

Mangoes at Tk10-15 a kg, litchis Tk 30-70 per 100

Glut in Rangamati markets due to hot spell

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The ongoing hot spell is a boon for fruit lovers but a bane for their producers in Chittagong Hill Tracts. There were good yields of seasonal fruits like mango, litchi, pineapple and jack fruit this year because of a favourable weather. But these are selling at almost throwaway prices in markets at Rangamati town, sellers said. At the College Gate market in the town yesterday, mangoes were selling at Tk 10 to 15 per kilogram and litchis at between Tk 30 and Tk70 per hundred. Pineapple was sold at Tk 3 to 6 per pair depending on the size. A big jack fruit was available at only Tk 8.

The prices are much lower than last year's, farmers coming from far away hill said. There has been a glut in the market as fruits are ripening due to the hot spell, they said. Traders and middlemen from other districts are taking the opportunity. "I sold 1,000 pineapples at Tk 3000, which will not cover my production and transport costs", said Purnasha Chakma, an indigenous farmer who came from Boradam in an engine boat. Chaitali Tonchangya, come from Saphchari with about 400 pineapples. After waiting for almost the whole day, she sold those at Tk 1100. "This will not feed my family", she

said. Middlemen and agents of big traders control the market, she said. "We are compelled to sell the fruits as those ripen early due to the hot spell". Lack of storage facility and bad communication system are also responsible for the situation. This year's dull prices will have a great dampening effect on farmers, said DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) Statistical Officer Kajol Kanti Talukder. Peoples in CHT became interested to plant fruit trees instead of timber trees in recent years. The prices they are getting now will dampen their spirit, he said. He said the entire CHT region

can be turned into orchards, opening up great prospects for the people and export earning for the country. The soil, climate and hilly topography are suitable for raising big orchards. But that needs careful planning and government support, he said. "A little care can turn this entire CHT region into an agricultural zone and boost horticultural, which can remove poverty and change the life of people". He said about 30,000 acres of land are now used for fruit and vegetable cultivation. This can be increased many times. The prospect is unlimited but neither the government nor local bodies seem to realise the potential, he lamented.



Pineapple (left) and Litchi farmers trying to lure buyers at the College Gate market in Rangamati town yesterday.



PHOTO STAR

Use bio-technology to meet growing food demand

Seminar at Mymensingh BINA suggests

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Speakers at seminar here has suggested use of bio-technology in

agriculture to meet the growing demand for food. Lands for agriculture are decreasing and so yield must be increased, they said at a seminar on

'Bio-technology and Bio-Safety: Awareness Building Among Media Professionals, held on Saturday at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA).

International Service for Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Application (ISAAA) and Bio-technology Department of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) jointly organises the day long seminar with Prof Dr Rafiqul Islam Sarker of BAU Research System (BAURES) in the chair.

Prof Dr M Amirul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of BAU, spoke there as the chief guest while Dr MA Razzaque, Member Director (Cops) of BRAC, presented the theme paper titled "Challenges of Bio-technology for present century."

Dr Md Nurul Alam, Executive Chairman of BRAC; Dr Md Ziauddin, Director General of BINA; Prof Dr Md Ali Newaz of Agriculture Faculty of BAU; Prof Dr Lutful Hassan of the Department of Genetics; Prof Dr Md Bahadur Meah, Head of Plant Protection Department and Dr Emdadul Haque Chowdhury of BAU; Prof Dr Rakh Hari Sarker of Botany Dept of Dhaka University; Dr

GP Das, Country Director of Agri-Biotechnology Support Project (ABSP); Prof Dr KM Nasiruddin, National Coordinator, ISAAA and Dr Fouzia Yusuf Hafeez, a scientist on genetic engineering from Pakistan addressed the seminar as resource persons.

The BAU Vice-chancellor said bio-scientists should interact with journalists to make them aware of bio-technology.

"We would be dependent on others till we are self-reliant. So we must adopt bio-technology", he said. Farmers should also be made aware of this, he added.

Rakh Hori Sarker said we use pesticide in a massive way, which enter our food chain. Bio-technology can save us from this and give more yield.

Bio-technology has also some risks, so we should apply it very carefully, taking the practical result into consideration, Dr Nurul Alam of BRAC said.

Pakistani Scientist Dr Fouzia said bio-fertiliser is massively used in Pakistan and its prospect in Bangladesh is also very good. She also answered questions from journalists and scientists.



PHOTO STAR

BAU VC Prof. Amirul Islam speaking at the seminar on bio-technology, held at BINA, Mymensingh on Saturday.

7x2

Jubo Dal leader held by Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rapid Action Battalion arrested Jubo Dal leader Najmul Islam Naju from Rangpur town in the early hours of yesterday.

RAB source said, Naju was arrested from the Grand Hotel intersection near BNP office at about 2:30 am while he was returning home. Naju was returning in a number of criminal cases. He had been absconding since RAB launched its anti-crime drive in the district.

Naju is vice-president of Jubo Dal's rangpur town unit, party source said. He was produced before a court yesterday (Sunday). The court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail.

Rickshawpullers set an example

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Rickshawpullers have set an example of social work by voluntarily repairing a road.

The 1.5 kilometre Kalikatcha-Bariora road in Noagong union under Sarial upazila in the district was badly damaged by flood last year. The road connecting the upazila with the Dhaka-Sylhet highway became unfit for use by vehicles and rickshaws, creating sufferings to people of the entire upazila.

Local people and the elite approached political leaders, but to no effect.

At last, rickshawpullers' associations in Airo, Bariora, Katanisha and Akhtar joined hands and decided to repair the road voluntarily.

On Friday, they gathered on the dilapidated road with spades and baskets. They fixed a loudspeaker and urged villagers nearby to join them.

Seeing the noble initiative, people from the villages including students came with tools and joined them, cutting earth and repairing the road. The road was repaired in two days. The road was reopened for vehicles on Friday. This has created a sense of cooperation and among local people.

Netrakona CS made OSD, RMO transferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Netrakona Civil Surgeon (CS) Dr ABM Azizul Islam has been made OSD at the office of the Director General (DG) of Health in Dhaka.

Residential Medical Officer (RMO) of Netrakona Sadar Hospital Dr Rafiqul Islam has also been transferred to Chittagong divisional office of the Health Department.

Sources said a departmental case for corruption was filed against Azizul Islam in November last year when he was CS in Kishoregonj.

There were allegations of corruption and misuse of power against RMO Rafiqul Islam. He was in Netrakona Sadar Hospital for about 10 years.

When contacted, Azizul Islam said he does not know why he has been made OSD. But he admitted that a departmental case was filed against him when he was CS in Kishoregonj. This correspondent also tried to contact RMO Rafiqul Islam but he was not available at Netrakona Sadar Hospital.

'Nizera Kori' observes silver jubilee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The silver jubilee function of 'Nizera Kori', a prominent NGO, was held at its Rajshahi divisional office auditorium at Nongola here on Thursday.

Nizera Kori coordinator Khushi Kabir opened the programme.

Some employees, working here for the last 25 years were honoured at the inaugural function.

TANORE GANGRAPE

BNP leader among 4 named in 2nd charge sheet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has pressed charges against four persons including a local BNP leader in the 17 year-old Tanore gangrape case. This is the second charge sheet in the case.

The four are local BNP vice president and Chanduria Union Parishad Chairman Mofiz Uddin, former UP Chairman Abdul Mozid Mollah, Omar and Yaad Ali.

They were charged under Section 376 of the Penal Code, Section 4 of the Cruelty to Women Act of 1983 for rape and under Section 342 for keeping the victim confined for two months after rape.

In the charge sheet submitted to a Magistrate Court here on Saturday, the CID also accused another person—Muhammad Ali. But they said, Ali was accused in the case in line with a High Court order not to skip during re-investigation any accused named in the first charge sheet.

The victim's lawyers yesterday demanded speedy trial of the case. "The victim of the case suffered a lot for 17 years since her rape as the case remained suspended for several reasons. She now needs a speedy trial", said Habibur Rahman Hasibul, the victim's lawyer, while talking to this correspondent.

The victim alleged earlier that Mofiz, Omar and Yaad bribed her

uncle Sayed Ali Satari and gang-raped her on April 1988 when she was an 18 year old orphan.

Then they took her to the then UP chairman and village doctor Abdul Mozid Mollah, who also raped her. Her ordeal did not end there as her uncle Satari lodged a case accusing Muhammad Ali while Mofiz kept her confined until police pressed charges against Ali two months later.

But the victim unfolded the truth when the court asked for evidence. Two of the accused were arrested after The Daily Star reported the incident on December 13 last year, but they were released on bail while the main accused in the case were moving freely.

Yarn from bamboo Spinning mill in the offing in Lalmonirhat

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Lalmonirhat

Rangpur: Jute Minister Shahajahan Sheraj has said a modern bamboo-based spinning mill will be set up in Lalmonirhat soon.

This will be a joint venture by Japan and Korean investors, he said.

Speaking in an opinion exchange meeting with local businessmen, political leaders and newsmen at the local circuit house on Saturday,

the minister said site for the mill has been primarily selected at Shibram in Lalmonirhat Sader upzila. "The proposed mill will provide employment to 10,000 people and help remove munga in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts to a great extent.

Five Korean and Japanese business delegates led by Dr. Likomy, Jute Secretary Shahidul Islam, and Lalmonirhat BNP secretary Sale Uddin Ahmed Helal were also present at the meeting, among

others. As bamboo grows abundantly in these two districts, Japanese and Korean entrepreneurs have shown interest to set up a bamboo-based spinning mills in the region, the Jute Secretary told the meeting. The minister hoped that foundation of the proposed mill could be laid in September and it might go for production by 2006. Later, the minister and the foreign delegates visited the proposed site at Shibram village.

13x3

'Lack of commitment affects primary education'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Lack of commitment and awareness of teachers and guardians are the main obstacles to ensure quality primary education.

The speakers told this at a workshop on improvement of primary education yesterday. Sadar Upazila Parishad and Satkhira Unnayan Sangstha (SUS), an NGO jointly organised the workshop held at Upazila Parishad auditorium.

The workshop was presided over by Sadar upazila nirbahi officer

(UNO) SM Ashrafuzzaman. They speakers further said that the standard of education declined although the country achieved tremendous success in increasing enrolment in primary schools.

Satkhira deputy commissioner (DC) Md Elias was present as chief guest while SUS director Eman Ali and Sadar upazila education officer Samsunnahar were present as special guests. Among others, Anisur Rahim, Amir Ali, addressed the workshop.



PHOTO STAR

In observance of International Day Against Child Labour, LIFE, an NGO, held a rally and brought out a procession in Rangpur town yesterday to create awareness among people.