



Staff Reporter

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) on Tuesday approved a compact township project, 'Palli Janapad', for rural people based on cooperatives involving TK 424.34 crore, aiming to protect arable lands and thus ensure food security and improve their living standards.

The approval came from the 5th Ecneec meeting of the current fiscal year held at the NEC conference room in city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area with Ecneec chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said a total of three uplift projects involving TK 829.85 crore were approved today.

"Of the total project cost, TK 520.03 crore will come from the national exchequer, while TK 87.41 crore from the organization's own fund and TK 222.41 crore in project assistance."

State Minister for Finance and Planning MA Mannan was also present during the briefing.

About the Palli Janapad project, the Planning Minister said four-storey buildings will be constructed in seven villages of seven divisions accommodating some 272 families in each village.

Under the project, there will be flats in four categories for the beneficiaries of the project. The category-A flats would be of 915 square feet size, while category-B flats of 710 square feet ones, category-C flats of 460 square feet ones and the category-D flats of 365 square feet with each square feet areas having a price of TK 1603.

Of the total project cost, the government would initially provide 70 percent of the project cost while the rest of 30 percent will come from the beneficiaries. The flat owners would repay the loan to the government in 15 years at a flat rate of 5 percent. Planning Ministry sources said the project has been re-designed that includes expansion of the project area from three divisions to seven divisions, downsizing the buildings' size from six-storey to four-storey and some

increased amenities.

The project cost has gone up nearly five folds to Tk 424.34 crore from originally estimated Tk 86.54 crore.

The 'Palli Janapad' project is now expected to complete during a period from July, 2014 to June, 2017. The government will bear Tk 362.98 crore of the project cost, while the beneficiaries will provide Tk 61.36 crore.

Center for Irrigation and Water Management (CIWM) and Rural Development Academy (RDA) will jointly implement the project under the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division.

The main project activities include construction of seven four-storey buildings, construction of another three-storey seven buildings for animal husbandry and marketing of agricultural produces, setting up solar panels, ensuring safe water supply, rain water reservation tank construction as well as lake, construction of biogas plant, producing high-quality organic fertilizer and its marketing, operating various income generating training for the beneficiaries and operating RDA credit operations for entrepreneurship development.

The proposal of the project was first placed before Ecnec on 4th February this year with a provision of erecting three six-storey buildings having civic amenities in the rural areas of three divisions, but the Ecnec meeting asked for bringing some necessary revisions to the project's design.

According to the Ecnec instructions, the buildings will now be four-storey ones and stand face-to-face and have proper ventilation, have separate bathrooms and toilets, would have enough playgrounds for the children at the project sites, and enough distance must be kept between residential buildings and cattle and poultry farms.

Asked about the possibility of corruption in the project, the Planning Minister said that near to zero tolerance would be followed during the implementation of the projects alongside other projects.

Kamal, however, opined that he would have to live for another 50 years to see a corruption-free Bangladesh.

He told another questioner that the project has been undertaken as a pilot project and based on its successes it might be extended in future.

Secretary of the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division MA Kader Sarker present at the briefing informed that the project sites would be selected prioritizing the wage-earners remittance-prone areas.

The day's Ecnec meeting approved another project titled 'Extended Cotton Cultivation (Phase-1) project with TK 105 crore to be implemented by June 2018. Cotton Development Board (CDB) under the Ministry of Agriculture will implement the project, aiming to enhance the overall cotton production of the country.

The Planning Minister said the project will be implemented in 35 upazilas of 10 districts and once the project is implemented it would be possible to raise the cotton production to 7-10 lakh bales per year.

According to the Ministry of Textiles and Jute, the country imports around 4 to 4.2 million bales cotton per year with a cost of TK 21,000 crore.

The Ecnec meeting gave nod to another revised project titled 'Siddhirganj-Maniknagar 230 KV Transmission Line (1st revised) with downsizing the project cost to Tk 300.51 crore from TK 391.70 crore. Of the total project cost, the IDA of the World Bank will provide TK 222.41 crore. According to sources at the Ecnec meeting, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the meeting that newer plans would be undertaken to ensure nice and safe life for the country's children.

She also said that cooperatives-based multi-storey buildings will be built in rural areas to ensure better living of the urban areas.

Ministers, State Ministers, Planning Commission members and other high officials were present at the meeting.