

Kashadaha-Ichamati Project

The move for putting the country on to the road to self-sufficiency in food and for augmenting the growth rate is yet to yield results. It is in the nascent stage and more time and attention has to be given to the move by all concerned. As it is, the goals are of far-reaching consequences and nothing should prevent the relevant agencies in taking the move to its success. The same optimism reverberates in the mind of the people around the fields through which the Kashadaha-Ichamati canal project runs. It is there that the canal-digging programme was initiated on the first day of December last year and all including the President, who participated in the programme surmised a good future for the locality and the people therein. And they did so with a great deal of confidence in the people and the efficacy of the programme of canal-digging.

As reported the Kashadaha canal has been completed by the people who worked there on voluntary basis and the initial enthusiasm was raised by President Ziaur Rahman, when he personally inaugurated the digging programme. As it turned out to be, the same enthusiasm continues in other areas where canal-digging has been initiated and people in various walks of life have participated in the work. Those who know it may also point out that people in general view these projects as their own both because of the fact that these canals pass through their neighbourhood and that people themselves felt the need for them. Unlike other developmental projects, these activities have given opportunity to the people to participate in them with whatever they have and to contribute to the efforts needed for taking these projects to successful end. People are both partisans and ultimate direct beneficiaries and hence their commitment is also total.

As postulated, canal digging including the Kashadaha-Ichamati canal programme is designed to utilize surface as well as subsoil water for irrigation of farms. These canals are also designed

to augment pisciculture activities in various parts of the country. With the completion of various projects the prospect of having irrigation facilities will be increased and as such more of farm products may be harvested in the coming seasons. The thrust of the programme will be for increased food production which is targeted at doubling within the next five-year period. This is a viable goal and the sooner the target of self-sufficiency in food is achieved the better will be the prospect of intensifying developmental activities in other sectors. Incidentally, the positive contribution to food autarky apart, these mass participation programmes will release some resources now needed for food import and enable the government to utilize them for other productive sectors.

As it is, like many other parts of the country "Dacca district which is a food deficit area" may burgeon into a self-sufficient area and work as a pioneer in the developmental process. The proximity of the area to the capital will also facilitate intensive and extensive participation by the policy makers and programme executives in the planning and implementation of other such projects. This would enable the authorities to develop ways and means for monitoring mass participation programmes. This would also help calculation of physical labour in terms of money to be ultimately computed into the national income. It is this aspect of the programme, which has to be planned and implemented more rationally and logically with a view to ensuring mobilization of local resources, needed also for attracting external aid and assistance. Unlike in the past, these canal-digging programmes should be taken not as replacement activity, depleting thereby the national income and magnifying the contribution of external resources to the economy and for growth. This newer dimension of the mass participation work should justify involvement of official agencies and voluntary contribution of the masses.