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Climate chaos:

Changing climate for Rambutan in Malwana

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Once, Bibile was famous for the goodness of 'Peni Dodam,' or oranges, just as apple-like big pears for Nuwaraeliya prior to the 1978 hurricane. Would the fate of gleaming red or yellow Rambutan in Malwana be similar?

Yes, probably, it could be a matter of few more years before growers in Malwana would get rid of the fruit loved by all, giving back coconut and rubber their due places. These growers had removed coconut and rubber trees in their gardens and planted bud Rambutan saplings of 'Malwana' variety in 1980s.

"Many Rambutan growers are seriously thinking of planting coconut or rubber uprooting Rambutan trees," says E. A. Suraweera Perera (75), Malwana, a Rambutan grower disappointed by the continuous crop failures over the recent years, mainly due to the changes in the climate during past few years.

Back to coconut and rubber

"Rambutan could guarantee no future for us. A proper Rambutan season did not come for several years. There is only one season per year and when that fails, we are ruined," Pathirana another small scale grower lamented. "If this year's crop fails we'll have to wait for the next year or the next but a coconut tree could give us at least some coconuts for every two months," Pathirana expressed his concern.

Amis Perera Jayathilake (85) of Kalukondayawa is a Rambutan grower who counts 35 years of experience in Rambutan growing. He is taking care of 135 Rambutan trees with his son Upali. "One day we might cut those threes and grow coconut or rubber again," added Amis Perera agreeing with the common sentiments expressed by Rambutan growers in the area.

"When we were children there is only one Rambutan season that had come timely. But now it is different. The season never begins on time and the climate has been topsy-turvy," says Amis Perera.