

'Intensive cropping leaves soil bereft of nutrients'

By Staff Correspondent

The current practice of intensive cropping and harvesting pattern, which leave little crop residues in the fields, has left the soil bereft of the nutrients in the country as well as in most other Asian countries.

This was observed by Dr J D Beaten, President of the Potash and Phosphate Institute (PPI) at a seminar on "Sustainable Development in Agriculture" held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) yesterday.

"Nutrient balancing is the key to sustainable agriculture," Dr Beaten said. "Agriculture has to be made sustainable to provide food for 60 million additional Bangladeshis in the next 20 years."

He also stressed the need for crop residue management.

Vote of thanks

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speech yesterday, came out with conflicting views on the subject. The ruling party MPs were all praise for the President for a constructive speech but the Opposition was extremely critical of the speech for failing to mention the government's failure regarding various problems confronting the nation.

Salaiddin Yousuf of the Awami League (AL), who initiated the discussion, criticised the President for not mentioning anything about the government's failure to separate the judiciary from the administration. During the last three years.

The AL MP also criticised the presidential speech for its silence over the government's industrial policy which allegedly had forced the closure of local industries and made the country a market for Indian goods. Turning to problems with India, especially regarding the due share of Ganges water, the AL MP suggested that the government should mount effective pressure on India to realise the country's demand.

Col (retd) Shawkat Ali of the AL criticised the President for making 'untrue statements' in the House on more than one issue.

The AL MP, refuting the president's claim that tranquillity has been restored in the educational arena, said a large number of institutions including the Jahangirnagar University had been closed since due to violence.

The MP also contested the President's observation that the government had restored law and order in the country. Speaking next, Haji Abdul Majid Talukdar (BNP-Bogra) thanked the President for his address. He said the President's speech had reflected the correct picture obtaining in the country. It would also provide a guideline for future development, he added.

About Opposition criticisms that the government had been pursuing a policy of retrenching the industrial workers, Talukdar said no government could run the industrial units with excess workers and by giving subsidy to the tune of Tk 200 crore to 250 crore annually.

The House was adjourned at 4:25 pm to resume 11 this morning. Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni presided over yesterday session.

Clinton

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the Bangladeshi people three years ago in restoring democratic freedoms and a respect for human rights in their country."

President Clinton said: "I am confident that the people and leaders of Bangladesh will continue to build a free and democratic nation in which the human rights of all are fully upheld."

The American leader was appreciative of some of the steps taken by Bangladesh to promote family planning and small business and made particular reference to Prof Mohammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank, for his "unique and successful programme of providing small non-collateral loans to Bangladeshi women" to integrate them in the national development process.

Clinton also lauded the "significant economic progress" achieved by Bangladesh in recent years. He held out the assurance that despite budgetary constraints, the United States would continue to assist Bangladesh's economic development process.

"These results serve as proof that macro-economic reform can indeed bring great benefits. I believe further economic reforms will foster a vibrant and robust private sector, resulting in the economic growth necessary to meet the hopes of the Bangladeshi people for a better life of their children and grandchildren."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Communications Minister Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed being given a military guard of honour at Sabroom in India during his visit there yesterday in connection with the beginning of the repatriation of the Chakma refugees. — Star photo

Chakma refugees return home

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any problem if it tries hard with sincerity."

Welcoming the homecoming of tribal refugees, Oli assured them: "We are prepared to do everything possible for your smooth and proper resettlement."

The Indian State Minister for Home PM Sayeed said, India had so far spent 45 crore rupees for the maintenance of the Chakma refugees.

Romesh Bhandari urged the Bangladesh government to fulfil the assurances made for resettlement of the tribal refugees.

To encourage the private sector, adequate credits should be made available for such large-scale nature of these investments, he said.

Energy Minister Mosharrif Hossain, painting a gloomy picture of the existing power generation structure, informed that the peak demand for power in 1995 would be 379 MW more than the PDB could supply. The country would continue to face power shortages till 1999, according to the government's estimate.

In 1999, the peak demand would be 3621 MW while the PDB would be able to supply 3653 MW.

"At the present trend of power consumption, the chief resource of power generation — natural gas — will be finished totally by 2012," the minister added.

Makhan

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their final tribute to the late hero.

The body was then taken to the Aparajeo Bangla statue and thence to the FH Hall where student leaders addressed a brief meeting.

BSS adds: The body of Makhan was then taken to the Awami League Central Office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 12:30 pm where hundreds of mourners had their last glimpse of the leader.

Awami League leaders Abdul Mannan, Abdus Samad Azad, Begum Zohra Tajuddin, Begum Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzaq, Tofael Ahmad, Kamruzzaman, Abdul Jalil, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Mohammad Hanif, Obaidul Quader, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Ashiqur Rahman, Sudhangshu Sheikh Halder, Vify Rahman, Sultan Mohammad Mansur and many others placed wreaths on the coffin.

Then, the body was taken to the National Eidgah for namaz-e-janaza. People from all walks of life, political leaders, ministers, members of Parliament, leaders and workers of different students' organisations and freedom fighters and his close associates attended the janaza.

Makhan's closest political associates — Nure-e-Alam Siddique, Shahjahan Straj and Tofael Ahmad, in emotion-choked voices, recalled the turbulent days of 1969 and the Liberation War in 1971 when they fought hand-in-hand with thousands of others for the independence of the country.

They praised Makhan's dedication to the struggle for independence and prayed for the peace of the departed soul.

Then the body was taken on a truck to the Mirpur freedom fighters' graveyard for burial.

Leaders of various political parties, including the Awami League and other organisations placed wreaths on the grave of Makhan. They stood in solemn silence and prayed to Almighty Allah for granting him eternal peace.

At the meeting even Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman pointed out the importance of taking into account the political support for reforms while reviewing the progress of implementation.

"I must point out that measuring progress in implementing structural reform against a check-list of actions can be a trivial exercise if conducted without reference to political support to reforms," he emphasised. "In a democratic society political acceptance of reform is a basic pre-condition for it to be implementable and successful."

Implementation of the reform programme, the report said, have had mixed results with progress being made on further liberalisation and deregulation, strengthening of the Privatisation Board, extension of the financial sector reform, further improvement in the quality of public expenditures, expanding the public sector retrenchment programme, starting to address the difficult issue of administrative reforms, implementing the new structure of elected local government, introducing reforms of the education sector and instituting transparent and less burdensome arrangements for supervising NGO operations.

"However, the pace of reforms remains unsatisfactory.

More and faster reforms are

needed, if (the government's)

high investment and high exports strategy is to succeed

and have a significant impact

on poverty alleviation," it added.

On the negative side the report noted that actions for private sector development has fallen short of expectations in three areas: Liberalisation policies are still not fully effective at the level of the individual entrepreneur; very few privatisation operations actually took place; and Bangladesh's competitiveness is not being enhanced.

To make the liberalisation and de-regulation policies more effective, it suggested "urgently" reforming the Tax Department, Board of Investment, Export Promotion Bureau and the Duty Drawback Department.

Additional reforms should also include abandoning the use of tariff values in calculating import duties, the announced privatisation drive should be expedited and the economy should be made at least as competitive as that of the neighbouring countries, to attract foreign investors and expand exports, the report recommended.

"Production costs must not be allowed to increase beyond those prevailing in competing countries. This implies that great importance must be attached to exchange rate management, as well as to policies that aim at linking wages to productivity and improving industrial relations."

Implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) during the first six months of the current fiscal

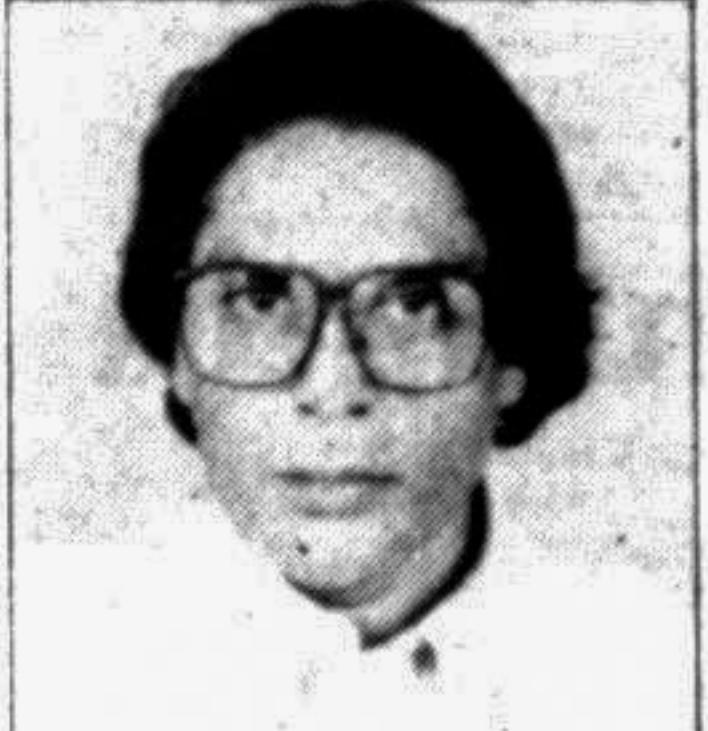
year, the report said, continues to remain slow in project execution and aid utilisation, similar to the extremely low rate of ADP implementation during 1992-93.

However, it noted that ADP implementation rates in the social sectors have improved tremendously, and nearly 30 per cent of the shortfall in execution is due to a few self-financed projects of 'doubtful' quality.

"Urging the government to redouble its efforts aimed at increasing the volume of public investment, the report said that the government should: Ensure implementation of the procedural reforms initiated earlier to improve execution and aid utilisation; seek greater private investment in the infrastructure sectors and make more use of the private sector in implementing ADP projects; and start introducing administrative and civil service reforms.

Reforms affecting the management of human development programmes, the report further pointed out, have fallen short of target in two areas: Administrative improvements in the health sector; and social safety nets for the most vulnerable groups in society.

It emphasised the need for better integration of relationship between health and family welfare services to strengthen supervision and to secure more community involvement in the management of field-level facilities, at present so frequently under-



Best award for Mansurul in Delhi Triennial

Eminent Bangladeshi artist Mansurul Karim will be given one of the best awards at the 8th Triennial Art Exhibition beginning in New Delhi today, a press release of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Mansurul Karim left here yesterday for New Delhi as the commissioner representative of Bangladesh to receive the award from the Indian President at the inaugural function of the international art exhibition.

He joined the Bangladesh Observer in the late Sixties and was its West Pakistan representative based in Karachi till 1969 when he returned to Dhaka and joined the paper as the Managing Editor. He was the Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) for two terms.

Mansurul Karim left here yesterday for New Delhi as the commissioner representative of Bangladesh to receive the award from the Indian President at the inaugural function of the international art exhibition.

He is one of the six participants from Bangladesh whose art works will be on display.

Other participants are Abu Taher, Mahmudul Huq, Hamiduzzaman Khan, KM Qayyum and Mohammad Younis.

Replies to a question, Hongshadu

Chakma, who is heading the Liaison Committee mediating the negotiations between the Government of Bangladesh and tribal rebels, talking to this correspondent said. "If the refugees returning in this first phase are not rehabilitated and allowed to live in peace and full security, this will be the first and last batch of repatriation and the refugees again to India may cross the border in to India."

Replies to a question, Hongshadu

Chakma said: "The repatriation of Chakma refugees does not mean that the problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been solved. The insurgency problem will remain until and unless the government resolves the issues through negotiations.

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