

Diploma engineers

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Our diploma-holding technicians will have a very useful role to play in the implementation of the Second Five-Year Plan. The graduate engineers at the drawing-boards shall need the support of an army of middle-rung technical personnel to provide tangible shapes and effectiveness to the formers' designs. A development strategy, minus the social mobilisation content, is but a programme of maintenance and enrichment works centred on roads, embankments, agricultural mechanisation, industrialisation, gas distribution, electrification and the like.

Signs are observable that we are trying to avoid lumpy, indivisible, capital-intensive and urban-centred investments, veering instead towards labour-intensive and local resources-based projects that admit of dispersal automatically throughout the country. In such a decentralised development process, the diploma engineers are bound to be spotted as critically important elements all over. Besides, even where unmonetised investments are taking place like in the case of canal-digging, a significant section of technicians will have to be associated with the irrigation network that the channels will combinedly make.

A central implementation monitoring machinery will be in existence soon with teams sent out from Dacca to tally the money spent with the physical results in the project sites. There will also be hard assessments made of the implementation through sophisticated computers at the Planning Commission. While these moves promise to establish a more direct link between planning and work, much unchangeably depends on the local bodies and the field-staff of the works ministry to produce the desired results in a spread-out process.

In our bid to breed appropriate, simple and inexpensive technologies, the middle order technicians' thorough knowledge of the machines can be put to use for necessary innovations and alterations to the techniques. Also the effort to diffuse available expertise over the countryside can be helped tremendously by the diploma engineers acting as 'change-agents'. After all, we cannot entirely depend on the obviously limited capacities of the engineering institutions to produce all of the trained manpower we need. There has to be an informal way to induct ordinary people into the process.

In any case, the diploma engineers will form the nucleus of the technical work force we envision. As such, a conscious effort has to be made to place them well in the works set-up with incentives built into the latter in a way that will encourage them to stay in the country and settle down to work at hand.