FOOD PRODUCTION, SECURITY

Bangladesh in right direction: FAO boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has lauded Bangladesh's sustained growth in farm production, but expressed concern over malnutrition faced by a large number of poor people.

"We need more production, more rice and fish, but these are not enough. The poor need more assets in their hands [so they can buy food]," said FAO Director General Jose Graziano da Silva.

Before leaving Bangladesh yesterday after a two-day visit, he shared his opinion at a press conference at Hotel Sonargaon in the capital.

During the visit, he held meetings with the prime minister, ministers of finance, agriculture, food, foreign affairs, environment; high officials concerned and the development partners. The main issues of suggested. discussion included agriculture, food security and climate change.

a country...it is progressing towards right direction," da Silva said, stating that Bangladesh has witnessed substantial production in rice and fish.

Bangladeshi scientists are quite active in developing and introducing stresstolerant crop varieties, he added.

Rice production went up to 3.36 crore tonnes a year in 2010-11 from 1.78 crore tonnes in 1990-91. Production of livestock, fish and other crops has also increased.

At the press conference, Food Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said 33 percent people, mainly children and women, of the country suffer from malnutrition.

To feed the rising population, more rice and fish production is required, da Silva told reporters. He also underscored the need for ensuring nutrition of food along with more production.

The world already has enough food though 925 million people are undernourished yet. The main cause of hunger is lack

of adequate access to food. To address this, it has to be assured that people have the money to buy food or can grow enough for themselves and their families, says a statement by the FAO chief executive.

He suggested breathing new life into rural communities by supporting smallscale farmers, creating rural employments and taking up targeted safety net programmes like cash for work programmes for the poor.

da Silva said a market linkage for the small farmers is crucial as they often face problems in selling produces.

High food prices encourage farmers for more production that finally increases supply. The governments at such situations can give subsidies to increase peoples' purchase capacity, he

"Social and productive policies can and should be linked to complete a virtuous "During my visit, I was surprised to see cycle in which local consumption and production feed off each other," he said in the statement.

He said Bangladesh faces challenges of declining arable land, increasing population, salinity and drought. A regional cooperation in sharing knowledge can help face such challenges, he added. Food Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque said

the FAO DG has assured of helping Bangladesh get more support from the development partners in meeting its challenges.

He said Bangladesh has an employment generation programme for the poor, while it has been running open market sales of rice at subsidised rates amid market volatility.

Earlier, the food minister and the FAO top official inaugurated a documentation centre at the food ministry. The centre is maintaining national and international information on food both in electronic and printed forms.



DRAFT BANGLADESH WATER ACT 2012

commercialisation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over a cabinet meeting at the Secretariat yesterday. (Story on Page

PHOTO: PID

114 police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday promoted 114 police officials of different ranks, said a home ministry release.

Five superintendents of police (SPs) have been promoted to the posts of Additional Deputy Inspector General of Police (Addl-DIG), while 21 Additional SPs to the posts of SPs and 88 Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs) to the posts of Addl-SPs.

'Conserve forests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for socailly acceptable community-based approaches along with enforcing legal prohibitions to conserve froests and natural resources.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Bangladesh organised the workshop titled "Natural resources governance: An interaction among policy makers, managers and resoures users" held at the Forest Department in the capital, says a IUCN press release.

"The forest has been degrading rapidly since 1980s and the traditional practice is not enough to conserve this natural resources. We should introduce socially acceptable community-based approaches to manage our existing natural resources wity active participation of all levels," said Mohamamd Nasir Uddin, joint secretary of the environment and forests ministry.

"It is a must for sustainable natural resources governance," said Nasir who chaired the workshop.

Istiak Ahmed, country Bangladesh.

Yunus Ali, chief conservator of forests and Prof Dr Niaz Ahmed Khan of Development Studies department of Dhaka University attended the

with community approaches'

representative of IUCN, said more than 75 percent of local people are dependent on natural resources and the regenerative capacity is not so high to support this large number of population in

workshop.

officials get promotion

The scope for commercialisation of water in the draft Bangladesh Water Act 2012 must be removed, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft emphasises on water distribution which could also mean commercialisation, said Rashed Khan Menon, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the education ministry, at the programme. The seminar, "The draft Bangladesh

Water Act-2012 and people's right to water", was organised by Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) in association with Water Rights Forum in the city's Cirdap auditorium.

People's participation is needed for the formulation of the law, said Menon. Bela Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan, presenting a keynote

necessary for the coordinated management and development of water resources. They include ensuring account-

on the draft, said six elements are

Call to remove scope for water

ability at all times, presenting a complete picture to the people, making people's participation compulsory while determining the right to water and considering industrial and commercial institutions as consumers instead of users. Though the draft has a provision to

identify areas facing water crisis, there is nothing on how to recover from such crisis. The proposal to reduce pressure on groundwater in National Water Policy 1999 is also absent in the draft, she added. The draft proposes to fill up one or

more branches of a river in the excuse of stopping river erosion or recovering rivers. But such proposals are detrimental as there are no provisions for

environmental impact assessment, said Rizwana.

Moreover, the draft provides the Ministry of Water Resources the authority to formulate guidelines to identify specific areas for different kinds of economical activities related to water resources but no provision was kept to take public opinion, she

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon General Secretary Dr MA Matin said the draft mentions licensing for water distribution but does not clearly mention who would get the license.

ALRD Chairperson Khushi Kabir presided over the seminar where former Water Resources Planning Organisation director general Engineer Enamul Haque and Associate Prof Dr Shahjahan Mondol of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology also spoke.



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