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**Leave Agri Colleges Alone**

THE government's sudden decision to convert two agricultural colleges of the country into science and technology university, despite the Agriculture Commission's report recommending to upgrade these institutions into Agricultural Universities, has come as a surprise to the experts, researchers, agricultural scientists and officials concerned. The commission, headed by the Agriculture Advisor to the prime minister AM Anisuzzaman stressed that agricultural education was a specialised one and institutions for agricultural education should be under the agriculture ministry, according to report published in The Daily Star on Saturday. But the order issued last week asked the agriculture ministry to handover Hajj Danesh Agricultural College and Patuakhali Agricultural College to the education ministry in disregard of the commission's recommendations. The decision of the government has angered the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture Ministry, and its Chairman T I Fazle Rabbi Choudhury MP has vowed to take a strong position against the government decision.

Agriculture has always been the mainstay of our economy from time immemorial. It has always contributed the lion's share to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Bangladesh and it will continue to do so. In fact we do not foresee any tangible shift in this trend, nor do we expect any spectacular performance in the industrial sector in near future. Hence all our efforts need to be directed for improvement and innovations in the agricultural sector for our survival. The recent claim of the finance minister of a more-than-normal 5.2 per cent growth rate in the GDP was mainly based on performance of agriculture, particularly a bumper harvest of the boro crop.

We are not against technical education. In fact we are strongly in favour of science and technology education and advancement thereof, but not at the cost of agricultural education. We believe the government will reconsider its decision and find ways and means to establish science and technology universities without disturbing the existing agricultural institutions.