

## APPROPRIATE EDUCATION

The present government under Begum Khaleda Zia has lately introduced a new element in our secondary level education in schools the positive effects of which are likely to be far reaching in the long run. Agriculture science education has been made a compulsory subject in secondary schools from the sixth to the tenth grade. The effects of the introduction of agricultural education in the school curricula will not show up immediately. But the country is likely to reap the benefits of this most thoughtful introduction of a new discipline in the schools some years from now when several batches of youngsters will have passed out from high schools with adequate knowledge of agriculture and agro-production techniques.

Despite all kinds of attempts to diversify the economy, even after nearly a quarter century of independence agriculture continues to be the mainstay of our economy. The lion's share of the GDP still comes from agriculture and with upswings or downswings of agriculture are linked the fate of the overwhelming majority of the people of the country. Bangladesh has no doubt made some significant advances in its agriculture manifest from its growing ample rice to be able to feed its population almost entirely. But the gamut of agricultural activities do not constitute only rice production and apart from cereal production, in the other wide fields of agriculture, ranging from dairies-poultries to pisciculture, we have hardly realized our full potential. The reasons for this overall less than the desired level of performance in agriculture is a knowledge gap in modern methods of production. Raising of cattle, growing of fish, raising chickens and hens, etc. are all mostly done in the traditional methods or left almost wholly to nature with the result that in the production of meat, fish, pulses and other edibles derived mainly from farming communities, we are lagging behind substantially. The per capita consumption of protein is not satisfactory in the country and lately the government has been trying hard to motivate unemployed people, specially the youth, to take up agro-oriented small schemes which would both create self-employment and help reduce the protein gaps. But these moves are perhaps not producing the anticipated response and here again the problem is that most of the otherwise motivated young people feel reluctant to give these schemes a try out of a feeling of lack of confidence. They feel that they simply do not have sufficient basic knowledge to run these agro-

oriented schemes. It is precisely this problem of insufficient knowledge of modern agriculture which the introduction of agriculture science at secondary level of education aims to solve.

In our circumstances of worsening unemployment and the presence of a large number of people not finding jobs although they possess high university degrees, the attraction of higher education is already beginning to dim among the rank and file of our youngsters. This trend is nothing to be regretted. Even in developed countries it is neither desirable nor possible to accommodate too many people in institutions of higher learning and for a very large number of young people in those countries education pursuits may end at secondary or higher secondary stages. Subsequently they simply enter the job markets equipped with their intermediate range knowledge and skills in different technologies and trades. Such a path is also the practical necessity in our country and many young people in Bangladesh after passing out from schools and colleges will appreciate the value of the agriculture science course they have had and in not uselessly wasting their time chasing jobs but in setting up gainful agro-enterprises basing on the knowledge they have acquired on agriculture.

Introduction of agriculture science in school texts has been only the first step. It has become imperative to introduce in schools and colleges compulsorily other practical courses such as computer science, basic electronics, basic engineering, etc. which can equip our young learner with the ability to earn a living subsequently from what they learn at schools and colleges.