

DACCA MONDAY AUGUST 21 1978

Science And Technology

Within the course of next one month, a number of committees will be submitting their reports to government on both the scientific and technological facilities now available in Bangladesh and the potentialities the country has in these fields. The time limit given to these committees, one of which will function at the national and the others at the various sectoral levels, may appear to be rather short, but actually is not. The intention is not to have a detailed account of these facilities and of the possibilities of their growth, but to go for a quick survey so that immediate corrective measures may be taken and steps initiated for expansion that might be demanded by programmes of economic growth. The survey must not however be perfunctory or incomplete or superficial or short-sighted. President Ziaur Rahman, who on Thursday last ordered the formation of these committees in the fourth general meeting of the National Council for Science and Technology, would certainly like to see a good work done. And so would the whole nation.

The importance of the task given to these committees must be fully realized by the members, who will be drawn from among responsible men in the concerned areas. These are men who have by this time put in years of work for the advancement of science and technology, and have seen, from close personal experience, the various stages through which this country has passed in this field and the various problems which she has faced in the process. Work has been done by many men and in many areas, but whether or not any meaningful attempt has been made towards co-ordination of these efforts and towards relating those to the basic demands of life in this country is a question which the members of these committees must ask themselves and try to find out an answer for all of us. It would not be surprising if on an investigation it is found that facilities in the past have been duplicated in many areas or that these have not been fully utilized in one sector or the other or that those who were responsible for creating these did not take into account the degree of their need in the circumstances obtaining at a given time or the possibilities of their satisfactory functioning in a set of given conditions. This is not to suggest that these necessarily happened in the

past. But can the possibility be fully ruled out?

The key-word in the President's speech is 'the national objectives'. Objectives which, as the President himself has pointed out, are closely related to the national plan for development and have been clearly spelt out in it. These have been formulated after much deliberation and in consideration of many factors, and nothing must be done to upset these or to create imbalances in the process designed to achieve these. Advancement and sophistication have their own charm, but it is not for us to be carried away by this. The realities of life as they exist here and now cannot be forgotten or ignored even for a moment. The sight of hundreds of men and women looking for work, the state of their preparedness for technological advancement, the lack of facilities for repair and maintenance—these are grim facts of realities which cannot be overlooked. Technology and science must therefore be appropriate. These may be advanced or may even be relatively elementary, but it is on their appropriateness in relation to the conditions obtaining here that chances of their success depend. And these must invariably and at all times be made to serve the cause of the national objectives, furtherance of which alone can make these relevant and acceptable.

The President has also asked to check brain drain. This directive is not in conflict, as it may perhaps seem to some to be, with government's policy of exporting manpower, for these two operate at two different levels. Conscious as he is of the need for helping others with our manpower, the President has not put a total ban on the outflow of men, qualified technically and otherwise. He has only asked for imposing restrictions designed to ensure the meeting of our own demands first. There are and will be many attractions abroad for the qualified, but they must ignore these and respond to the demands of their own nation. They will have to make sacrifices, but there are sacrifices worth making and to be proud of. Conditions must however be created to give them job satisfaction and to allow their talents to flourish. And creation and sustenance of such conditions, surely, would be one principal objective of the survey that is being undertaken.