

Patuakhali teacher finds success in commercial cultivation of tween fruit

SOHRAB HOSSAIN

A madrasa teacher has seen the face of success by commercially cultivating tween fruit, commonly known as fig, in Patuakhali during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Notably, there is also surah in the Holy Quran—At-Tin (The Fig) asserting the wholesomeness of the fruit. Tween is a good source of both calcium and potassium and has a huge potential of export after meeting the of the country.

Jahnagir Hossain Manik, a lecturer of agriculture of a madrasa in Tengrakhalia area under Badarpur union of Patuakhali Sadar upazila, got inspired to commercially cultivate tween fruit from Facebook.

"I had a huge free time in my hand due to the closure of my madrasa and I was pondering to do something in this long hiatus. Then I came across some videos in the Facebook on the goodness of tween fruit and fixed my mind that I would cultivate the fruit," he said.

He elevated 30 decimals of low-lying area adjacent to the madrasa and purchased 200 tween plants at the rate of Tk 720 per plant from Maona of Gazipur in October last year. His dreams came true as the trees start bearing fruits from February this year after four months of intense care. He has already started to marketise the ripe fruits.

People from different districts are coming to see his orchard of the exotic fruits that are very juicy and can be consumed all the year round after drying and preserving in containers. Many visitors are also expressing their eagerness to learn the cultivation technique from Manik, he said.

"I was apprehensive about the cultivation of tween fruit at the beginning but I have gained success by dint of hard labour, intensive care and the advice of the officials of the agriculture department. I have started the sale from the month of Ramadan at Tk 1,000 per kg. Most of the buyers

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buy the fruits directly from the orchard and local super shop also sells them," he also said.

"Hopefully, I will see the face of profit from the next year," he added.

An engineer came from the neighboring district of Barguna came to visit the orchard. "I want to cultivate the fruit commercially," Engr Imran said.

Md Hasan, who came from Kalapara upazila town of the district, said that he has also decided to cultivate this exotic fruit and came to visit the orchard to see

its cultivation method.

Dr Shamim Ahmed, additional deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension—DAE—(Horticulture Wing) of Dhaka said the fruit is rich in Vitamin A, Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, as well as almost all essential nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, sodium, carbohydrates, sugar, fat, protein and thiamine. It also has many medicinal properties.

It helps cure constipation, reduce weight, keep the heart healthy and controls high blood pressure. It also helps prevent cancer.

He further said each tree bears up to 1 kg in the first year, 8 to 11 kg in the second year and up to 25 kg fruits in the third year. In this way, it continues to bear fruit for 34 consecutive years. The lifespan of the tree is about 100 years. Tween fruits grow at the base of each leaf. Each tree is six to 30 feet tall and bears 60 to 70 fruits.



The madrasa teacher's tween fruit garden in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN



A section of the damaged concrete slabs around the Muktijoddha Chatter on Sylhet-Dhaka highway in Sherpur Bazar of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Roundabout on Sylhet-Dhaka highway turns risky

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The roundabout at Muktijoddha Chatter on Sylhet-Dhaka highway in Sherpur Bazar of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila has turned hazardous to unsuspecting moving traffic. After two sections of concrete slabs over the circular drainage line of the roundabout were damaged recently, locals have been anticipating a severe accident at the spot any time, as the newly exposed holes cannot be seen by drivers from far due to the curve of the roundabout.

Some of the fixtures made with stainless

steel pipes have also been damaged on the southern side of the roundabout, built by Moulvibazar district council in 2006.

Nurul Haq, a resident of the area said, the exposed holes over the drain are putting lives of thousands at risk, as all sorts of vehicle, large and small, ply the road every day.

Misbahur Rahman, chairman of Moulvibazar district council, said they would soon send the engineer of the district council to assess the damage around Muktijoddha Chatter and make necessary arrangements for repair work.

BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE EXPANDING NORTHWARD

More 300 acre land to be acquired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

About Tk 300 crore is going to be spent on acquisition of at least 300 acres of land, mostly arable, to facilitate northward expansion of the Barapukuria coal mine in Parbatipur upazila.

The expansion of the country's lone active underground coal mine will ultimately result in an increase in its production cost by about 40 percent for each metric tonne of coal.

Officials of the mine's operating authorities, Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL), a subsidiary of Petrobangla, said keeping in mind that coal in the central reserve of the mine will end within the next two years, it has to be expanded to ensure uninterrupted supply of coal to Barapukuria 525 MW Thermal Power Plant in future.

The neighbouring power plant, operated by Bangladesh Power Development Board, is currently the sole user of most of the coal produced by BCMCL.

Coal from Barapukuria used

to be sold to brickfields for baking bricks, but the sale was suspended in March 2018.

The existing coal extraction contract between state-run BCMCL and China-based CMC-XMC Consortium expires on August 10 this year.

With that in mind and in line with the expansion plan, the BCMCL has already made all necessary preparations and extended its contract with CMC-XMC for six more years, effective from August 11 this year, said Kamruzzaman Khan, the managing director (MD) of BCMCL.

Under the six-year contract, CMC-XMC will develop new mines in the north of the existing central reserve and extract about 4.5 million tonnes of coal -- 1.3 million tonnes from the central reserve and 3.2 million tonnes from the northern reserve, he added.

The expensive and time-consuming task of linking the central and northern reserves with a minimum of 5.8 kilometres of underground roadways will likely raise the production cost of coal, said several BCMCL officials.

As opposed to the current production cost of around USD 100 per tonne, the same amount of coal might end up costing about USD 140 after the development of the northern reserve is complete, they also speculated.

Since its inception in 2005 till May this year, 12 crore tonnes of coal was extracted from the mine. In fiscal year 2019-20 alone, BCMCL earned Tk 271.50 in net profit.

In 2006, when incidents of land subsidence took place in surrounding areas, BCMCL paid Tk 191 crore to villagers, in compensation for acquisition of at least 646 acres of land.

BCMCL officials said the new land acquisition is a measure to avoid any loss of life or property in case of any land subsidence occurs during the development in the northern reserve of the mine.

The mine has been playing a significant role in the national economy by supplying its coal to the Barapukuria power plant, said Kamruzzaman, the MD of BCMCL.



Barapukuria coal mine in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

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