



PHOTO: STAR  
A child is being administered polio vaccine at Gopibagh in the city yesterday during the second round of National Immunisation Day.

## 'Agri issues neglected in JS'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issues relating to agriculture, land and farmers' rights are largely neglected in the discussions in parliament although 80 percent of the country's population is engaged in agriculture, speakers at a meeting said yesterday.

The agriculture sector gets much

less attention in parliament as most of its elected members are businessmen, lawyers and industrialists, they observed.

They stressed the need to highlight the agriculture issues in parliament in the greater interest of the country.

Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (BARCIK) organised the view exchange meeting

at the auditorium of Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Lotus Karmaker and Silvanus Lamin, researchers of BARCIK, presented a brief report on agriculture issues discussed in parliament from 1972 to 2005.

The number of working days in all sessions from first parliament to eighth parliament was about 1200 days, but the agriculture issues were less discussed than any other issues, they said.

Agriculturist Dr Abdur Razzaque, a former lawmaker, said many lawmakers want to do their bit for the development of agriculture, but the situation does not always allow them to do.

He suggested that parliament should have a research cell to document what the lawmakers are doing over different issues.

Shykh Seraj, director (news) of Channel i and agriculture expert, said farmers are making outstanding contribution as they are now producing food grains triple the amount they produced in 1970s although the cultivable lands have declined in an alarming rate.

Highlighting the plights of genuine farmers, he said most government subsidies in the agriculture sector are grabbed by middlemen and rich farmers. Real farmers do not get more than five percent of the benefits, he added.

He also stressed the need to educate farmers about biotechnology so that they themselves can produce hybrid seeds to get more yields.

BARCIK Executive Director Sukanta Sen, researcher Pavel Partha and farmers Sayed Ahmed Khan Bachhu and Shanti Sudha Mandol also spoke.