

A Brief Overview on South Asian Climate Justice Caravan in Bangladesh Part

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On 10 November 2014 in the capital city of Dhaka in Bangladesh the inaugural function of the Bangladesh-India-Nepal Climate Justice Caravan was held in the chair with Bangladesh Krishok Federation President Badrul Alam. As good as three hundred people including foreign delegates from Australia, Germany, UK, USA, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Sweden and New Zealand attended the inaugural. The inaugural was preceded by the press conference held on 9 November 2014 at Dhaka Reporters Unity. Different Electronic Medias broadcast and quite a number of dailies gave coverage of the news of the press conference.

On 11 November 2014 at BARRI (Bangladesh Rice Research Institute) in Gajipur district, the second stay of the caravan, there was a plenary on GMOs and Bt Brinjal (Egg plant) issue where the resource persons including Badrul Alam of Bangladesh Krishok Federation and Devika from Pesticide Action Network in USA elaborated the issue. The Director General Dr. Jiban Krishna Biswas and Director Research Dr. Ansar Ali of BARRI were present in the plenary. The officials of the institute acknowledged the significance of local variety of seeds and the role of peasants in food production. They added that they invented non-GE (Genetically Engineered) variety of rice which is salt tolerant. Bangladesh Krishok Federation President Badrul Alam emphasized on indigenous seeds which has been promoted by the peasants for thousands of years, which is suitable to the aged old traditional farming method, which is ecology-environment friendly. After the plenary based on the issue the participants split into 4 groups. There were 190 participants in total. Every group went through brain-storming on the GMOs and Bt. Brinjal and its impact on human health, agriculture, ecology and the economy of the country. The participants put emphasis on the local seeds which are sustainable, healthy and safe. The participants in Gajipur had the scope for sight-seeing as well as for witnessing the Bt. Brinjal test field. They also shared the concern about GMOs with higher officials of BARRI in a dialogue in the evening. They proposed to the authority to ban the Bt. Brinjal keeping in view its negative impact.

On 12 November 2014 at BADC (Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation) in Madhupur, Tangail there was a seminar on agro-ecology; grassroots solutions to climate change; food sovereignty and indigenous peoples land right. 170 participants attended the seminar. After the seminar the whole participants divided into four groups. There were significant numbers of indigenous from the area. The participants expressed their concern about the condition of indigenous peoples' right. They are of the views that the indigenous people are very close to the nature and preserve the ecology. The indigenous people are seriously victims of global climate change. The outcomes of the group discussion were put forward to the plenary again. The participants visited solar water pump and seed processing center in Madhupur. An interaction meeting with agricultural farm labors followed the seminar and workshops. They were also an evening meeting with organic pineapple tillers in Madhupur, Tangail.

On 13 November 2014 in Iswardi, Pabna a seminar on renewable energy and zero waste in Sugarcane Research Institute took place. The DG of the Institute Dr. ASM Nurun Nahar spoke the seminar expressing solidarity with the caravan. She said that they did not promote any GMOs in their institute. Rather they are trying to promote sugar beet for more production of sugar in order to

fulfill the demand of the country. Jarrad Sferruzzi from Australia spoke in the seminar as resource person. He elaborated the coal based energy production and its impact in Australia. He advocated for renewable energy as an alternative to fossil fuel based energy system. He put stress on the recycling use of waste to respond to climate change. The president of Bangladesh Krishok Federation discussed the broader aspect of climate change and proposed to UNFCCC to accept the grassroots people's thoughts around solutions to climate change. He said that the real solutions lie in the grassroots consisting of community people. He said adding that use of solar power, windmill, bio-gas, small hydro-electric power generation, charcoal, limited scale geo-thermal power generation can guarantee the clean energy. The seminar rejected the existing energy security based on fossil fuel mining which jeopardizes the usual decoration of nature. He told the audience that nature has become angry to the human being because of over exploitation of it. He also mentioned that extractive industries operated by TNCs are generating the dirty energy which is pushing the planet into destruction instead of energy security. There were 165 participants in the seminar in Iswardi, Pabna. In the end of the seminar, the participants were grouped into 4 for workshops. After closing of the workshops the participants visited the different sugarcane fields promoted by the institute. The report back of the workshops took place in the field while enjoying the sugarcane juice.

On 14 November 2014 in Sadhuhati, Jhenaidah a seminar was held with the participation of local communities on climate change, climate migrants, grassroots adaptation and mitigation. Bangladesh Krishok Federation President Badrul Alam and Anna from Sweden spoke on the issue as resource persons. There were 300 participants in the seminar. From the seminar it was said that the rights of climate migrants should be protected by the UNO convention. The adaptation and mitigation are coming about at different levels in the affected countries but the responsible countries should have deep and drastic cut in their emission level with no delay. They have to pay reparation to the affected country people as their historic and ecological dues. The participants asked all South Asian governments to active in order to realize the reparation for the people affected by climate change. Before the seminar the participants went to visit the pesticide and chemical free organic vegetable cultivation in the field. They curiously took part in the harvest of eggplant, cauliflower, bean, etc.

On 15 November 2014 in Cotton Research and Seed Multiplication Farm at Jagadishpur in Chaugachha, Jessore a seminar on grassroots networking in South Asia and next UNFCCC conference in Lima, Peru took place. Bangladesh Krishok Federation President Badrul Alam elaborated the relevance of the grassroots networking for the climate justice. There was a question and answer session at the end of deliberation. Scientific Officer of the institute and other leaders of peasants' organizations spoke on the issues. Three representatives of local non-government organizations also participated in the seminar. The seminar agreed to form a network with grassroots movements existing in South Asia to combat the climate change. A short visit to the agricultural labor in Seed Processing and Production Farm of BADC in Chuadanga district preceded the Seminar. There was also a short dialogue with the Assistant Director General of the farm.

On 16 November 2014 in the morning the caravan crossed the Indian border to Kolkata, West Bengal. In Bangladesh in a week the caravan travelled around 850 kilometers, 10 districts, stayed in 6 destinations, and touched one station meeting different community people on the way. Throughout the caravan leaf-let, book-let were distributed among the local people so that they can be aware of the objectives of the caravan and the issue of climate change. The whole week was so educational, interactive and experience sharing for the participants. The productivity in terms of lesson-learned was enormous. The impact of the caravan on the locality will be long lasting. People's feelings of sustainability in agriculture will bring fruits. It will contribute to the dream of a peasant based agro-ecology hand help the dreams to come true.

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