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| an | LL | SE | 91 | WH | a/a |
| Date | 1.6.66 | 6/6 | | | |
| Visa | WP | CC | TS | h | May 27, 1977 |
| EPD | 31.05.77 | | 15 | | |
| Ref. | f. M. Bangladesh | | | | |

Coopération with Bangladesh

Review of activities with the External Resources Division,
 Ministry of Planning, Dacca, 25.5.77.

1. On May 25, I met with Mr. M. Muhiuddin, chief, and Mr. S.M. Akram, deputy chief, Technical Assistance Programmes, External Resources Division, Ministry of Planning, for reviewing our activities in Bangladesh. On May 26, I called on Qazi Asher Ali, additional secretary, External Resources Division, mainly for getting his reaction to our position concerning our financial aid programme. Both meetings were held in a very relaxed atmosphere.

2. On-going projects

I mentioned briefly our support to the Mirpur Agricultural Workshop-cum-Training Centre, the Dinajpur Demonstration Farm (both CORR-projects), the good work done by IUCW with the Social Welfare Department (which might be extended soon), the Holy Family Hospital Dacca (Red Cross). Mr. Muhiuddin welcomed the support given to these voluntary agencies, which have shown their ability to implement efficiently development projects.

Along the multi-bilateral line (funds in trust with UN agencies, etc.), I recalled our contributions to UNICEF handpump tubewells programme for drinking water supply and for irrigation, our special contribution to three UNDP/FAO projects (Warehousing, Dairy Development, Winter Crops), and our new commitment for the UNDP/ILO low lift pump training and maintenance programme. Mr. Muhiuddin, who was never so much in favour of multi-bilateral aid, wanted to know whether our contributions were in addition to our targets for bilateral aid and mentioned that some countries, like the Netherlands, are offering multi-bilateral aid in addition to the funds earmarked for bilateral assistance. I explained to him that in our system we do not have general allocation of funds for a specific country for a specific period of time, but that we are working projectwise. As our development cooperation with Bangladesh started really in 1975 only, and as the preparation of any bilateral project is taking more than one year, we were left with no other possibility but to make use of programmes which were immediately ready for implementation as soon as funds would have been available. This is the reason why, for the time being, the major part of our contributions went to multi-bilateral projects. He fully agreed with this approach. I got the impression that Mr. Muhiuddin has adopted a more flexible attitude in this respect, when I compare with what he told me during earlier discussions.



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 On a bilateral basis, the collaboration with the Tongi Workshop of the Power Development Board has a slow start; with the nomination of the engineer to be trained in Switzerland, we may now expect that the two Swiss specialists will be appointed soon and arrive in Dacca sometime in Autumn (see separate note). Mr. Muhiuddin was particularly glad of our quick response to his proposal for financing the stay of two Bangladeshis with the Centre d'Etudes industrielles in Geneva; he is convinced that their training will be as successful as the training of Mr. Mahmud from Petrobangla in 1976.

3. Project ideas in the pipe-line

Concerning the supply of 400 fridges for the livestock services development project, which will be implemented by the British aid, Qazi Asher Ali and Mr. Muhiuddin have welcomed our initiative and have made sure that the Department of animal health has made the necessary financial provision to pay for the customs duties of these fridges. I have informed our British partners of the concurrence received from the Ministry of Planning.

Concerning our proposal to organize a project identification mission in the field of sericulture, our partners have no objection to a team comprising of a Swiss expert and one or two Indian specialists working on our behalf. We are now in a position to go ahead. Within one week I shall write a special report on this project proposal.

4. New ideas

I have asked Mr. Muhiuddin, whether he had new proposals to submit for consideration by us. It was not the case. Discussing which kinds of proposals might be considered favourably, I mentioned rural development at grass roots level, practical training of workers in the field of mechanic, electricity, etc., intermediate technology (and Mr. Muhiuddin emphasized the needs in low cost housing and rural transport), production of small spareparts for electrical equipment (see provision 5.1b of the Tongi agreement and point 6 of the minutes of the meeting held on 31.3.76 with the Chairman PDB), the storage and marketing at village level (feasibility study made by Mr. Garcin). Generally speaking, my partners agreed with this approach and it was decided to continue the discussion during my next stay in Dacca around mid-July.

5. Financial aid

Qazi Asher Ali agreed with our proposals (see my letter to him dated May 6) and our mission will be welcomed in July (see separate note).

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