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Golden rice release stuck due to DoE reluctance: Minister

Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque on Wednesday said the initiative to release golden rice, a Vitamin A and nutrition fortified rice, has been stuck due to reluctance of the Department of Environment (DoE) under the Environment and Forest Ministry (MOEF).

"Although we were trying to release the golden rice, it remains stuck due to DoE clearance. The authority has been examining its negative impacts. As no countries except Philippines approved it, we are also examining the issue. Hopefully, it would be released soon," he said while speaking at a virtual seminar on "Role of Agriculture in achieving the SDGs in Bangladesh" organized by Agriculture Reporters' Forum (ARF). ARF President Ashraf Ali chaired, and General Secretary Maksudul Hassan moderated the seminar. ARF joint secretary Faijul Siddiqui presented the keynote paper.

Prime Minister's Office's SDG Affairs Principal Coordinator Zuena Aziz, former Agriculture Secretary Anwar Faruque, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) Director General Dr Nazirul Islam, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Executive Chairman Dr Shaikh Mohammad Bokhtiar, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) DG Dr Abdul Muyeed, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) Chairman Md Sayedul Islam, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BIRRI) DG Dr Shahjahan Kabir and Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA) DG Dr Mirza Mofazzal Islam spoke the occasion.

In his speech, Dr Razzaque said that Bangladesh normally exports rice to different countries. As most countries haven't yet approved the golden rice, it cannot be exported. "But, we are trying to overcome the problem for the nutrition fortified rice."

Regarding the role of agriculture in GDP, he said though contribution of agriculture is declining in the GDP in terms of money, its importance has not declined yet. Considering the situation, emphasis has been given on commercialization and mechanizations and processing of agro products.

Urging potato traders earn less profit, Razzaque said it's true that potato was grown less this year than other years. As a result, the farmers have got adequate price this year. But, there are huge stocks of potatoes in traders hands. They can profit less for the country's people. Considering the interest of the people, the government fixed its price at Tk 35 per kg for retailers.

SDG Affairs Principal Coordinator Zuena Aziz said when it was hard to ensure food security for seven crore people after the country's independence, the government is now ensuring food for 17 crore people. The government successfully recovered the impact of Covid 19 in agri-sector.