

# Kazi guavas creating better lives in Narsingdi

SHYKH SERAJ

Four decades ago, Honours graduate Ainab Ali went abroad in search of his fortune. Ironically, it was when he returned home and turned to guava cultivation that he truly found success. "The decision to go abroad wasn't the right decision," he says. "It's better to grow guavas."

The sweet, green fruit has long been popular in Bangladesh. A little salt on a guava slice is a well-liked treat, almost a taste of national culture. From Jhalakathi's floating bazaar on the Kirtipasha canal, in the midst of Bhimruli's remote, swampy terrain, to the plains of Narsingdi, guava cultivation has rewarded many an entrepreneur.

Nowadays a happy man, Ali has found success in his guava orchard, earning sufficiently to give his family a decent standard of living.

In Mati O Manush aired on BTV a long while back I featured kazi guavas, a variety commonly grown on rooftop gardens which, as they regularly weigh more than one kilogram per piece are affectionately called "KG guavas." We must always be thankful to the agricultural scientist Dr. Kazi M. Badruddoza for introducing this variety to Narsingdi district in the 1980s. Kazi guavas have subsequently revolutionised the local industry.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Shibpur and Srishtigar villages where the trees in huge orchards currently bend from the weight of the fruit.

One orchard there is owned by Shaheen Mridha, who also cultivates aubergine. Originally set on one bigha of land, his uncle Ainab encouraged him to dedicate another three bighas to guavas, and the investment paid off. Guavas have become his main



PHOTO: STAR

Shykh Seraj at a guava orchard in a village of Narsingdi district.

income source and left his family quite well-off. "I am doing fantastically well," he says, in high spirits.

Interestingly, according to locals much of the land in the area was barren only a few decades ago. But now per acre a farmer can earn about Tk. 5 lakhs per year. Guavas have not only changed the lives of farming families, but have bettered the fortunes of entire communities.

Altab Hossain, another local, says markets are vibrant as traders arrive regularly to buy large quantities of the kazi guavas. In Shrishtigar bazaar alone around 40 tonnes of guavas are sold daily. Further, harvest quality and quantity has improved since farmers have begun to use bagging

systems that protect the fruit from insect and disease. This technology ensures fresh guavas for both Narsingdi farmers and consumers nationwide.

Orchardist Morshed Mian from Kulutek village, a Masters student, is growing kazi guavas in his two-bigha orchard, while a neighbour Mobarak has similarly started guava farming. Both are doing well.

"I'm happy to be working for myself and kazi guavas are really popular. The profit is good," says Mian. "Kazi

guavas are healthy. I'm glad to deliver these to consumers," adds Mobarak.

According to statistics, Narsingdi has 700 acres dedicated to guava production, with 600 of those growing the kazi variety. Lotafot Hossain, a deputy director of the local department of agriculture extension office says Thai guavas are also doing well.

Dear readers, when driving the Dhaka to Sylhet highway you're sure to notice the extensive

orchards, to see indeed people selling guavas along the roadside. It's worthwhile to take a minute to consider the significant contribution guava cultivation has made in bringing new prosperity to orchardists, their families and entire communities. Better news: there's little reason to think the guava industry will not continue to expand, with the development of processing industries holding the potential to bring about still greater success.



Shykh Seraj is a Media and Agriculture Development Activist. He is an Ashoka Fellow and recipient of Ekushey Padak, FAO A.H. Boerma Award and many other prestigious accolades. At Channel i, he is Director and Head of News. He is also Director and Host of the popular agro-documentary, "Hridoye Mati O Manush".

# Pariza paddy brings smile to farmers in Lalmonirhat

Cultivated between boro and aman, it adds to their earning

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Cultivation of Pariza, a short duration paddy cultivated between boro and aman, brings happiness to a good number of farmers in the district.

Introduced five years ago, the variety was cultivated on 1,000 bighas of land at 40 villages in the district this year with advice and technical support from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University and NGO RDRS Bangladesh.

"I have been cultivating short duration Pariza paddy for the last four years. I got 14 maunds of yield from one bigha of land this season. I spent only Tk 2,000 for the additional crop," said Ismail Hossain, a farmer of Panchagram village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Motaleb Hossain, another farmer of the same village, said his eight bighas of land usually remains unused for three months between harvesting of boro and start of aman cultivation.

"This year I cultivated Pariza paddy on two bighas of land early May and I harvested it early August. Then I cultivated aman paddy in the same land," he said.

Chairman of Panchagram union parishad Delowar Hossain, also a farmer, said Pariza cultivation helps farmers to earn additional money but insects and birds often cause harm to it.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers harvest short duration Pariza paddy at a field of Doljor village in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat district.

said. Safayet Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, said the land which is usually used for boro and aman cultivation, is suitable for Pariza rice cultivation.

"The seedbed of Pariza is prepared around 15 days after harvesting of boro. Fifteen to 20-day-old seedlings are transplanted on well-ploughed land early May. It can be harvested in late July or early August," he said.

# Two die in Sunamganj boat capsized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A woman and her daughter drowned as a boat capsized in a haor (water body) in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj district on Monday night.

The dead are Nazma Begum, wife of Sohel Mia of Kholahati village in the upazila, and her daughter Binti.

Victims' family members said a small boat carrying four members of Sohel's family sank in the haor after it was caught in a violent storm around 8:00pm.

Sohel and his seven-year old son managed to swim ashore, said Shahidullah, officer-in-charge of Tahirpur Police Station.

# 70 sued for vandalising madrasa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Around 70 people were yesterday sued for allegedly vandalising Bowdubi Rabeya Khatun Hafizia Madrasa under Zianagar upazila of the district on August 11.

Abdul Halim Khalifa, alias Babul, president of the institution, filed a case with Pirojpur Judicial Magistrate's Court, accusing 16 named and 50-55 unnamed people.

One Rezaul of the area, who claims the ownership of the madrasa land and led the attack on August 11, has been made the main accused in the case, police said.

Around 50-60 youths led by Rezaul stormed the madrasa and damaged to rooms.

# PETROL BOMB ATTACK ON TRUCK

# Charges pressed against 23 Magura BNP-Jamaat men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Charges have been pressed against 23 BNP-Jamaat men in a case for hurling petrol bomb at a sand-laden truck in Magura Sadar upazila during the countrywide blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance on March 21 this year.

Five labourers sustained burn injuries in the attack and later died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The victims are Rowshan Ali Biswas, Motin Biswas, Shakil Ahmed, Yeadul Islam and Imran Ali.

Officer-in-Charge of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police Emaul Haq, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in Magura yesterday.

District BNP general secretary Ali Ahmed, vice-president Monowar Hossain Khan, district Jamaat ameer Alamgir Biswas, general secretary Mustar Baker, Chhatra Dal

central committee president Rajib Ahsan, Magura Sadar Upazila Parishad vice chairman and Sadar upazila jamaat ameer Prof Faruk Hossain, Magura district Chhatra Dal general secretary Feroz Hossain, organising secretary Abdur Rahim, and district BNP publicity secretary advocate Mizanur Rahman are among the accused.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Abdus Salam filed a case with Magura Sadar Police Station the following day, accusing 26 BNP-Jamaat and Chhatra Dal leaders and activists.

According to case statement BNP-Jamaat men hurled a petrol bomb at a Magura-bound sand-laden truck from Moghirdhal area under Shalika upazila on March 21, leaving five labourers injured. They later died at the burn unit of DMCH.

Away in Chandpur, a court here yesterday sent three BNP leaders to jail, rejecting their bail petitions in a case for arson attack on a truck that left four people killed in Sadar upazila on

March 18 this year. Senior Judicial Magistrate Muttakin Billa passed the order when the BNP leaders appeared before the court on completion of their four-week bail granted by the High Court.

They are BNP central committee member and a convener of the party's Chandpur district unit Sheikh Farid Ahmed Manik general secretary of Chandpur town unit of BNP Akhter Hossain Majhi and general secretary of the district unit of Jubo Dal Afzal Bepari.

On March 18, BNP men hurled a petrol bomb at a Khulna-bound goods-laden truck from Chittagong while it was crossing Chandrain Sadar upazila. Trucker Jahangir died on the spot and three workers--Khorshed, Rubel and Sharif--sustained burn injuries.

The injured later died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Later, police filed a case, accusing 94 people.



PHOTO: STAR

The authorities hung a signboard, marking as 'government property' a piece of land of Bangabandhu's fugitive killer Captain Abdul Majed on Hospital Road in Borhanuddin municipality area under the district, after confiscating it yesterday.

# Property of Bangabandhu's killer confiscated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

The authorities yesterday confiscated a piece of landed property of Captain Abdul Majed, a fugitive killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on Hospital Road in Borhanuddin municipality area under the district.

"Around 1.35 acres of land at Kutuba Mouza on Hospital Road of Borhanuddin municipality belonged to fugitive killer Captain Abdul Majed, now

living in Canada. It took nearly seven years to identify the area, following a verdict of the Supreme Court," said Md Selim Reza, deputy commissioner of Bhola.

After completing all the procedure, the government has attached the property, he added.

Monowar Hossain, executive magistrate and assistant commissioner (Land) of Borhanuddin Upazila Land Office, along with Ratan Krishna Roy Chowdhury, officer in charge of Borhanuddin

Police Station, and Mushfikur Rahman, assistant land officer of Kutuba Land Office, went to the spot around 2:00pm yesterday and hung a signboard, mentioning the land as a government property.

Owners of 12 shops set up on the land were earlier served a notice to vacate the place.

A large number of people gathered when the attachment procedure was going on.

A police team has been deployed there, said OC Ratan Krishna Roy Chowdhury.

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