNamara has praised the morale of the people who have undertaken mass participation programmes for extricating the society from the curse of dependence on nature as well as for removal of illiteracy, ill-health and so on. For this he rightly assigned the credit to the leadership of President Ziaur Rahman. Yet the people and the leadership have many more odds including those of balance of payments, generation and transmission of power and rural electrification etc. to cross. One such problem lies in Bangladesh's being a lower riparian terrain. Obviously the World Bank mission has been rightly briefed on the need for cooperation between neighbours, especially for the sake of harnessing water resources. The point may have been carried in mind by the team which visits Nepal and India at the end of its visit to Bangladesh. It is hoped that better understanding of the problem of the region as a whole will emerge and that concrete proposals for jointly harnessing water resources will be evolved and supported by the World Bank.