

# WATER-SAVING RICE FARMING TECHNOLOGY Govt to try it out

Matia tells discussion, urging experts, officials to take direct-seeded technology to farmers

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government has decided to give a new water-saving farming technology a try so that farmers can grow Boro rice using half the volume of water they use now for irrigating paddy fields.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday told a gathering of several hundred agricultural scientists, experts and extension officials that since 2009 she had discouraged Boro considering its huge impact on groundwater depletion but she is now ready to give the new rice farming technology a try as it promises cutting water use by half.

Dr Md Moshir Rahman, an agronomy professor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), who pioneered the direct-seeded rice technology in Boro season, was invited to give a talk on the water conservation merits of the new production system in the auditorium of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in the capital.

In a power-point presentation Dr Moshir explained how the direct-seeded technology

not only helps saving water used for irrigation, but also saves diesel and electricity used for running irrigation pumps.

"I had said back in 2009 that we can't have the luxury of growing Boro at the cost of 3,200 litres of water for each kilogramme of rice. And I began encouraging farmers to grow wheat, maize, vegetables, oilseeds and pulses instead," said Matia.

She appreciated the BAU team's effort in developing the less water-intensive rice farming technology and urged for taking it to the farmers' field and see if there were any challenges.

Agriculture Secretary Md Moinuddin Abdullah asked officials and extension workers to take the technology to the fields so that farmers get relief from high irrigation and Boro production costs.

Unlike traditional puddle transplanted rice technology, seedlings are not grown in nurseries in direct-seeded technology; seeds are soaked and incubated for two to three days and then sowed in the paddy fields.

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## DEATH THREAT TO DU PROF 14 cultural personalities demand security for Md Samad

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Fourteen cultural personalities yesterday expressed deep concern over the death threat reportedly issued to Dhaka University Professor Dr Muhammad Samad and demanded necessary steps to ensure security of the teacher.

In a statement, they also mentioned that Prof Samad, also the president of Jatiya Kobita Parishad and vice president of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, has lodged two general diaries with Shahab and New Market police stations regarding the threat issued over the phone.

Fourteen personalities include Bangla Academy

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## Nine held for selling 'leaked' questions

Involvement of BGP employee found, claim police

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Detectives on Wednesday night arrested nine members of two gangs in the capital's Tejgaon area for their alleged involvement in question paper leakage.

Based on an intelligence report, police arrested them from in front of Directorate of Land Records and Survey office along with some fake question papers of the ongoing HSC examinations and eight mobile phones, said Monirul Islam, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), at a press briefing at DMP media centre yesterday.

The arrestees are: Saiful Islam alias Jewel, Iqram Hossain, Rubel Bapary, AB Sattar, Mejbah Ahmed, Kawsar Hossain, Al Amin, owner of a coaching centre, Ridoy Hossain and Jahangir.

Monirul said an unscrupulous employee of Bangladesh Government Press (BGP) used to memorise questions while publishing question papers. He (the employee) shared those questions with Jewel, who with the help of some of his cohorts supplied them to Iqram.

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## JU BCL men beat up journo again

Protest spreads to other universities

**JU CORRESPONDENT**

Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) allegedly beat up a campus reporter while he was trying to rescue a young woman from an alleged abductor in front of the main entrance of the campus on Wednesday night.

The injured, Shafiqul Islam, is a JU correspondent of the online news portal www.bdnews24.com and a fourth year student of the department of Journalism and Media Studies, said campus sources, adding that he is also an assistant general secretary of JU unit Students Union.

Witnesses said a man, identified as Golam Sarwar, was trying to kidnap the woman on his bike. In a bid to escape, she jumped off it and screamed for help.

Shafiq and some other campus journalists, who were present there, came to her rescue and took them to the university security office near the gate, they added.

Sarwar then called someone from his mobile phone and soon a group of BCL men led by Mohitosh Roy Tito, the religion affairs secretary of JU BCL, appeared, alleged witnesses.

They got engaged in an altercation with the students and at one point attacked Shafiq with iron chain and rods, according to the witnesses.

Soon more men joined and eventually took Sarwar away, alleged witnesses.

Shafiq was rescued by his fellow journalists and was taken to Savar Enam Medical College, they added. Yesterday, in a written complaint to JU proctor, Shafiq sought justice.

Meanwhile, BCL suspended Mohitosh from the organisation, said a press release signed by JU unit President Mahmudur Rahman Jony and Secretary Razib Ahmed Rassel.

Mohitosh could not be reached on his phone despite several attempts.

Contacted, JU pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Abul Hossain said action will be taken after an investigation.

The young woman filed a case, said Ashulia police, adding that they helped her to get back home afterwards. She, in a statement, alleged that she knew Sarwar as they were in a

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BITTER CAN SOMETIMES ALSO BE BETTER.....

FOLLOW YOUR FOOD



Eating vegetables and liking it all is a matter of habit. Many have fond memories of the first time they bit into a piece of bitter melon, making faces of disgust and spitting it out as they were unable to get passed the bitter aftertaste it left, to now thinking of it as a comfort food best prepared deep fried and eaten with lentils and rice, others like to prepare it with an array of mixed vegetables or simply with potatoes. At times it is hard to fathom how something bitter can have the ability to satisfy one's appetite. There is nothing bitterly bad about these gourds aside from its taste as it is a great source of nutrients and minerals.

Bitter gourds are known to have antibacterial and antiviral components that increase resistance of animals and humans to viral infections. It is low in calories and is a rich source of dietary fiber, minerals vitamins and anti-oxidants. Bitter gourds aid in the regulation of blood sugar levels and women who are expecting should regularly consume this vegetable as it reduces the chances of any neural defects in newborn babies. As it contains a lot of Vitamin C it is a natural antioxidant that helps scavenge deleterious free radicals from the human body. Bitter gourds stimulate easy digestion by promoting healthy bowel movements which means that it is a great way to relieve indigestion and constipation problems.

Abdul Jabbar from Bogra has been farming vegetables since he was twenty-five years old and said that cultivating bitter gourds is roughly a two month long process that starts from the middle of February. He collects the seeds from the local market and then soaks them overnight before sowing them, the following day. After fifteen days, sticks are planted to support the individual saplings grow and forty-five days later, a Macha (a make shift arrangement of leaves and bamboos) is constructed around the field. Within sixty to seventy days the bitter gourds are large enough to be harvested and each plant can produce gourds for as long as four months. A team from Shwapno is sent to regularly inspect the fields; a truck from Shwapno collects the bitter gourds via trucks.



Photo: Rashidul Ul Islam

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