

Purple cabbage, seedless cucumber on Games platter

By Prashant K. Nanda

New Delhi, March 4 (IANS) A world-class infrastructure and fool-proof security are not the only things in offering during the Commonwealth Games. The organisers are also fixing up delightful menus prepared with select ingredients ranging from purple cabbage and seedless cucumber to multi-coloured pepper.

Leading agricultural scientists in Delhi are currently working on a number of vegetables, which are not only safe and pesticide-free but also fancy and colourful. These vegetables will be served to over 7,000 athletes, delegates from over 70 countries and other tourists who will be here for the mega sporting event Oct 3-14.

"We are getting ready for the Commonwealth Games. They will get safe and colourful vegetables to eat," Baljit Singh, a principal scientist with the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) here, told IANS Thursday.

"It is our job to provide them good food. We know October is an off season but we will cultivate vegetables in protected environments," he said.

"Vegetables like purple cabbage, special broccoli, multi-coloured peppers, cherry tomato with at least seven percent sweetness, French radish and seedless cucumber are some of our focus areas now.

"We have cultivated them under protected environment and are now training farmers, living in 80-km radius of the national capital, to grow these vegetables," said Singh, who is the head of the Centre for Protected Cultivation Technology at IARI.

He said several farmers in and around Delhi are interested in cultivating these vegetables.

For example, farmers in Najafgarh are likely to cultivate pesticide-free cauliflowers while those in Alipur will produce seedless cucumber. Special sweet corns are likely to be sourced from Sonapat in Haryana. Several farmers in Bilaspur region of Himachal Pradesh are likely to provide red, yellow and green pepper.

The scientist explained that protected cultivation meant that all these vegetables would be grown in "greenhouses under a controlled environment". Water, fertiliser and temperature will be controlled.

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