

SAARC WORKSHOP ON VEGETABLES

Call to share agri knowledge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculturists yesterday called for stronger collaboration among the South Asian countries for exchange of the best vegetable varieties and findings of the agricultural researches to increase productivity for meeting increasing demand of nutrition.

They stated that average consumption of vegetables per capita is only 36 grammes a day, while modest requirement is 220 grammes.

They also said scientists in their own countries are conducting researches but those are not being shared. So, the people of the region are not get benefit from the researches, they added.

The observations came at a regional workshop titled "Improvement on vegetables and adaptive trials in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries" at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The government with support from the Saarc secretariat organised the event.

Addressing the inaugural session, Bangladesh's Agriculture Secretary CQK Mustaq said Saarc has already agreed to collaborate and enhance food productivity.

He said it is very important that the agriculturists find out ways to share knowledge to this end.

In that line, it is imperative that Saarc initiates specific projects to increase vegetable production and thereby increase intake of vitamins and minerals, he said.

Dr M Shahabuddin Ahmed, principal

scientific officer of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), proposed to form a regional research body, which could be named as South Asian Vegetables Research Network (Savnet).

This is important because Saarc countries have developed strong vegetable institutions and conducting researches, but tackling all concerns in the field of vegetables is not possible by any country alone, he said.

The collaboration could be through exchange of leading vegetable varieties, enhancing research capacity through the network and transferring proven technologies, Ahmed said.

For example, Bangladesh has a lot of winter vegetables, but not of monsoon. In this case, Bangladesh could use those best grown in other Saarc countries, told Rafiqul Islam Mandal of Saarc Agriculture Centre in Dhaka to The Daily Star.

Thus, sharing the best varieties and technologies among the Saarc nations would ultimately enhance production, he said.

Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (Barc) Executive Chairman Dr Wais Kabir said post harvest management of crops is an area where scientists of the region could share their experiences.

Barc Member Director Dr M Khalequzzaman A Chowdhury and Saarc Secretariat's Director Riaz Hamidullah also spoke at the inaugural session while agriculturists from Saarc countries attended it.



State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promod Mankin speaks at a discussion on constitution and the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami organised by Ekatturer Ghat Dalal Nirmul Committee at Bilia auditorium in the city yesterday.

Climate change imperils Sundarbans: CF

BSS, Dhaka

Frequent flooding of the Sundarbans due to sea level rise is gradually squeezing the wildlife habitats in the world's largest mangrove forest, says conservator of forests.

"Another impact of sea level rise is the increased salinity in the forest area, which brought about definite adverse changes in the vegetative propagation of the mangrove forest", Dr Tapan Kumar Dey told the news agency yesterday.

He said the Sundarbans is the source of livelihood for 12 lakh people.

The six thousand square kilometres forest is a world heritage site, recognised by the United Nations' Education, Science and Culture Organisation (Unesco).

He said a number of projects were under way, which aim for an improved understanding of the forest's ecology and improve it as well.

Dr Dey explained the problems responsible for havoc to the flora and fauna of the Sundarbans, the last habitat of spotted deer.

He said spotted deer were originally inhabitants of the Himalayan Mountains, and its immediate

vicinities -- the altitudes of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan.

For habitat loss in those areas, they were compelled to migrate to the Sundarbans, which too now under threat for climate change. The global warming has already made Bangladesh "the most vulnerable country" to climate change in the world.

Dey said Caora leaves, the staple food for the spotted deer, are scarce in the forest for salinity.

According to a statistics, every year 1,000 deer are poached mostly in three places -- Barguna, Sathkira and Southkali. Apart from this around 200 to 300 deer are killed each year in 'Dubla Mela' at Dublar Alor Khole, Shawarankhola forest range in the Sunderbans during November.

The Royal Bengal Tigers -- one of the most fascinating cats in the world and Bangladesh's national animal -- are also under threat because of waning population of deer, as the tigers mostly live on hunting deer, said Dey.

An estimated 85,000 to 90,000 deer currently inhabiting in the Sundarbans against existing Tiger population of 450, he cited.

'Include article on Dalit community in constitution'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement yesterday demanded inclusion of a special article in the constitution to ensure citizens' right, human dignity and social security of the Dalit community.

They raised the demand at a human chain formed in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh in the city.

Members of Dalit community and development activists also demanded issuing of constitutional directives to all government and non-government organisations to remove existing discriminations against Dalit community.

Speaking at the programme, Dalit community leader and President of the movement Mukul Sikder said as many as 55 lakh members of Dalit community are working at different towns and cities in the country in over 100 professions.

They are facing discrimination and humiliation in various phases in the society only because of birth in Dalit community and of professional identities and are compelled to adopt professions that are recognised as of low standard, he added.

On similar demands, the movement's representatives submitted a memorandum on October 5 before the special parliamentary committee for amending the constitution, says a press release.

Nagorik Udyak, a human rights organisation, took part with the movement in arranging the human chain where representatives from Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights and Dalit Nari Forum also participated, expressing their solidarity to the demand.

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'Save Buriganga, Shitalakhya rivers'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Nirbhik (Narayanganj) yesterday demanded a pollution-free Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers and appealed to save the rivers from encroachment.

The organisations at a citizen's rally held at Narayanganj Terminal Ghat also demanded a quick recovery and demarcation of the boundaries of the rivers and to set up recreation parks in Narayanganj.

The leaders of the organisations said, Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers, the lifeline of Dhaka and Narayanganj, are now on the verge of death due to draining of effluents produced by the factories close to them and waste treatment plants of Wasa.

They demanded immediate implementation of the verdict of the High Court and prime minister's stern directive about setting effluent treatment plants to give the rivers a new lease of life.

They also pointed out fallow government land in between Chanmari slum and Jimkhana slum, Charar Gop Potashray adjoining number-5 ghat and Old Court premises may be turned into parks since there are no such parks in Narayanganj.

Chief Coordinator of Nirbhik ATM Kamal presided over the rally. General Secretary of Bapa Dr Md Abdul Matin, Joint Secretary Sharif Jamil, and President of Samajik Sangathon Jannatul Ferdous were also present at the rally.

Khaleda to address Sirajganj rally Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will address a student rally on Monday at Ullapara upazila in Sirajganj district. Chhatra Dal is organising the rally to mark the Shahid Jihad Day.

Naziruddin Jihad was killed in the capital on October 10 of 1990 while participating in an anti government movement during Ershad's military rule.

Meanwhile, the BNP high ups has assigned senior and mid-level leaders to work with the field level workers across the country ahead of the chairperson's countrywide campaign in November, said the party leaders.

A special team comprising the members of the standing committee, vice-chairmen, joint secretaries general and BNP chairperson's advisers for each district will oversee the already underway month-long programmes at upazila level, they said.

According to the party decision, Khaleda Zia will address rallies at 21 districts across the country in November.

AL leader killed in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A local Awami League leader was killed at Kalihati upazila of Tangail yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Abdul Aziz, 50, of Salla village of Kalihati and president of Salla ward unit AL.

Victim's family sources said several people, including two known persons called Aziz out of his house around 10:00pm and later he went missing.

Police recovered the body beside a rail line near Aziz's house and sent to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Yunus Ali, officer-in-charge of Kalihati Police Station, told The Daily Star that some marks of injuries by sharp weapons were found on Aziz's body.

"Police are investigating the matter and victim's son Rafiqul Islam has filed a murder case with the police station in this regard," the OC added.

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