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PINEAPPLE IN MADHUPUR Ripe, risky

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Growers and traders in Madhupur Garh region are excessively using growth hormones and artificial ripening agents in pineapples to make them bigger and to hasten the ripening process, posing serious health hazard.

They have also been using formalin to increase the shelf life of the popular summer fruit.

Markets of this region are deluged with different chemicals and hormones and trading of these chemicals is going unabated due to the lack of proper government monitoring.

Madhupur Garh is famous for producing Honey Queen and Giant Q varieties of pineapples and this year, the fruit was cultivated on around 10,000 hectares of land, agriculture officials said.

The orchard owners use different growth hormones including planofix and superfix in the fruit during the budding stage and before harvest. Then they use ethephon (or ethylene) after harvest for fast ripening and to make the fruits yellow, they added.

Later, formalin is sprayed on the fruits just before transportation, local pineapple growers said.

Farmer Abdul Aziz of Garobazar of Ghatali upazila, a recipient of Channel i agriculture award, said most farmers are unaware of the correct amount of chemicals to be applied as they did not have any training. They cannot even read the directions on the labels.

"Chemicals and hormones of different companies are

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Pineapples stacked up in vans at a wholesale market at Jalchhatra in Madhupur, Tangail. The upazila sees a bumper yield of the juicy summer fruit this season. *Inset*, farmers spraying chemicals on a pineapple orchard at Jangalia of Madhupur. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO:
MIRZA SHAKIL



Two lakh people marooned

Rain, water from rivers upstream inundate five districts

STAFF REPORT

Incessant rains and the onrush of water from rivers upstream in India over the last few days flooded several northern and north-eastern districts in the country.

Around two lakh people in six districts -- Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Sunamganj, Feni and Sherpur -- have been marooned. Many of them are living on the rooftops in helpless condition.

The situation may not improve in one or two days, said an official of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), adding that new areas might go under water if the rain continued.

The water level of the rivers upstream has been rising and may continue for another two to three days, resulting in the rise of water levels on this side in Bangladesh, said Ripon Karmaker, an officer of FFWC, yesterday.

Several major rivers like Jamuna will flow at a higher level, which may cause floods in low-lying areas of Sirajganj, Bogra and Faridpur, he added.

Flash floods in north-east (Sylhet, Sunamganj, Netrakona) and south-east (Parbatya Chittagong) areas are mainly caused by continuous rains. The situation in these areas may deteriorate further as the weather office has forecast more rain in the next two to three days, Ripon said.

According to a bulletin issued by FFWC, Teesta, Surma and Kangsha rivers were flowing above the danger level yesterday. The water levels at 63 measuring points out of 83 of the rivers across the country showed a rising trend while the levels fell at 17 points and remained steady at two points while one point was unreported.

LALMONIRHAT
More than one lakh people of Patgram, Kaliganj, Hatibandha, Aditmari and sadar upazilas of the

district have been marooned, as the areas have been submerged by rising water.

Both Teesta and Dhara rivers were flowing above the danger level, officials of the Water Development Board (WDB) told our *Malmonirhat* correspondent.

Teesta Barrage area was on red alert yesterday and the people living in adjoining areas were evacuated to a safe zone, said Mahbubur Rahman, executive engineer of WDB, *Malmonirhat*.

India has kept all the gates of Teesta Barrage on its side at Gajoldoba point open, prompting WDB to keep all 52 gates of Teesta Barrage here open since yesterday morning to release the extra water, he said.

Mahbubur added that if rain and water flow continued, WDB officials would cut the by-pass of the barrage to save it.

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