

# Hills now hub of seasonal fruits

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, RANGAMATI and KOFIL MAHMUD, KHAGRACHARI

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is becoming a seasonal fruit hub with immense potential for the development of a food processing sector.

Last year the CHT produced nearly 14 lakh tonnes of fruit, officials said, while a decade ago production in the region was 6 lakh tonnes.

Fruit is grown on 77,000 hectares of land, up from 45,000 hectares in 2002.

"There is a fruit revolution in the hill tracts," said SM Emdadul Haque, additional director (horticulture) of the Department of Agriculture Extension

(DAE) in Dhaka.

Over 40 fruit varieties grow in the region, with litchis, jackfruit, mangoes, watermelons and bananas the most plentiful.

The government has promoted fruit production in the CHT since independence, but the opening of horticulture centres and implementation of a large-scale government project from 2001 played a critical role.

Through the project the government distributed free amropani, litchi, olive and orange saplings, and after the project ended in 2006, saplings were provided at low cost, officials said.

Ajit Talukder, a farmer in Wagga, Rangamati, said he

started an orchard after the DAE gave him 1200 mango, litchi and olive saplings in 2002. "I earned 15 lakh taka in the last five years," he told The Daily Star.

Many, however, have expressed dismay over the absence of food processing industries and poor road communications.

"Had there been some fruit processing industries, more farmers would produce fruit," said SM Emdadul Haque. Better roads could facilitate product transport, he noted.

Hundreds of hills remain fallow and cultivating them could make Bangladesh a fruit exporter, he said.

Additional reporting by Porimol Palma



Jackfruits bought from growers in different remote areas of Rangamati are being unloaded in Old Bus Stand area of the town before sending them to other districts including Chittagong and Dhaka. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Fake police

FROM PAGE 16  
Birrer's home town of Sursee, near Lucerne.

The owner of a local car rental firm, Birrer had the brilliant idea to paint a Hyundai i40 in the colours of the Swiss police, fit it with warning lights and advertise it as an effective way to discourage burglars.

The newspaper ad read: "Don't want your home broken into? Are you leaving on vacation soon? Rent our police car, we leave it parked outside your home the entire time."

It was meant to be a publicity stunt, but the ad got people so interested that the Swiss mechanic decided to actually provide the unusual service.

Now he has a whole fleet of police car replicas available for 250 francs (\$270) a week.

Birrer is raking in a small fortune as his idea seems to have become a hit.

## Anti-terror

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2009, following which it was amended last year. The latest amendment aims to overcome some shortcomings in terms of curbing terrorism through inter-state cooperation and checking terror financing, says the bill.

Protesting the bill, several BNP MPs, including Moudud Ahmed, who led the opposition bench in the absence of Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, excoriated the government saying that the bill was more repressive compared to the Special Powers Act, 1974 passed during the tenure of Bangabandhu's government.

Discussing the bill, Moudud said according to the re-definition of terrorism, an individual has been included in the bill apart from organisation, which he feared would be misused to intensify oppression and harassment of opposition leaders and activists.

"Under a provision of this law, police have been given powers to arrest any individual and there is no provision of giving bail in it as offence against the individual will be considered as cognisable," added the BNP leader.

Besides, police were given arbitrary powers to freeze any bank account and confiscate any individual's wealth without taking prior permission from the courts, pointed out Moudud.

As per law, police now have to inform the courts about freezing bank accounts or confiscating the wealth of an individual, he noted.

Even the authorities concerned would be able to confiscate wealth or freeze the bank account of an individual while conducting investigations against him/her, which is a violation of our constitutional rights, claimed the legislator.

Joining the discussion, other opposition MPs criticised the government saying that political confrontation would escalate if the bill was passed.

Defending the bill, the home minister refuted the allegations made by the opposition MPs and said, "I want to hold out the assurance that no gentleman or gentlewoman will be harassed under the law."

Although boycotting the passage of the bill, the opposition lawmakers returned to the House after a few minutes.

## No big name except Abul

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BNP alleged that relatives of the prime minister had been involved in corruption in the bridge project.

Newly appointed WB Country Director Johannes Zutt yesterday handed over the panel's final report on the conduct of the ACC probe to Finance Minister AMA Muhith at the latter's secretariat office in the capital.

In its 10-page report, the panel made a number of recommendations that include incorporating Abul's name in the list of suspects in order to make the ACC probe transparent, according to sources.

The panel's final observation was almost similar to what it had mentioned in its letter to the anti-graft watchdog in January, said the sources.

The details of the final report could not be known.

In January, Luis Moreno Ocampo, chairman of the WB's external panel of experts, wrote to the ACC

chairman, and conveyed the panel's unhappiness over the ACC probe.

The letter stated, "The panel assessed that at least four individuals working for the government of Bangladesh, including the former communications minister, should be named as accused in the FIR."

"I do not know whether it will be published or not. But, of course they [WB] will publish it on their website. Yes, I permitted the World Bank to post it on its website," Muhith told reporters at a briefing after a meeting with WB officials.

Sources said the WB might release the report in a week.

Talking to journalists at his secretariat office, Muhith said no corruption had taken place in the Padma bridge project.

"It is a case of corruption conspiracy." Only the BNP believed that corruption took place in the bridge project, said the finance

minister.

Asked whether he was absolutely sure that there was no corruption in the project, Muhith confidently said no graft took place in the project.

"The conspiracy of corruption is not corruption," he said.

But when journalists again asked him whether corruption was an offence or not, Muhith seemed a bit puzzled, and said the ACC was investigating it.

Punishment might be handed out for committing conspiracy, said Muhith. But he did not elaborate.

ACC Commissioner Mohammad Shahabuddin told The Daily Star, "We heard that the World Bank had submitted its final report but we have not been officially informed about it."

Asked whether the ACC would take into account the WB panel's recommendations, he said, "We may draw inference from the data in the report, if necessary."

## Negligence unpardonable

FROM PAGE 1

responsible for the disaster and they were absconding, he added.

The home ministry recently sent its probe report to the Office of the Attorney General for submission before the High Court on June 19.

Earlier on November 25 last year, the ministry formed the four-member committee led by its Additional Secretary Mainuddin Khondker.

Md Abdus Salam, director general of the industrial police, Md Abdus Salam, director (administration) of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, and Sayeed Mahmud Belal Haider, deputy secretary to the home ministry, were the other members of the committee.

They submitted the report to the home ministry in December last year. The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the report.

The committee in the report observed the disaster at Tazreen Fashions was very sensitive that had created a sensation both at home and abroad.

The incident might be "subversive", but the "unpardonable neglect" of its owner was also responsible for it, the probe report added.

It was clearly an offence of causing deaths by negligence, the report further said.

The committee has also found eight others of the garment factory responsible for the incident and recommended their trial under relevant laws.

They are manager Md Abdur Razzak, quality manager Md Shahiduzzaman Dulal, production manager Md Mobarok Hossain Monju, assistant production manager Md Sohel Rana, assistant general manager Harun Or Rashid, security-in-charge Al Amin, Delwar Hossain's wife, who is a director, and engineer M Mahabubul Morshed.

Delwar and his wife had constructed the building like a brick kiln on a faulty plan and illegally used the walkway on the ground floor as a godown, the report said.

Three anthropologists -- Naznin Akter Banu, Saydia Gulrukh Kamal and Mahmudul Hasan Sumon -- filed a writ petition on April 28 with the HC seeking directives on the government to arrest and bring Delwar to book.

The petitioners have also claimed 37 garment workers are still missing since the deadly fire.

After the hearing on the petition, the HC on June 9

directed the government to submit the probe report to it on June 19.

The court also asked the inspector general of police to get DNA tests of the relatives of the missing people done and submit a report to it on June 19.

India has come up with this new move although the joint committee formed to ascertain the feasibility and impact of the proposed dam is yet to submit its report.

There has been a massive protest against the proposed dam both in Bangladesh and Monipur. Experts apprehend massive environmental and ecological disaster in Bangladesh if the dam is built.

The newly formed special committee is mandated to ascertain the dam's impact on human life, livelihood and biodiversity.

The dam scheme is proposed at confluence of Barak and Tuivai rivers in Monipur to produce 1500 megawatt hydro electricity and prevent floods.

## Defence

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officer Nurul Islam if he had collected any documents in support of nationality of the people killed after March 26, 1971.

Hena also asked the investigator if he had collected death certificates of those killed in Hathazari of Chittagong in 1971 and seized any death register in this connection.

Prosecutor Sultan Mahmud Simon opposed the questions.

Earlier on Monday, Hena asked the investigator if he had a list of three million people killed in 1971.

Riled, Simon said Hena was actually denying the sovereignty of Bangladesh by asking such questions.

The defence counsel withdrew the questions and asked the investigator whether he had made any queries at the Chittagong deputy commissioner's office over the killings in Hathazari, Raozan, Kotwali and Boalkhali.

Investigator Nurul Islam replied he had collected a partial list but did not seize it.

On October 2 last year, the same tribunal expressed annoyance when the defence counsel pronounced the Liberation War distortedly.

The defence yesterday cross-examined the investigation officer over dissimilarities between depositions against his client.

The proceedings of the case were adjourned until today.

## Leaving Bangladesh

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chapters in a statement said some companies were backing away from Bangladesh sending a wrong signal about their commitment to workers' rights and fighting corruption.

The anti-corruption group said those companies should lobby the government for a legal reform to uplift the integrity in the sector and dedicate greater resources to government officials responsible for safety inspection.

Two major factory disasters, a building collapse and a fire incident, had drawn the world's attention to the working condition in Bangladesh and companies that source products from here. Corruption was one of the factors making it harder to tackle these problems, the statement said.

"The companies leaving in the face of such tragedies, or to avoid greater regulation, will only be punishing the victims of corruption rather than the perpetrators," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

He said the alternative to dumping business in Bangladesh was to work with the government on ensuring that factories complied with safety rules.

The TI chapters com-

mended the initiatives taken by some companies, international organisations and local players to support the critically important readymade garment sector, especially the workers' rights.

Negligence, lack of resources, bribery in licensing and permitting, or collusion between factory owners and safety inspections allows facilities to remain even when dangers were identified, said the chapters.

They said the Rana Plaza building, which collapsed on April 24 killing more than 1,000 people, had been allegedly constructed on an illegally occupied piece of land and it lacked permission for extra floors.

The statement said Tazreen factory had three illegal floors and no emergency exit. It had lost the safety certificate months before the blaze incident that killed 112 people on November 24, 2012.

However, corruption was not checked in Bangladesh, said the statement, adding that nine of the world's 10 biggest clothing producers scored less than 50 out of 100 in TI's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index, where zero suggests extreme corruption and 100 perfectly clean.

This suggests widespread corruption risk that can make safety inspection

vulnerable to bribery, according to the statement.

"The legacy of the Savar tragedy should not be to scare business and investment away from Bangladesh, but to underscore the importance of conducting business with responsibility and integrity," said Iftekharuzzaman.

The Bangladesh, Cambodia and Indonesia chapters of TI emphasised the need for stronger enforcement of laws with greater human, professional, legal and institutional capacity to prevent such disasters.

It is the duty of the governments to enact appropriate laws in consultation with public and trade unions to assure safe working condition and corruption free investment, they observed.

The chapters also emphasised the shared responsibilities of consumers, mainly those of the developed world, to demand for ethically-made products.

A big responsibility also lay within the governments in developed countries to assure that their companies met national and international labour standards and did not engage in corrupt practices in conducting business in other countries, added the TI statement.

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