

NORTHEAST

GE

Farmers get a taste of IT

DARRANG

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Jan. 9: A first-of-its-kind teleconferencing session between agriculture scientists and farmers in Darrang district has bridged the urban-rural digital divide.

As Abdul Kasem and his fellow farmers gathered for the session earlier this month, their excitement at the prospect of speaking to scientists and getting answers to agriculture-related questions was noticeable.

The programme was arranged by the community information centres of Darrang and Udalguri to coincide with the Krishak Sanmilan at Dhula, organised by the Pub

Mangaldoi Farmers' Association in collaboration with the district agriculture office.

The main objective of the teleconferencing session was to highlight the benefits of information and communication technology before the villagers.

The programme was inaugurated by small tea grower Md. Habibur Rahman of Khatoriapara village. Rahman, who also participated in the interaction session, was the most voluble of the lot.

"Could you tell us what is the appropriate quantity of fertiliser to be used after plucking tea leaves?" he asked.

The answer from one of the scientists seemed to satisfy him.

Kasem was perhaps the

happiest of the lot. A resident of No 3 Thekerabari village, he asked five questions and was very happy to get solutions to his problems. Patiram Mushahari of Bhakatpara village, near Mangaldoi, asked how to improve hybrid papaya and banana cultivations. The agriculture scientists gave detailed answers.

"We are very happy to have participated in this programme. It was an opportunity to get our problems solved by the agri-scientists," said Patiram Mushahari.

The scientists did not disappoint Anowar Hussain either. A prosperous farmer and businessman who owns more than 80 *bighas* of cultivable land, he wanted to know about the pests affecting French

bean, brinjal and chilli plants.

"It was a wonderful experience for me and we discussed our problems with the scientists and got on-the-spot solutions," he exclaimed.

Nripen Medhi of the State Biochemical Laboratory in Ulubari, agri-development officer Khagen Sarma and agriculture development officer Batiruddin Choudhury of Kahikuchi interacted with the farmers.

Agriculture minister Pramila Rani Brahma was present, too. She highlighted the need to bring about a technological revolution in the agriculture sector.

The minister said a proposal for a cold storage unit at Kharupetia had been sent to the North Eastern Council.