



A good initiative falls short of goal

Little progress in integrated, mechanised farming scheme to cut cost, increase yield

MIRZA SHAKIL and PINAKI ROY

A Tk 3,020 crore government project to popularise cultivation on big plots of land with the help of modern agricultural tools has seen little success in the last two years.

The idea is to boost crop production and reduce farming cost with the use of transplanters, harvesters and other equipment on 50- to 60-acre blocks of land. The farmers will have to agree to do away with the aisles separating each plot.

The government took up the five-year project in 2021. The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) cultivated the hybrid SL-8 variety of Boro on 110 blocks in 61 districts to show farmers how "synchronised" farming is done. A total of 5,500 acres of land was utilised for the demonstration.

Not much else has been done as farmers are reluctant to adopt it, officials said.

However, farmers in some places said they agreed to adopt the method, but it was the DAE that was unable to provide them with the support.

The plan was to sell 51,300 machines among farmers at 50-70 percent discounts with subsidies. As of December 2022, only 16,236 were distributed under the project titled "Agriculture Mechanisation through Integrated Management", said Tarik Mahmud, the project director.

"The main challenge is to get a group of farmers to adopt the synchronised farming method," said DAE Director General Badal Chandra Biswas.

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THE PROJECT

- Farming Boro on 50-acre plots under integrated management
- Mechanisation of seeding, transplanting, harvesting
- 5-year project launched in 2021 involving Tk 3,020 crore
- Pilot schemes being implemented in 61 districts

BENEFITS

- Saves cost of labour, agri inputs
- Increases production

CHALLENGES

- Bringing small plots together
- Bringing farmers under a community farming group
- Creating awareness among farmers



"We get 18 to 20 maunds of rice from one bigha of land but the output rises to 25 to 28 maunds in integrated farming method."

Anwar Hossain, a farmer of Bhatkura village in Tangail

GOVT SUPPORT DURING PILOT PROJECTS

Farmers are provided with free seeds, seedling trays; harvesting also free of cost; agricultural machinery provided at 50-70 percent subsidised prices



Bangladesh approached IMF at the right time

Says ex-chief economist of World Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has averted a potential major crisis by reaching out to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a timely manner, said Kaushik Basu, a former chief economist of the World Bank.

"People are criticising [the government move of] reaching out to IMF but it was the right move. We have an example in Sri Lanka of the big risks associated with not reaching out to IMF timely," Basu told a group of journalists after his lecture on development policy at Dhaka University yesterday.

In July last year, when the foreign exchange reserves were hovering around the \$39 billion mark, Bangladesh wrote to the Washington-based multilateral lender for a loan to help the country cushion the

blows of the pandemic and the Ukraine war.

Last month, the IMF approved a 42-month loan programme involving \$4.7 billion and a host of long-delayed reforms. Basu cited the case of India when it reached out to the IMF for support in 1991.

India had an import cover of just 13 days when it sought an emergency loan of \$2.2 billion in 1991. Bangladesh had an import cover of five months when it sought funds from the IMF.

"Given the circumstances of Covid and the Ukraine war, Bangladesh is doing pretty well. But the rough road for economic growth lies ahead."

He went on to suggest that Bangladesh can take inspiration from India's approach towards the IMF loan programme in 1991.

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Kaushik Basu

Bangladeshi team rescues girl in Turkey

Relief materials sent to Syria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's joint support team, which flew to Turkey after the devastating earthquake struck there and neighbouring Syria, rescued a teenage girl alive and recovered three bodies from the rubble.

The girl is 17-year-old, Shahjahan Shikder, deputy assistant director (media) of fire service and civil defence, told The Daily Star last night.

On February 9, a 46-member combined rescue team that includes 24 members from the Bangladesh Army, 10

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TURKEY-SYRIA QUAKE

Death toll nears 24,000

Bitter cold adds woe to victims

AGENCIES

Rescuers yesterday pulled people, including children, alive from the rubble of the Turkey-Syria earthquake as the toll neared 24,000 and bitter cold compounded the suffering of the homeless.

In the Turkish city of Kahramanmaraş, one of those hit hardest by the region's worst earthquake in nearly a century, the stench of death hung in the air.

But as crews entered a fifth day of peeling back flattened buildings, Turkish media reported rescues of young children, long after the expiration of the 72-hour window when survivors are considered most likely to be found.

Officials and medics said 20,213 people had died in Turkey and 3,553 in Syria from Monday's tremor, bringing the confirmed total to 23,766.

Experts fear the number will continue to rise.

In the 105th hour, rescuers pulled 18-month-old Yusuf Huseyin

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We strongly believe in what SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

We are pleased to present to our readers the first of our five-part 216-page special supplement series beginning today.

The first part of our five-segment special series, titled

"TOWARDS A SMART BANGLADESH", features a collection of articles on Bangladesh's economy from the perspective of different sectors, and how far we've come on the path to creating a smart Bangladesh.

Make sure you grab a copy of this collector's item free of charge from your hawkers!



Children watching a show of Sisimpur at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning. Such shows for children will be held on Fridays and Saturdays during the Ekushey Boi Mela.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NCTB withdraws 2 textbooks

Experts term it a political decision

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The curriculum board yesterday withdrew two school textbooks in the wake of controversies over some contents, a rare move that eminent educationists described as a "political decision" of the government which apparently gave in to the pressure from religion-based groups.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board member (curriculum) Prof Moshuazzaman yesterday evening confirmed that they were withdrawing "History and Social Science: An Inquiry-based Reader" books for class 6 and 7.

"We are withdrawing the books as there has been a lot of criticism regarding the books and these two books have too much information on ancient history, which is tough for students of class 6 and 7," he added.

Besides, Prof Moshuazzaman said, at least four chapters in the social science books of class 6 and 7, and some contents in the science book of class 6 will see changes.

Many criticised the authorities after they published these four new textbooks with a number of mistakes and there is also an allegation of plagiarism in one of the textbooks

distributed free among the students, in line with the fresh curriculum introduced, on the first day of this year.

Besides, Islamist groups, including Islami Andolan Bangladesh, are claiming that these four books for class 6 and 7 are imposing the "debatable" Darwin's theory of evolution on students and demeaning the Islamic veil system for women.

They also said the textbooks depicted "bearded men wearing Islamic prayer caps as collaborators of 1971 Liberation War" although this has no historical basis and others".

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বিসমিল্লাহির রাহমানির রাহিম

প্রথম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী

'জমি বতে নাবতে'

ব্যাগ্‌স গ্রুপ অব কোম্পানীজ-এর প্রয়াত চেয়ারম্যান

জনাব আকতার হোসেন-এর

১ম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকীতে

শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

টিভিএস অটো বাংলাদেশ লিঃ, গ্রামাঞ্চল ইলেকট্রনিক্স লেজিস্লেট, ফার্মশিয়া লিমিটেড, ফাইনালিটি লিমিটেড, ফেইস মি লিমিটেড, আরইএল পেট্রো কেমিক্যালস লিঃ, হোসেন ট্রেডিং কোম্পানী লিঃ, স্পিঞ্জি আই বাংলা এডিটরেশন লিঃ, আরইএল মটরস লিমিটেড, ফার্মশিয়া লিমিটেড, হোসেন ট্রেডিং কোম্পানী লিঃ, হার্ট ইন্ডেস্ট্রিয়াল ট্রেডিং বি.টি. লিঃ, ইসলাম ব্রাদার্স কনস্ট্রাকশন এন্ড ইন্টারিয়ার লিঃ