



Lotkun, pineapple and jackfruit are some of the indigenous fruits that see gradual rise in cultivation in Rangpur region. Research work and motivational programmes of the agricultural organisations coupled with farmers' awareness contribute to the changing agro pattern in the northern districts. PHOTO: STAR

Local fruit cultivation gains popularity in 5 N-dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Cultivation of local varieties of fruits on commercial basis is gaining popularity among farmers and general people at many places in five northern districts of Rangpur region in recent years, bringing a change in the agriculture pattern in the area.

Tasty, quick growing and high yielding newer varieties of fruits, developed as a result of research by scientists of the government's horticulture department, are proving to be very profitable, which is making farmers interested in fruit cultivation.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur region says 3.50 lakh tonnes of various

fruits worth around Tk 3,500 crore were produced this year on 23,000 hectares of land in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

Khandaker Md Mesbahul Islam, horticulture specialist in Rangpur regional office of DAE, said fruit cultivation has been expanding in the last couple of years, mainly through private sector initiatives, as DAE is providing all-out support.

Agriculture institutes and research organisations are carrying on research work and bringing about a revolutionary change by developing traditional fruits into high yielding varieties which give production in shorter time, he continued.

Mango, litchi, jackfruit, banana,

papaya, guava, jujube, blackberry, strawberry, lotkun, olive, wood apple, berry, watermelon, etc. are very popular among the growers in this region for their high yield and good taste, he added.

A DAE source said, among the local fruits, mango alone constitutes the largest portion as 70,000 tonnes worth about Tk 1,500 crore were produced.

Presently, there are over 17.25 lakh fruit-bearing mango trees in 5,100 orchards and homesteads on about 7,200 hectares of land in Rangpur region, the source said. Besides, there are 4 lakh fruit-bearing litchi trees in orchards and homesteads, covering an area of 1,800 hectares, producing 20,000 tonnes.

The farmers are also producing 2,500 tonnes of other indigenous variety fruits this year, worth about Tk 150 crore, said DAE sources.

Jojmul Islam, a fruit farmer of Rahimapur village of Taraganj upazila of Rangpur, said, "Farmers are inclining to fruit farming as it is less costly. The trees start yielding within 1-2 years and continue for about 8-10 years. All we need is to do weeding once or twice, and apply fertiliser and spray pesticide on time."

Anwarul Islam, a fruit farmer of Chaora village under Sadar upazila of Nilphamari district, said many farmers like him have changed their fortune by producing high yielding, quick growing pricey fruits.

Md Shah Alam, additional

director of regional DAE, said farmers and many people are inclining more and more towards local variety fruit cultivation as they are getting good yield and higher price, and also creating jobs for farm workers.

Shafiqul Islam Dablu Shah, president of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries, emphasised the need for setting up fruit preserving and processing factories in the area so that the fruits can be exported.

Dr Abdur Rashid, civil surgeon of Nilphamari, said local varieties of fruits are rich in vitamins and minerals, which can contribute significantly in making a healthy nation.

Road in awful state

Locals plant paddy on the muddy road demanding its repair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Local people demanded immediate steps for repair of the 2-kilometre-long Purbo Rangikul-Katauni road in Kulaura upazila of the district.

The road has become almost unfit for vehicular movement due to lack of repair or renovation since its construction 20 years ago.

As part of a protest programme, at least 60 villagers on Sunday planted paddy saplings on the muddy road used by over 2000 people of two villages everyday.

Students using the road to go to their educational institutions are the worst sufferers.

During a visit to the road on Sunday afternoon, this correspondent found a number of potholes on the road that has become muddy at places.

Following a shower of rain, the road has become muddy, halting traffic movement, said Alamgir Hossain, a resident of Katauni village.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities are yet to take any steps to repair the road, said Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury and Abdul Kuddus of Purbo Rangirkula village.

Abul Hossain, engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Kulaura, said they informed the higher authorities about the matter but to no effect yet.



Locals plant paddy seedlings on the muddy road in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar, protesting the authorities' indifference to repair it. PHOTO: STAR

Arrest warrants against 30 Jamaat-Shibir men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court yesterday issued arrest warrants against 30 Jamaat-Shibir men for skipping court hearing in a case for torching a polling centre in Ghoraghat upazila during the parliamentary elections on January 5, 2014.

Judge Md Waliul Islam of the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court passed the order in the afternoon as they have been skipping the court for long.

According to the case statement, the accused set afire a polling centre at Maglishpur Government Primary School in the upazila during the election. They also exploded several crude bombs to create panic among the voters.

Later, a case was filed with Ghoraghat Police Station accusing 200 unidentified people.

After investigation, police submitted charge-sheet against 40 Jamaat-Shibir men in this connection, on April 22 last year.

Of the 40 accused, only 10 appeared before the court yesterday while the rest continued dodging the court since the charges pressed against them, said Azizur Rahman, assistant public prosecutor of Dinajpur court.

Yesterday, 10 accused of the case--Saidur Rahman, 40, Alam Hossain, 25, Humayun Kabir, 25, Sazzad Hossain, 30, Liakat Ali, 28, Monwar Hossain, 40, Shafiqul Islam, 25, Sabu Mia, 24, Sirajul Islam, 42, and Shafikul Islam, 30,--appeared before the court seeking bail.

After hearing, the court rejected their bail prayer and sent them to the jail, Officer-in-Charge Nuruzzaman Chowdhury of Ghoraghat Police Station said.



The Marasoti River at Rajpur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila has turned black and stinky due to retting jute plants in the water. PHOTO: STAR

Jute retting pollutes rivers, canals, ponds

Lalmonirhat farmers avoid ribbon retting method for lack of training

S Dilip Roy, Lalmonirhat

Many water bodies like rivers, canals and ponds are becoming polluted due to retting of jute plants in these water bodies as ribbon retting, a method for retting the plants with less water, is yet to gain popularity in the district.

Introduced among the local farmers some years ago on a very limited scale, the ribbon retting method did not get popularity due to lack of steps for its promotion.

Farmer Nabir Hossain, 56, of Khalaighat village under Lalmonirhat Sadar said, "We are not familiar with ribbon retting. Maybe some farmers were informed about the new system but they did not show their interest in this method. We know retting of jute plants in water bodies pollutes the water, but we have to do it because we have no alternative."

Agriculture officials said farmers remove fibre after retting jute plants in water for two to three weeks, while

ribbon retting system of extraction of the fibre does not take much time and requires less water. Ribbon retting needs polythene and a big hole in the soil. After separation of the raw fibre from the jute stalk, it is kept in the water hole, they said, adding that only

Ribbon retting system is time-saving, needs less water and does not pollute water

a few farmers were imparted training in the district.

Farmer Abdul Hossain, 65, of Teesta village, said he heard about ribbon retting system but didn't know how to apply it. He said he processes jute plants in a canal beside his home-

stead, adding that the water has turned black and stinky.

Latifur Rahman, district fishery officer, said jute retting turns water bodies black and stinky, and hampers fish production and their breeding system. Latifur said he asked the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials to show the system to farmers and take steps to save water bodies from pollution.

Dr Abul Hasnat, upazila fishery officer, said if there is adequate rainfall, jute retting is not a big problem in any water body. But if the rainfall is inadequate, it hampers fish production and breeding system, he added.

Sarwar-Ul-Haque, deputy director of DAE, said they are trying to introduce the ribbon retting method among the farmers. "Some farmers were given training about this method, and they are using it properly at many villages," he said, adding that all farmers would be provided training soon.

Vegetable farming makes Monju self-reliant

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

Cultivation of a variety of vegetables has brought good days to the family of landless farmer Monju, 48, son of late Shamsuddin Fakir of Borobaripara in Shajahanpur upazila of the district, in the last few years.

Following the cultivation of numerous vegetables in the leased land, the farmer has changed his lot. He can now afford education of his daughter in a local high school, which was previously impossible, and ensure the development of the family.

Having only three decimals of paternal land for his homestead, he could not even feed his family, and had to go hungry many days.

Being determined to be self-reliant, he has been trying to overcome poverty by leasing lands for the last few years. Five months back he took lease of 38 decimals of land from one Ratan Sarker for Tk 20 thousand and one year.

He has cultivated a variety of vegetables like potol, red-spinach, gourd, papaya, water pumpkin, borboti and banana and already sold potol and borboti of around Tk 10 thousand and

banana of Tk 10 thousand so far and a huge amount of potol was ready for sale at better price.

He said his daughter is studying in the nearby Chupinagar High School in Class VI and his son is working as a carpenter. They are leading a very happy life and hoping to lease more land within a few months to expand the busi-



ness. He hoped that he can earn around Tk 50-60 thousand from the land. PHOTO: STAR

Nikhil Kumar Das, deputy assistant agriculture officer of DAE, said their officials have been creating awareness among the field-level farmers through yard meeting, field visiting, distributing leaflets and training them about cultivation of vegetables in the district.