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Let's make things better

PHILIPS

Farmers feel BR-29 fills the bill

Bangladeshi variety gets the certificate over the imported hybrid

By Reaz Ahmad



Nature's bounty
Plenty on the yard and plenty on the way.

—Star photo: Reaz Ahmed

BR-29, a high yielding variety (HYV) of paddy developed by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), is better than imported hybrid seeds in terms of yield, cost-effectiveness and weather sustainability, farmers said.

Hybrid paddy was cultivated for the first time in the country in over 20,000 hectares in the IRRI-Boro season this year. Farmers in Bogra and Brahmanbaria told newsmen during a visit last week that BR-29 gave better yields at places with less cost than hybrid Alok under same conditions and care.

At places, yield from Alok was "marginally higher" than that of BR-29 at more cost. Alok is more susceptible to adverse weather conditions but takes less time than BR-29, they said. Average yield was eight tons per hectare from hybrid seeds and seven to seven and a half tons from BR-29, they said.

Farmers who could not take "extra care" for their hybrid fields even got yields less than BR-29. At places, yields were equal under the same conditions and care.

Abdul Shukur Molla of Nayampur village in Brahmanbaria said he cultivated locally developed HYV varieties of IR-8, BR-21, BR-29 and hybrid Alok in 35 bighas. He got 26 maunds per bigha from BR-29 and 19 maunds from Alok.

Shubir Kumar Roy of neighbouring Uchapara village got 27 maunds per bigha from Alok and 24 maunds from BR-29. However, Roy said, "I took much more care and used more fertiliser to the hybrid plot than the BR-29 plot." Roy believed that the yield would have been more had he invested more on BR-29 plots.

Also upset was his neighbour Sunil Chandra Sutaradhar. He said he got less yield from the hybrid variety than BR-29. Sutaradhar claimed that he had to

apply insecticides four times in hybrid field compared to once in BR-29.

Farmers in Bogra also had similar experience. Some of them said they are more encouraged seeing yield potential of BR-29 than hybrid varieties, which are more susceptible to adverse weather conditions.

They all got two things in common to point out. The ratio of sterility is as high as 25 to 30 per cent in hybrid paddy. The grains in the sheaf is also too fragile to withstand seasonal storms.

Md. Khalilur Rahman was responsible for irrigation to all rice fields in Uchapara village. According to him, only better care can guarantee good yield from hybrid seeds. "I had to provide more irrigation to hybrid rice fields because the growers were very enthusiastic about it, cultivated for the first time here."

ACI Ltd, one of the four companies which got government permission for importing hybrid seeds this year, however, has points to make.

FH Ansary of ACI told The Daily Star, "Eight tons per hectare yield matched our promise to farmers".

Regarding grain-fragility, Ansary said, "We always tell farmers to harvest hybrid paddy when 80 per cent of the sheaves ripe so that adverse weather conditions late in the season can not damage the crop".

Farmers said they do not have to hurry in harvesting BR-29. This correspondent also saw in Brahmanbaria that BR-29 crops were still on many fields while all hybrid crops had already been harvested, which farmers said, was to avoid damage by unfavourable weather conditions.

But farmers acknowledged that hybrid paddy took shorter time for cultivation compared to HYV varieties.

BNP, allies observe 'Black Day'

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of opposition activists staged demonstration in the city yesterday in observance of "Black Day" to protest the formal installation of Shantia Larma as chairman of the CHT Regional Council.

The BNP-led opposition alliance had declared May 27 as "Black Day" and called for nationwide demonstration demanding scrapping of CHT peace accord signed on December 2, 1997.

To mark the day, BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote held rallies and brought out procession in the city as well as at all district and thana headquarters. BNP held public rally at Paltan Maidan, JP at Kalabagan, Jamaat at Muktagangan and IOJ in front of Purana Pal-

tan mosque. After the rallies, they brought out separate processions.

Addressing the Paltan gathering, top BNP leaders declared that there would be no entry of the so-called CHT agreement if the party was voted to power. They asked the government to immediately cancel the accord because "it has violated the Constitution".

"BNP will never accept the CHT agreement and it will not bear the responsibility of this accord," said party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. He added that the party would also not accept the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty because it was signed to protect the interest of India.

Bhuiyan said lakhs of Indian tribals have illegally entered Bangladesh and started

living permanently in the Chittagong Hill Tracts after signing of the "black" agreement. This agreement instead of restoring peace has created instability and a permanent division among the people in the region.

Referring to Sheikh Hasina's Wednesday's comment on election, the BNP secretary general said this statement of the prime minister proved that people now have no confidence in the ruling Awami League and it is wise for the AL to quit power immediately.

Presided over by city BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, the rally was also addressed by Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Abul Hasnat, Mirza Abbas and Gayeshwar Chandra Roy.



Protest against the beginning
BNP demonstration to mark the "Black Day" protesting installation of the Regional Council for the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

—Star photo: Sk. Enamul Hoque

Regulators wake up

Mechanised country boats to get a knock on the head

By Shehab Ahmed

Some 700,000 mechanised country boats, driven by agricultural power pumps, are coming under regulations controlling their operation, officials said.

They would not however set any deadline for themselves to put the rules in place.

These boats, popularly known as 'shallow boats', are posing a threat to navigation safety in river routes. The decision to bring these under regulation has been taken to ensure safety, director of Ports and Traffic of IWTA Badruddoza said.

Driven by small propellers fitted to power pumps, these boats can only move forward with steel rollers.

But those have neither gear nor brake to control forward motion nor lights to indicate their presence on dark rivers at night.

But these boats compete with launches and cargo vessels, taking away a chunk of their business.

Their number is increasing fast as these are cheap means of transportation. Entrepreneurs are also finding it a good investment.

A typical long boat with a steel capped hull having a capacity to ferry 120-150 people costs about Tk 160,000.

The engine costs Tk 16,000 and only two crew are required to operate it, said Pannu Mia, driver of a mechanised boat at Sadarghat.

He ferries 120 to 150 people on a short trip from Sadarghat to Sawarighat in the Buriganga.

The trip costs Tk 1.50 per passenger and takes about 10 minutes. People prefer boat to rickshaw which goes through the Islampur Road and normally takes 30 minutes and costs Tk 12.

He says he pulls a string to pick up speed of his 16 horse power engine. "I reverse the process to slow it down when the shore approaches".

At night, a torch and ready wits help him move through the maze of big boats, launches,

steamers and big cargo vessels. Siddiqui Rahman, Secretary of the Launch Owners Association, loathes the presence of mechanised boats in the river.

"Those are cutting our returns and posing a serious problem for navigation. The boats, usually overloaded with passengers or cargo, often capsize in strong current or in a gust", he said.

Mechanised boats were allowed by the government in 1987 to operate only in canals and lakes. But their number has increased greatly over the years.

If those are brought under registrations and safety rules, it would reduce the risk in waterways and save many lives, officials said.

But the IWTA does not have enough manpower to monitor movement of so many mechanised boats plying in all the rivers of the country. A private company or an association may be given the job under supervision of IWTA, they said.

Larma wants troops to go

From Page 1
the same feelings. Since we signed the agreement, let us all work together in the interest of the region and the whole of Bangladesh."

Larma also reacted sharply against those who term the treaty "a gift from some one out of pity." "The treaty is the outcome of years of struggle of the Jumma people for which every family in the hills had suffered and contributed."

Larma complained that a number of "important steps" to implement the agreement fully were not taken in 18 months of its signing "due to opposition from inside and outside."

He had earlier accused some quarters in the government of backing the splinter groups from the PCJSS who are working against the agreement.

Larma appealed to the Prime Minister to see that amendments to the three hill district council acts are passed in the next session of parliament. He complained that even resettlement of the tribal returnees and displaced people had been slowed down.

The PCJSS chief also sought cooperation from Bengalee settlers from the plains.

The function concluded without any trouble despite a hartal called in Rangamati by

the Parbatyia Gana Parishad which termed the day a 'black day'.

Tight security measures were taken by the authorities at the Tribal Cultural Institute and nearby Circuit House where VIPs including diplomats were flown in from Dhaka.

Hundreds of school children showered flower petals on Larma, other members of the RC and dignitaries as they arrived at the heavily guarded venue.

But the ceremony was noticeably low key. The function was also addressed by, among others, CHT Affairs Minister Kalparanjan Chakma, three MPs from the hill districts, Chakma Circle Chief Raja Debashish Roy, British High Commissioner David C Walker, UNDP Resident Representative David Lockwood and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Shahab Zarta.

Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah who was Convenor of the National Committee on CHT Mayor of Chittagong Mohiuddin Choudhury and Civil Aviation and PWD Minister Mosharraf Hossain who had played a key role in negotiations with PCJSS in reaching the peace agreement were not seen in the function.

Addressing the function Kalparanjan Chakma,

called upon all irrespective of party affiliations, to work unitedly to maintain peace in the region.

"Any bid to mislead people against peace would be tolerated."

Bir Bahadur said the objective of the peace agreement is to ensure an atmosphere for all to live and work in amity. "Nobody should infringe this anyway", he said.

There is no doubt about progress in the region," said the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps "Peace means love and development."

British envoy Walker and David Lockwood of UNDP assured continued assistance for the region's development.

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Hartal at Rangamati

From Shuvra Jyoti
RANGAMATI, May 27: Normal life was paralysed due to dawn-to-dusk hartal here today at the call of the Sarbadalyia Oikya Parishad.

The Parishad called the hartal protesting today's installation of the CHT Interim Regional Council.

During the hartal, all kinds of vehicles kept off the roads and business establishments remained closed.

But offices remained open. In the evening, a protest rally organised by the BNP-backed Parishad, was held at Banarupa, chaired by Nurul Alam Patwary.

Beyond the boundary

From Page 1
competition, but there is still enough gumption left in the side to win the toss and ask the opposition to bat first on a very firm, full-of-not waiting to track.

The fact that the opposition happened to be Bangladesh may have had something to do with this rather inexplicable decision. It was of no real consequence, as it turned out to be.

After Bangladesh's adrenaline filled win against Scotland, the Australian encounter was really a cross between the marathon runner's withdrawal and a symposium. Bangladesh, true to form started disastrously. Another new opening pair presented all and sundry with the same output, a wicket within the first five overs. After the national objective (almost by decree) of a victory over Scotland was achieved, one might question what was the purpose of sending Khaled Mahmud as an opening batsman. Who did we not opt for Shahriar Hossain providing him with the valuable experience of tackling the best bowling in the world? The future of our batting lies with Mehraab and a decent opening partner.

What better opportunity than the rest of the competition to be used as a testing ground to prepare ourselves for what lies beyond the World Cup?

At first foot one, Mahmud is the smallest player in the competition. Because of the lack of his reach he could neither come forward nor play the rising deliveries on the back foot. Predictably, he departed early. One is amazed that the think tank missed such an obvious point. It is true, size does matter. Mehraab Hossain who has so far shown himself to be the only batsman in the team worth writing home about, is a conventional man. He has a very organised defence and can attack when he needs to. Because of the lack of support from the rest of the early order, he is unable to play his natural game. He is having to consolidate for the team's survival rather than being able to attack in the first fifteen overs, which is his forte really.

Senior partners of the firm went on early vacation once again, leaving the rest in the lurch. With Mehraab caught in the process, Bangladesh faced another imminent disaster. Abedin it was again, to no one's surprise, who actually had to conduct repairs. The fact that Bangladesh managed to stay alive at the end of fifty overs and post 170 plus on the boards, are in no small measure due to Abedin's steadfastness and ready understanding of the actual strengths of his team, the management's version of it notwithstanding. He struck his second unbeaten fifty and whether he realises it or not has opened the Pandora's box for more speculation regarding his future in the game. It would be an interesting few weeks after the team gets home.

The Bangladesh bowling in the meantime had to face its first stern test of its World Cup

campaign. Until now the bowlers were helped paradoxically by the low scores of the team itself. Under overcast conditions, against batting sides not willing to take undue risks, because the target was so insubstantial, the bowlers were perhaps painted in more flattering colours than was warranted. On a batsman friendly wicket, in good batting conditions, the bowling was exposed to the hilt. True, Australia had a target in hand and felt the urgency of getting the match over as early as possible for obvious reasons. Bangladesh may just be thankful that the bowlers were made to realise that we have few more arduous miles of trekking to do before we are taken seriously.

It is unfortunate that the team is under unnecessary pressure. As cricketers they certainly realise and appreciate their standing in the world community of cricket. The nation on the other hand is of the opinion that they are the emerging tigers of world cricket. Instead of exercising reason and restraint with regard to these laissez faire expectations, for reasons unknown is toeing the popular line. Under pressure, misguided and deluding themselves of their actual standings in the game, our players are more than likely to fall short of what they were capable of achieving under normal circumstances. That is worrying. We forget but hardly forgive. Beware.

Scotland

From Page 1

West Indies skipper Brian Lara said: "The bowlers bowled well and I'm very pleased. Every game we play the team is playing better and with more confidence."

The more success you have, the more focused and competitive you become and the more camaraderie there is in your squad. I think that's very evident in our team at the moment."

Scotland captain George Salmond said: "There are a lot of guys hurting after that. It's not great to come off having been bowled out for 68 when you're representing Scotland."

Scotland, at 29 for seven, looked set to make the lowest score ever recorded in a one-day international.

All-rounder Gavin Hamilton, who ended on 24 not out, and bowler John Blair - the only two professionals in the team - helped them get past 43. The score made by Pakistan against the West Indies in Cape Town in 1992-93.

Then they crawled past 45 - scored by Canada against England in 1979 - to avoid being saddled with the worst batting performance in World Cup history.

A huge cheer came in the 30th over when number 10 Asim Butt smashed Reon King for six over long on. Lara later matched that, with 16 runs off Hamilton's first over, including a huge six over mid-wicket.

PM renews call for parliamentary battle

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has again called upon the Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia to discuss any issue in Parliament with open mind and find out solution to make parliament meaningful, reports UNB.

"Parliament is the centre of all activities. We believe all national problems can be solved through discussion in the parliament," she said inaugurating a conference on 'Comparative Constitutional Law on the Parliamentary Committee System' at the International Conference Centre yesterday morning.

Institute of Parliamentary Studies organised the two-day conference to strengthen relationship between the govern-

ment and the parliamentary committees and between the committees and the parliament.

Ministers, members of parliament from home and abroad, and parliamentary experts are taking part in the conference.

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury presided over the inaugural session, which was also addressed by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru and Secretary to the Parliament Secretary Qazi Mohammad Monjur-e-Mowla.

The Prime Minister said that in the 7th parliament there were 12 sessions and 70 bills were passed through parliamentary process and without promulgation of ordinance.

Various important issues like electricity, law and order, CHT peace accord, and Ganges water sharing treaty were discussed in parliament following the opposition demand, she said but regretted the absence of the Leader of the Opposition in parliament proceedings.

"I am sorry to state that the Leader of the Opposition had attended only 29 days out of 230 working days of the 7th parliament. She never asked me any question during the question hour," said Hasina, who is also the Leader of the House.

About the democratic system in Bangladesh, she said the social system here has provision for rule of law, parliamentary democracy and accountability of the government.

Bangladesh

From Page 1
Enamul Hoque's best deception was reserved for Julian who was bowled round his leg. When it appeared that Bangladesh bowlers may have some surprises up their sleeve, in came man-of-the-match Tom Moody to lay the foundation of the unbroken fourth-wicket partnership with Ricky Ponting. Together they put up 70 runs.

Moody scored a punishing 56 from only 29 balls to add to his three-wicket haul to easily take the man-of-the-match award. Moody's towering knock included two huge sixes and six powerful fours.

Ponting did not do bad either, scoring 18 off 10 balls that included a six and a four.

Without taking anything from the on-fire Australians, perhaps, just perhaps, the match may have been a bit more prolonged had Mehraab Hossain held on to Mark Waugh's cracker in the fifth ball of the innings, and had Khaled Mahmud done likewise to deny Tom Moody his fifty.

Enamul Hoque was Bangladesh's most successful bowler but also expensive. Minhazul sent Gilchrist back but not before being thoroughly punished. Khaled Mahmud was practically toyed with, giving away 39 runs in 17 deliveries.

Earlier the Bangladesh innings of 178 for seven centred round two fine innings. Minhazul was not out with 53 and Mehraab Hossain put on 42.

Tom Moody was Australia's most successful bowler with 3 for 25. Shane Warne was tight with figures of 10-2-18-1. McGrath and Fleming looked ready ordinary although they claimed wickets.

This was Bangladesh's third defeat against a win against Scotland. Bangladesh play their last group match against Pakistan at Northampton on May 31.

With Pakistan, Australia, West Indies and New Zealand in the same group, it is not total disgrace to play second fiddle.

Shafi murder

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The investigators, however, failed to record judicial statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of any of the accused. As many as seven people, including five DB informers, recorded their judicial statement during the investigation.

Shafi left his residence for the DB office with the three at around 2:30 a.m. Shafi entered Inspector Zia's office at around 3 a.m. Zia then asked Havilder Bellal and Constable Rob to bring Shafi to the roof and later, Zia followed.

Shafi was strangled to death there with a towel and later his body was dumped in the water tank.

The investigators in the charge sheet recommended departmental action against eight DB personnel for concealing truth, misguiding the investigators and negligence of duty.

The eight are: AC Humayun Kabir, Inspector Bellal Hossain, SI Shahajan, SI Bhuiyan Mahabub Hossain, Havilder Shahidul Islam and three constables - Batun, Jainal Abedin and Abdur Rauf.

It was charged, SI Shahajan was aware of the incident and tried to conceal the facts, while AC Humayun failed to supervise his team properly.

Cong dissidents float party

NEW DELHI, May 27: A former leader of India's main opposition Congress Party today floated a new party following his expulsion for questioning the leadership of the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, reports AFP.

Former defence minister Sharad Pawar and two other rebels - Purno Sangma and Tariq Anwar - announced the launch of their "Nationalist Congress Party" in New Delhi, the Press Trust of India reported.

Milosevic indicted for war crimes

THE HAGUE, May 27: Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and four of his top lieutenants have been charged as war criminals in a move that might complicate delicately poised peace move to resolve the two-month-old Kosovo crisis, reports Reuters.

The UN War Crimes Tribunal confirmed in The Hague today that it had indicted Milosevic for crimes against humanity, including murder, during the Kosovo conflict.

Indian jets

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Pakistan of backing the militants, has warned it would take "appropriate action" if Pakistani forces intervened during the bombings.

However, later a senior Indian government official said that the tensions will not escalate into a full-scale military conflict with Pakistan.

"There is no need for any panic," Brajesh Mishra, national security advisor to caretaker Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, told a private television network.

"We do not think that it will escalate into a general war. There is no intention on the part of India to escalate tension," Mishra said.

Pakistan has already warned the conflict could snowball, and has put its forces on high alert.

The Pakistan army, air force and navy were "ready to defend the country at any and every cost," Bajwa said. "We are alert and we are keeping a watch."

Adding to the fighting talk, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the country's nuclear tests a year ago had given Pakistan a new confidence in confronting any enemy challenge.