

Guava output falls in Barisal with growers changing trade

SUSHANTO GHOSH, Barisal

Barisal region, producer of about 70 percent guava in the country, now sees decline in the production as the fruit's cultivation has become less profitable.

The growers are deprived of fair prices of the delicious rainy season fruit, locally known as 'peyara' or 'goya', due to lack of adequate transport, marketing and preservation facilities, and consequently, a good number of guava farmers are opting for other agriculture items, locals said.

Over 2,750 acres of land including 225 acres in Banaripara upazila of Barisal, 930 acres in Sadar upazila of Jhalakathi and 1,595 acres in Swarupkathi upazila of Pirojpur district are used as guava orchards this year, said sources of Barisal office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

About 16,500 tonnes of guava production is



expected from the region, they said.

Besides the orchards, guava trees are found in homesteads across the area.

Barisal region produces a special variety of tasty guava having an attractive scent.

One Purna Mandal of the area brought the special variety from Bihar over 170 years ago, several local farmers said.

On an average, six tonnes of guava is produced from an acre of land, said upazila

owner in Banaripara upazila.

Agriculture officials suggest growers to replace damaged and too old trees with new plants. However, it takes 4-6 years to get full-scale production.

From a one-acre guava orchard, a farmer can earn about Tk 30 thousand in a season but the amount is too scanty, said Ovijit Kumar Halder, a guava grower of Kirtipasha union in Jhalakathi.

Surprisingly, one kg of guava is sold for Tk 4-6 a kg at wholesale level in the orchard but in local retail markets the prices rise to Tk 20-25 per kg.

The farmers are often compelled to sell the perishable item for throwaway prices.

Arrangement of good transport facilities between the guava producing areas and other parts of the country, adequate preservation facilities in cold storages, and setting up industries for producing jam, jelly and juice from guava is needed to address the problem, said Abdur Rahim, a guava trader of Kuriana Peyara Mokam, a wholesale centre.

The botanical name of guava is 'Psidium guayava Linn' and it belongs to 'Myrtaceae' family.

It is generally believed that the Portuguese brought this fruit from South America to this region.

There is, however, a different opinion that guava, locally called 'peyara', is actually an ancient Indian fruit that was cited as 'Parabat' fruit in 'Charak Sanghita' an ayurvedic (herbal) medicine guide book written in Sanskrit during the first century.

It is rich in vitamin C, riboflavin, thiamine, and other nutrients and the fruit as well as leaf and skin of its tree are used for herbal treatment of different diseases including those concerning stomach, teeth, and burn injuries.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer collects guava from an orchard in Barisal, a region famous for producing a high quality tasty variety of the popular nutritious fruit.

'TCB goods rotten, often pricey'

Dealers stop sale but demand more commission

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Dealers of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in the district have stopped receiving goods supplied from the government godown, hampering the authorities' efforts to keep the prices of essential commodities stable during the Ramadan.

The dealers have taken the decision demanding rise of their commission and reduction of price of lentils, and protesting the supply of rotten date, said Rahmatullah Ruhul, president of Nilphamari unit of TCB dealers association, referring to Abdul Gafur, president of the Rangpur divisional unit of the association.

"For the last week of July

the government has allocated against each dealer 1,000 kg of *chhola* (chick pea), 2,000 kg of sugar, 600 kg of lentils and 406 kg of soya bean oil. But prices of allocated TCB goods are either higher than market prices or the same. Besides, date and chick pea supplied by TCB are of inferior quality compared to those available in the markets. We are not interested to draw such items," he said.

"If this situation continues we will surrender our license and do other business," said Joad Hossain, a TCB dealer in Nilphamari.

There are 396 TCB dealers in Rangpur division and 20 of them are in Nilphamari district. They were given dealership after this govern-

ment came to power in 2008. "Most of them were given dealership considering their affiliation with the ruling party. Only a few of them are genuine traders," said Abdul Wahed Sarker, president, Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Visiting different areas of Nilphamari municipality, this correspondent found that many TCB dealers have no shop of their own. Those who have shops have not hung any signboard to help consumers easily identify them.

From May to July, TCB supplied different commodities to its dealers eight times, sources said.

Earlier dealers made good profit by selling a few commodities received from

the TCB. But instead of selling them to the consumers from their shops, the dealers often sold them directly to wholesalers who drew the goods from the TCB godowns by showing authorisation letters issued by the dealers.

The dealers did it to get the profit without doing any 'extra work' for reaching the items to consumers.

Consumers in different areas of the district alleged to this correspondent that they were unaware about the presence of any TCB dealer in their respective areas as they have no signboard and there is no publicity about it from the authorities.

District Marketing Officer ATM Ershad Alam Khan, also member secretary of market monitoring team of the district, said, "In the meeting of task force committee this month, only three out of total 20 TCB dealers in the district were present. Many dishonest dealers have refrained from drawing TCB goods in fear as monitoring has been intensified."

Talking to newsmen, Sujauddoula, in-charge of TCB in Rangpur region, claimed that date and other commodities supplied by TCB are of good quality.

"We have sent message to higher authorities to reduce prices of some commodities to make the dealers and consumers interested about TCB goods," he added.

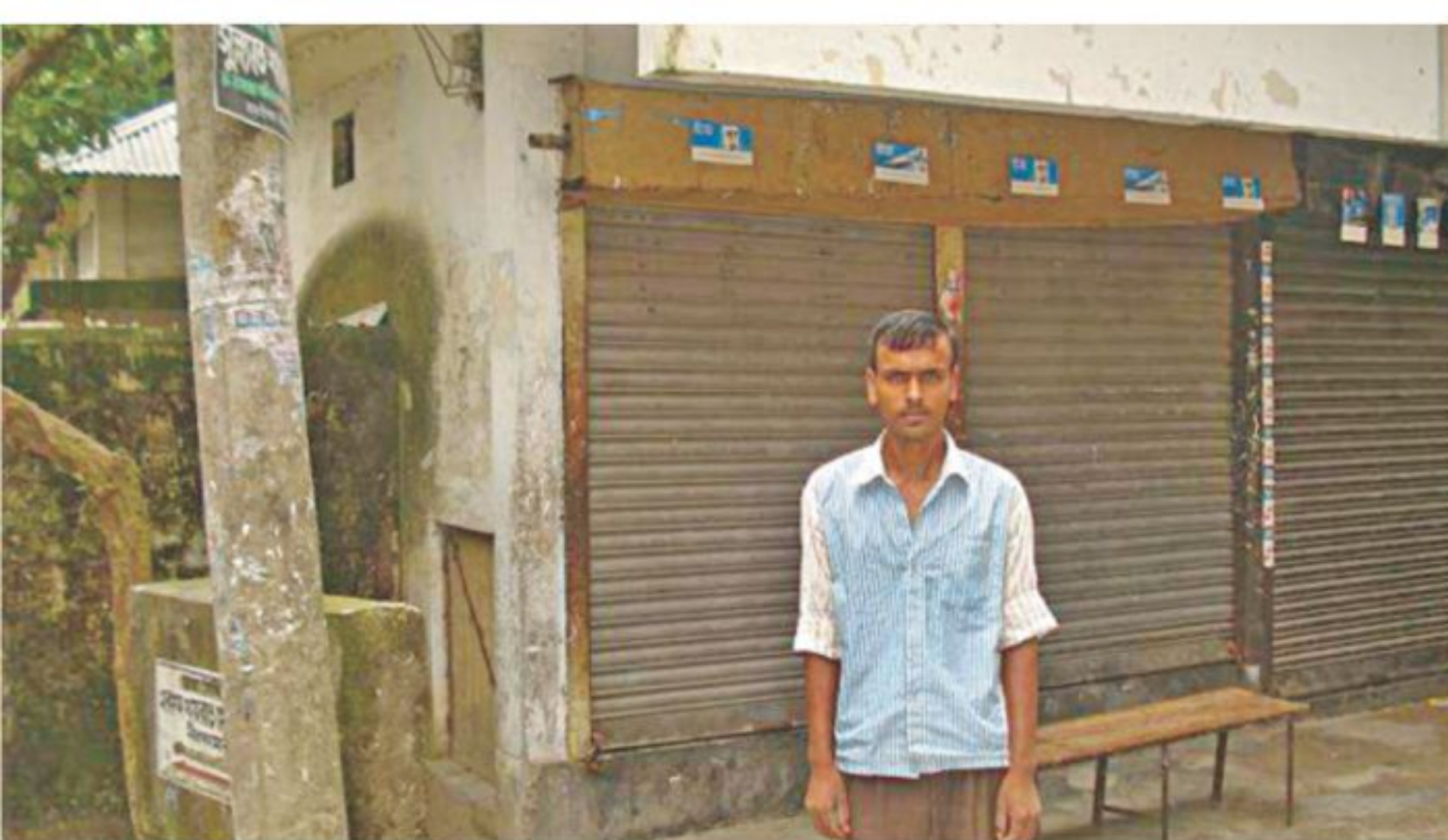


PHOTO: STAR

A TCB dealer's shop at Zila Parishad intersection in Nilphamari town remains shut as dealers in the district decided to stop drawing items from the government warehouse.



PHOTO: STAR

Lokman Sangram Parishad stages a sit-in in front of Narsingdi Press Club yesterday demanding re-investigation into mayor Lokman Hossain murder case as what it said the name of the main accused has been dropped from the charge sheet. Photo shows incumbent Mayor Kamruzzaman, brother of the slain mayor Lokman Hossain, speaking at the sit-in programme. Lokman's mother Majeda Begum and wife Tamanna Nusrat Bublil are also seen on the dais.

Armed gang kidnaps 9 in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Armed criminals abducted nine villagers from Lorchharamukh area in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The victims are Sumon Chakma, Sadhan Mitra Chakma, Minthu Chakma of village Polada Adam, Bijoy Chakma, Chandra Sheikhar Chakma, Torun Jyoti Chakma, Arun Jyoti Chakma, Indra Ranjan Chakma and Gayana Ratan Chakma of Korolyamura village in Bandukbhanga union.

Saiful Islam, officer in-charge of Kotwali police station, said a gang waylaid an engine boat carrying the villagers includ-

ing the boat driver and picked them up at gunpoint at around 7:30am. The gang then took them to deep forest.

The incident occurred when they were going to district town, the OC added.

Army and police are conducting combined operation to rescue the victims. However, none came to the police station to file any case in this regard, said Saiful Islam.

The reason behind the kidnapping could not be known immediately, said Barun Kanti Chakma, chairman of the union.

Police also could not identify the criminals till filing of this report yesterday afternoon.

4 Hizb-ut Tawhid men arrested in Sherpur

UNB, Sherpur

Police arrested four activists of banned militant outfit Hizb-ut Tawhid from Madhabpur area in the district town on Tuesday night.

Twenty-five 'jihadi' (Islamic uprising) books, over 100 leaflets and eight compact discs (CDs) were also recovered from their possession.

The arrestees were identified as Mahub Hossain, 23, son of Tareque Hossain of Chakpathak; Aslam, 20, son of Jamannullah; Moniruzzaman, 30, son of Hasan Ali of Bagraksra area in

the district town; and Najam Al Islam, 20, son of Anwar Master of Mirzapur upazila in Tangail district.

Officer in-charge (investigation) of Sadar police station Khairul Bashar said, being informed that the Hizb-ut Tawhid men were holding a secret meeting in a field near Diabetic Hospital in the area, a police team conducted a drive there at about 11pm and arrested them.

Later, 'jihadi' books, leaflets and CDs were recovered from their possession.

A case was filed in this connection.

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