PREREQUISITE FOR PROGRESS

The Asian Development Bank initiated its operational activities this past week, with the launching of an Asian Agricultural Survey. One of the key stimuli for this Survey was my recently concluded series of visits to the Bank's regional member countries. It is all well and good to peruse statistics, like those which record the past year's shortfalls in food production, to a level below pre-war output, and, more generally, the decline in overall agricultural production of similar magnitude. However, it was only through personal contact with leaders of government and the private sector in the developing nations of this region, that I was brought face to face with the very real consequences of these shortfalls, and the resultant imperative of reversing this downward trend.

The figures tell us that the developing countries must sustain an annual growth rate of at least five per cent in agricultural production, merely to regain pre-war levels. However, the figures don't spell out the difficulties impeding such a goal. It is only when you speak with economic planners and policy makers that you are made fully aware of the obstacles imposed by a host of deficiencies in the existing developmental framework, including a lack of elementary infrastructure, inadequate capital formation, and immobile or unskilled labor resources.

These and similar problems have not only proved serious deterrents to the effective stimulation of regional agricultural production, but, they have also had repercussions on industrial growth