

Better marketing, new tech access key to farm growth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diversification of crops, improved marketing system for farm products and dissemination of information on new research and technologies to farmers can contribute greatly to agricultural growth.

Moreover, closer links between scientists and breeders and farmers must be established by strengthening agriculture extension service and by disseminating information through print and electronic media to accelerate the pace of growth.

These were the unanimous views of participants in a seminar on 'Challenges for Communication of Agriculture Research Results' held

at Winter Garden of Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

The seminar coincided with an agriculture fair at the same venue in connection with the IRRRI Board of Trustees' meeting in Bangladesh for the first time.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRRI) jointly organised the fair that highlighted the results of rice research and new farming technologies.

Vice Chancellor of South-East University Prof M Shamsur Ali chaired the seminar and Channel-I Director Shykh Seraj presented the keynote paper. Dr Golam Rahman of Dhaka University, BRRRI Director Dr AR Gomosta, Agriculture Information Service (AIS) Director

Fazlul Haque Rikabdar, Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension Tariq Hasan and journalist Reaz Ahmad took part in the discussion.

Farmers -- both male and female -- from different districts also spoke highlighting the need for raising food production. They stressed soil test facilities and new technologies for rice drying and winnowing.

The keynote paper emphasised farmers' need-based research and coordination among different stakeholders including agricultural scientists, extension workers, policy planners, newsmen and farmers.

Prof. Shamsur Ali drew attention to the huge contribution of women to crop production and said this is ignored in most cases.

JCD leaders deal

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money, students alleged. The JCD leaders also forced the new students to join procession, sources said, adding that the JCD leaders frequently manhandle general students if they fail to dance to their tune.

They also said most of the JCD leaders return to the dormitories at around 10:00pm although the college and hall gates are officially closed after 8:00pm. They often force the guards to open the hall gate after 8:00 in the night, two guards admitted.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the opposition Awami League (AL), also took money against illegal seat allotment when the AL was in power.

Meanwhile, dormitory students said around 3,000 students are staying in the four halls, causing serious bathroom and food problems, among others. Principal Prof. Dilara Hafiz however said 1,600 students reside in the four halls of the college. A number of students have been staying in the TV rooms and in the prayers rooms illegally,

she said, adding that she would take necessary action against them.

Prof. Hafiz said she received scores of complaints against some JCD leaders of the college unit and added that actions would be taken against them. There are at least nine allegations against Nasima Akhter Keya, a JCD joint convener of the college unit, the principal said.

"College authorities have decided to expel Keya as allegations against her have been proved," she said.

"We will drive illegal students out of the hall within a week," she said, adding that they have informed the departments concerned to notify the students, who have been staying illegally in the dormitories, about the move. She also said second year students got seats through authorised allotments according to their merit and need. No first-year students are authorised to stay in the halls, Prof Hafiz said.

The principal said she has formed a 10-member committee comprising non-political resident students to look into the irregularities in the halls as it is difficult for the hall superintendent alone to man-

age so many students.

Meanwhile, the 31-member convening committee of the JCD's college unit has been suspended due to internal feud.

US stands

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and for our children, but also to honour the victims of terror and reaffirm the inherent value of their lives," Bush said.

Rocca said, "The US will stand by India in its battle against terrorism just as India has stood with the US in its battle against terrorism".

Well aware of India's continuing concerns over terrorism sponsored from Pakistan, she said "I can also reassure you that cross-border infiltration remains a very important issue on our agenda with Pakistan".

Rocca said the US and President Bush in particular have condemned all forms of terrorism in the strongest possible terms. "The recent bombings in Srinagar and the deadly blasts in Mumbai are horrific examples of this crime".

Cancun meet

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"His death is not a personal accident but reflects the desperate fighting of 3.5 million Korean farmers," said Song Nan Sou, president of the Farmers Management Association, one of several South Korean groups taking part in demonstrations at this upmarket Mexican seaside resort.

"We all regret this sad incident," World Trade Organisation Director-General Supachai Panitchakpadi said. "This self-inflicted wound has resulted in his death, so we do regret it," he said.

About 5,000 activists joined the protest and about two dozen broke through eight-foot-high metal barriers to attack police on the edge of Cancun's upscale hotel zone.

"We are going in. We are going in," a South African trade unionist screamed through a loudspeaker urging protesters to storm a long strip of beach hotels and fast food restaurants.

Demonstrators threw chunks of paving stones, sticks, metal bars and bottles at police, who fought back with batons and tear gas. More than a dozen people were injured as police

held off the protesters.

Violent protests have become a staple of international trade and finance meetings since rioting at a WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999. Italian police shot dead a protester at a summit of industrialised nations in Genoa in 2001.

The 146-nation WTO opened its five-day meeting in Cancun with serious divisions on a host of disputes, topped by agricultural subsidies in the United States and Europe.

British development charity Oxfam yesterday called on political leaders at the WTO talks to commit themselves to changing Europe's agricultural subsidy regime, which it said was biased toward helping the bloc's richest producers most.

Oxfam said Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was also preventing poorer nations, which receive much of the cheap, heavily subsidised food, from pulling themselves out of poverty.

Indian river-link

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Board Chief Engineer Akhtar Hossain.

The project will make traditional agriculture impossible, cause river erosion and saline intrusion in water and soil, destroy environment and bio-diversity and hamper our navigation, Hossain added.

Referring to India's recent vow to execute the project 'on foot footing', Hossain suggested that people of Bangladesh should be mobilised on the basis of political consensus to avert the effect of India's water diversion move.

"To protect its national interest, Bangladesh has to be more vocal against the Indian plan. The government should raise the issue before the international community to save the Sundarbans, a world heritage site," said Barrister Moinul Hossain.

"Like India, we cannot work out any national issue with political accord, as we don't have a knowledge-based government yet," said Professor M Ashraf of Chittagong University.

"India contrives river water as a weapon of mass destruction against Bangladesh," said journalist Anwar Zahid.

"We need political will and consensus, which we haven't so far been able to build to address such an issue," he added.

World trade order

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The LDCs are ready to resist any attempt including the Singapore issues of 1996 that include investment, competition and transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation. The European Union (EU) wants to bring the Singapore issues despite the opposition.

At the Doha Ministerial Conference in November 2001, member nations renewed their commitment to help least-developed countries. Concretely, they promised to give duty- and quota-free market access improvements for products from these countries.

High on the list of LDC agenda in this year's ministerial meet is special and differential treatment for LDCs' exports, both agricultural and non-agricultural, followed by demand for free movement of labour from the developing to developed countries.

Prior to the meeting, the WTO decided that the LDCs could produce and export medicines patented with foreign companies. Such a decision is expected to boost medicine export from the LDCs.

But the LDCs would want to see cut in farm subsidy and fair trade to improve their access to wealthier markets.

The LDCs are also worried about a proposal of the rich nations to introduce a formula for tariff liberalisation.

The five-day conference was inaugurated by Mexico President Vicente Fox with a call on the rich nations to remove all unfair practices, particularly agricultural subsidies, that hit other developing and poor countries hard.

Sources in Cancun said after the opening session on Wednesday, both formal and informal negotiation began with ministers meeting one another on the sidelines.

Farm subsidy

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low tubewells and over 15,000 deep tubewells, and Tk 200 crore to provide seeds at a subsidised rate and soil testing facilities in upazilas.

Presently, subsidies are given to users of electric pumps.

The minister earlier told The Daily Star, "Currently, farmers using diesel pumps have to incur a 30 per cent more cost than the users of electric pumps."

"According to a preliminary estimate, a cash support of Tk 500 crore will be required to bridge the gap," said the minister, adding 25 to 50 per cent of the subsidies would be disbursed in the current fiscal year and the rest in the next fiscal year.

"We're hopeful of getting more than the allocated Tk 300 crore this fiscal year and will go for a new cash support programme for farmers," Anwar said.

State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star earlier that the subsidies Bangladesh now provides for farmers are way below the subsidy level in the developed countries.

Official statistics say Bangladesh provides farm subsidies at only 3.3 per cent of the aggregate value of its annual farm products, although the World Trade Organisation rules allow any country to extend the subsidy level up to 10 per cent.

The government has recently made banks lower their interest rate from 13-14 per cent to 10 per cent in farm credit to boost the agriculture sector.

Pay toll

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student, received the first call, but the caller did not talk, said Qulsum, who received a second call from the man wanting to know the whereabouts of Shahid.

The opposition chief whip was not home and the caller demanded the money and threatened abduction and killing of their children in repeated calls until 9:00pm, Qulsum said.

Shahid, who was in Sylhet on Wednesday, said he informed the security-in-charge of the MP Hostel and sent letters to Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and the home ministry about it. He will also file a general diary.

Following a robbery at his Srimangal home in Moulvibazar on April 11, Shahid wrote to the Speaker on June 24, requesting him to ensure his security with two armed bodyguards.

The Jatiya Sangsad forwarded the letter to the home ministry on August 3.

50 clinics sans registration, 2 face action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

The Health Director's Office (HDO) in Rajshahi yesterday identified more than 50 city clinics operating without registration but recommended taking actions against only two.

A recent survey of civil surgeon's office (CSO) in Rajshahi revealed 50 clinics in the city were unregistered and the clinic inspection committee meeting of the HDO recommended to the health directorate in Dhaka for closure of Nazma Clinic and Ayesha Clinic for non-sterile environment and running without any specialised surgeon, sources said.

Chaired by Health Director of Rajshahi Dr Abdur Rashid Chowdhury, the meeting was also attended by Deputy Director of the HDO Dr Reaz Uddin and Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi Dr AK Fazlul Haque.

"Specific complaints against the two clinics led us to take the decision," Deputy Director of Rajshahi health department Dr Reaz Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

The CSO is entitled to conduct a survey on clinics' status in the district and submit its report to Dhaka office once a year for necessary actions, he added.

However, the CSO sources told this correspondent that survey reports are sent to the HDO every year but no action is taken against any unregistered clinics.

The move was taken 'intentionally' as many top health officials were practising in other unregistered clinics, Nazma and Ayesha Clinic authorities alleged.

Unregistered clinics sprouted in the city due to indifference of the authorities, Dr Abdur Mannan, president of Rajshahi Clinic and Diagnostic Owners' Association, alleged.

FTA

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from the meeting. He pointed out that Pakistan had already enacted Financial Responsibility Act and got positive impacts of the law. "We'll also introduce the act."

The finance minister had already announced the urgency of having such an act to bring discipline in the country's fiscal management.

BB questions

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managing director of Rupali Bank questioned the legality of Hafiz's re-election, sources said.

The BB letter asked the Rupali Bank to take up the matter at its next board meeting and inform the central bank of the outcome in a week. The next board meeting is slated for September 15.

Hafiz could not be contacted for comments because he is abroad.

Rupali Bank continues to be a state-owned enterprise despite being floated in the stock exchange as a public limited company in 1986. The state owns 93.65 per cent of its shares, while private shareholders own the rest.

Another bond

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picked to participate in the secondary market. General investors will also be able to directly buy and sell bonds at the secondary market.

The government is also going to fix interest rates for savings bonds on a market basis. The new system is likely to be introduced in December. The interest rate will be fixed in every six months after reviewing the interest rate of treasury bonds.

Two dredgers

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certificates and fined Tk 10,000 each. Owners of those vehicles would have to serve six months in jail if they fail to pay the sum, sources said.

The team also fined Seagull, a small motor launch, of Tk 5,000 during the drive, sources added.

Target is to get back on track

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the way in the three-match Test series.

But Bangladesh's dream of winning their first one-day match since their famous 62-run victory against the same opponents at the 1999 World Cup remains as distant as ever. They have lost 38 out of 40 matches since then with two being rained off.

Besides, the defeat in the first match without a fight showed that Khaled Mahmud's men still lack the maturity in the instant version of the game compared to their rapid improvement in the longer version.

"This time it won't happen. I can assure all that we are going to be more competitive tomorrow (Friday)," said Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud after the team's final practice yesterday.

Termining Pakistan as a strong batting side Mahmud said that he expected his opening bowlers to grab some wickets in the first 10 overs to at least slow the scoring.

"We have worked a lot on the

Pakistani batsmen. Hopefully, our homework will do the trick this time," said Mahmud without elaborating.

He said that there would be one change from the team that played in Multan with experienced right-arm pacesman Hasibul Hossain coming in for Sanwar Hossain.

Commenting on the wicket, the Bangladesh captain said that the pitch would be as batting-friendly as it was in Multan.

"Let's hope our batsmen put the runs on the board this time," said Mahmud, adding that there would be no change at the top provided that all-rounder Mushfiqur Rahman is fit enough to play.

"He (Mushfiq) has pulled a thigh muscle during the last match. And if he is not fit then Hannan Sarker will open with Ashraful with Bashir batting at his usual number three position," Mahmud said.

His Pakistan counterpart Inzamamul Haq once again reiterated his vow of completing a 5-0 whitewash. "We are aiming to be consistent in this series. We want to

carry on with the performance we put up in Multan.

"Pakistan's main problem has been its consistency in this form of the game. I think, this series gives us a good opportunity to do be consistent in all departments of the game."

TEAMS

Bangladesh (From): Khaled Mahmud (captain), Mohammad Ashraful, Habibul Bashar, Rajin Saleh, Tuskar Imran, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mashud, Mushfiqur Rahman, Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza, Hasibul Hossain, Mohammad Rafique, Hannan Sarker, Alamgir Kabir, Tapas Baishya and Sanwar Hossain.

Pakistan (From): Inzamamul Haq, Mohammad Hafeez, Yasir Hameed, Yousef Youhana, Yousif Khan, Abdur Razzak, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Junaid Zia, Umar Gul, Shabbir Ahmed, Danish Kaneria, Imran Nazir, and Salman Butt.

Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe).

JS body pats cops on the back

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police administration. Police's human resource is less than what they need, so manpower and facilities of the police administration should be raised.

Asked about police's performance in improving law and order, Mannan said, "Overall situation is improving. Though some incidents are happening, these are isolated. In many developed countries, some stray incidents do happen. So the committee was satisfied with their performance."

Police are yet to rescue abducted Chittagong businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury though the inspector general of police had assured the standing committee in its August 23 meeting that Jamal would be rescued within 48 hours.

However, the committee at yesterday's meeting did not discuss the issue, Home Minister Altaf

Hossain Chowdhury told the press. Altaf had said on August 24 that police knew about the whereabouts of Jamal.

But committee chairman Abdul Mannan said yesterday, "We hoped [about the rescue of Jamal] at our previous meeting. We are still hopeful. But in this case there is no failure of police, they are trying their best."

At yesterday's meeting, a sub-committee was also formed to identify the problems facing police. The committee will review works of the sub-committee at its next meeting on October 18 and recommend ways to improve police performance.

Most members of the committee were reluctant to talk to press yesterday. They just said that the chairman of the committee would tell everything about the meeting.

Asked about the meeting, the

home minister refused to make any comment and left it for the chairman. Asked about Jamal, the home minister said, "No discussion was held on this matter."

Lutfuzzaman Babar, state minister for home affairs, also refused to take any question, saying, "The chairman will tell you everything in this regard."

Mizanur Rahman Minu, a BNP lawmaker and committee member, said, "Of course, we are satisfied with the performance of the police administration."

Home Secretary Omar Faruque told reporters that the overall activities of police were discussed at the meeting.

Abdul Mannan presided over the meeting attended also by Majibur Rahman Sarwar, Aatur Rahman Khan, Sultan Mahmud Babu, Mushfiqur Rahman and officials concerned.

Marine cable

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million submarine cable project will be carried out simultaneously in the countries brought together by a consortium.

The international bidding of the project was opened in the Italian capital of Rome on Monday.

The SEA-ME-WE4 (Southeast Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 4) consortium is expected to complete the project by July 2005.

State-owned telecoms providers of Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Italy and France along with troubled American firm WorldCom and Indian firm Bharti are members of the consortium.

Indonesia withdrew its membership when SingTel of Singapore acquired major shares of Indosat, the state-owned telecoms agency of Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the dominant carriers of Thailand, Algeria and Tunisia have expressed their desire to join the consortium. Cable and Wireless of the UK and Reliance Group of India are also interested in being connected with the submarine cable network.

The consortium will accept these new aspirants if it faces shortage of fund.

Sources said despite global downturn in the telecoms investment, the consortium members have already committed 84 per cent of the estimated US\$ 750 million project cost. Bangladesh has earmarked US\$ 65 million as BTTB's contribution.

The contract to build this cable network will be awarded to the successful bidder in March 2004. The contractor will have to commission the system within 16 months

that means Bangladesh will be terrestrially connected with the high-speed global telecoms network not later than July 2005.

Meanwhile, the BTTB has shifted the location of its submarine cable's landing station from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar.

Sources said high risk of cable cut because of fishing and anchoring on the Chittagong coast prompted the shift.

The BTTB is now going to invite an international tender to lay 160 kilometres of optical fibre cable from Cox's Bazar to Chittagong.

The government has earmarked Tk 40 crore for the project. Initially it will be equipped with 622 megabyte per second (Mbps) capacity to carry 8,064 voice circuits.

It will be eventually upgraded to 1,000 Mbps to handle 129,024 simultaneous international phone calls.

Currently the BTTB handles only 3,333 international phone calls at a time through its satellite circuits.

US warns

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stay on the offensive overseas."

Bush, who led mourners in New York for the first anniversary, was not at Ground Zero this year and his chosen representative Vice President Dick Cheney also skipped the main ceremony at the request of city officials.

The names of all those who perished were read aloud once again at Ground Zero, but this time by children related to the victims.

The ceremony's participants paused in silence four times -- twice to mark the times that each hijacked plane hit the towers and twice to mark the times that each tower fell.

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Fakir

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this year. But they could not nab Moazzem, who raped her several times since the abduction.

Jahanara Begum, mother of the victim, filed a case against Moazzem with Nalchity Police Station and Sub-inspector Kazem Ali Munshi pressed charges against him on February 16 this year. The case was transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Barisal on May 11 this year.

The verdict came after examining 13 witnesses within 14 working days.

Abbas

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am not satisfied with the performance of Rajuk. I had also suffered a lot when I wanted to build my house." He however said Rajuk has been restructured and the situation is better now.

In his open letter, Babul alleged the housing minister is personally angry with him and this led him to take action against Jamuna Group. Some other developers are also filling up low-lying areas but the minister is only after his group, Babul claimed.

Brushing aside the allegation, the minister said Rajuk has filed as many as 10 cases against developers including Bushandhara, Modhumati, Jamuna, Banorupa, Amin Mohammad Foundation and Rahat Real Estate. "All the cases are in process," he mentioned.

The minister said Jamuna Group is using the daily Jugantar to support its illegal activities and urged people not to be misled by such propaganda in that newspaper.

Secretary of the housing ministry Aminur Rahman and Chairman of Rajuk Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury were also present at the press conference.

3 bills tabled

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Development and Communications Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan introduced the president's remuneration and privileges bill and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed introduced the rest.

Earlier yesterday, the Business Advisory Committee of parliament decided to run the current session until September 18.

The AL ignored the ruling party's appeal to join the session also on the day and said it would decide on

the issue at a parliamentary party meeting on September 14.

Bhuiyan called Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid in the afternoon, urging the AL legislators to join the session. Hamid in reply said the ongoing developments gave the party no mood to sit in the House.