

# 10pc mangoes lost in storm

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Around 50,000 tonnes of mangoes got knocked off trees in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj by the season's first nor'wester Sunday night, growers and experts said.

According to them, the lost mangoes are 10 percent of the estimated 5 lakh tonne mango output from the two famous mango-producing districts this year.

However, the damage would not affect this season's expected mango production too much. Growers might earn some money selling the green mangoes since those have demand, they said.

"The trees cannot keep all the mangoes they bear. Some fall naturally," said Sorof Uddin, senior scientific officer of Regional Horticulture Research Centre in Chapainawabganj.

Alim Uddin, chief scientific officer of Rajshahi Fruit Research Centre, said mangoes were considered storm tolerant.

However, further storms could affect the mango production, said Deb Dulal Dhali, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Rajshahi.

The wind speed during Sunday's nor'wester reached about 95kmph and swept over the two districts, according to Rajshahi Met office. Many mango trees

toppled. Visiting several areas in Rajshahi city and Puthia upazila on Monday, The Daily Star correspondent saw growers cleaning mango orchards, collecting mangoes in sacks and taking those to Baneshwar Bazar, one of the region's largest mango markets.

Green mangoes flooded the market when this correspondent went there. Usually, the market is abuzz with growers and traders towards the end of May, when mangoes ripe.

Even on Sunday, a maund of green mangoes was sold for Tk250, but the price dropped to Tk40 per maund following the storm, traders said, adding that they were sending those to Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna and Jessore.

Forhad Hossain of Puthia's Bhoruapara said he took lease of two mango orchards this year. Around 75 percent of mangoes of one of his orchards were damaged in the storm, he said. "It will be difficult for me to make a profit this year."

Waliullah, a mango grower of Baneshwar, said, "It hurts when I see mangoes on the ground."

He took eight mango orchards on lease. Around 80 percent mangoes of two of his orchards were lost in the storm while the other orchards suffered 20 percent damage.



A pile of green mangoes surrounded by sacks full of the fruit at Baneshwar Bazar in Rajshahi. Sunday's nor'wester hurt orchard owners as the storm caused trees to topple, inset, or lose their fruits before they became ripe. The photos were taken on Monday.



PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

## \$75b LOST IN 2005-14 Central bank asked to probe allegations

State minister for finance tells JS; Badal blasts Muhith

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has instructed the Bangladesh Bank to investigate the allegation that the country lost \$75 billion due to trade misinvoicing and other unrecorded outflows between 2005 and 2014, State Minister for Finance and Planning M Abdul Mannan told parliament yesterday.

Replying to a query from an MP, Mannan also asked all to remain alert so that such incidents of theft are not repeated.

The government would not hesitate to take legal action to prevent

## ADB focuses on water worries

FROM PAGE 1  
Manila emailed to inform that Bangladesh would get \$250 million out of the \$4.2 billion this year.

According to an ADB literature, declining river health is most evident in Bangladesh, the lower Yangtze River Basin in China, Nepal and northern and southern Vietnam (Mekong Delta).

Of the \$4.2 billion, half a billion dollars would go to China as part of a four-year project worth \$4 billion to revitalise the Yangtze river and turn the industries along the river green, said Leung.

She said 29 out of 48 countries in the Asia and Pacific are currently facing water insecurity.

Many Asian countries would end up with least per capita availability. And that's why the Bank was increasing its water projects across the continent, added the ADB DDG.

An ADB literature notes, "South

Asia has the lowest score for resilience to water-related disasters, notably Bangladesh and India. Several countries increased resilience between 2013 and 2016, including Pakistan and the Philippines."

Bangladesh also lags behind in providing better water services like water, wastewater and stormwater managements in urban settings, according to the Bank.

The ADB has awarded an additional investment grant of \$6 million to build resilience in vulnerable communities in Bangladesh's Bagerhat and Patuakhali. This is part of the Bank's \$130 million trust fund established in recent years to support fast-growing cities in Asia to reduce the risk the poor face from the negative impacts of climate change.

Speaking at the news briefing, ADB Technical Adviser (urban) Vijay

Padmanabhan said Bangladesh is among seven countries where at least 70 percent of the Bank's \$2 billion portfolio for urban cities goes to water and sanitation projects under its "Liveable Cities Initiative".

Leung said 150 million more people could have been provided with safe water if the leakage of water pipelines in the Asian countries was halved.

The issue of water got more complicated when countries failed to manage common river waters as upstream and downstream neighbours, she added.

"We didn't conduct a study on transboundary river issues by ourselves," said Leung, adding that ADB didn't want to be dragged into this as things get "political" at times when it comes to water-sharing.

About setting up of hydrological power plants in India's Sikkim, the

ADB official said the Bank gets involved in small-scale hydel projects rather than in gigantic ones and that it cares about any adverse ecological impacts.

Leung said ADB would soon publish a study identifying "water hotspots" in Asia -- it would inform the governments across Asian nations about where and how they should focus to help people come out of water-starved situations in the coming decades. The study is done and all the governments sans India have completed reviews. It should be made public very soon provided India's review gets completed, she added.

She also spoke of an upcoming GIS-based water information system, first of its kind, in Pakistan's Balochistan which would help the Baloch government to develop efficiency in farm irrigation.

## SSC results today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations will be published simultaneously across the country today.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will hand over a copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10:30am.

He will formally announce the results at a press conference at his ministry at 12:30pm.

The examinees will get their results from the respective centres, websites of their respective boards and also through mobile phones through short message service (sms) after the conference.

The results will be available on the website <http://www.educationboardresults.gov.bd>.

To receive the results through sms, SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

## Caught in cycle of misfortune, debt, neglect

FROM PAGE 1  
Some 70 percent of them come here having fallen victim to environmental disasters like flood, cyclone, river erosion and crop loss due to untimely rain, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

### URBAN POOR WITHOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION

Most of these migrants comprise the working class, but the government doesn't recognise their contribution to the economy, said Ashekur Rahman, urban programme specialist at the IUNDP Bangladesh.

Those of the urban poor, who live in slums across the country, have increased by more than 60 percent to 2.23 million in the last 17 years. Almost half of them live in Dhaka division alone, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

In the capital, a majority of the poor live mostly in illegal infrastructures built on Khas land by locally influential people, who also provide them with illegal water and electricity supply at a high cost.

There is a huge gap between social and government services available to rural and urban poor. Policymakers don't even consider ensuring basic rights like education and primary health of the poor people living in cities.

"Slum dwellers live like refugees. The city corporations and other government service providers don't consider them the city's residents," Ashekur said.

For example, he said, in the capital's Korail, there are not enough public schools for the children living in the slums there.

Some NGOs are working to improve the water, electricity and sanitation situations, but that's on a temporary or ad hoc basis.

The government's intervention is very rare, which is indeed necessary to make a big impact, said Prof M Abu Eusuf, chairman of development studies department at Dhaka University.

After crop loss due to sudden flash floods in the northern districts only late last month, many farmers have been reported to have left their villages for work in nearby cities.

Rokeya's life exemplifies the financial constraints that push these people to migrate to cities and the conse-

quences they face. The 35-year-old is surely among the extreme urban poor estimated at 7.7 percent in 2010, down from 14.6 percent in 2005, by the Bangladesh Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). During the same period, the number of urban poor fell to 21.3 percent from 28.4 percent. More recent data is not available.

Though there has been a significant improvement in the poverty status in urban areas, a Unicef report says climate change threatens to reverse some of Bangladesh's success in primary education, healthcare, child marriage, child labour, hunger and malnutrition.

This concern seems real when seen in the context of the lives of slum dwellers like Rokeya and Raihan.

With empty hands, the couple came to Dhaka leaving their five-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter to be cared for by Raihan's parents. The daughter was married off the same year, for which Rokeya is "grateful" to her-in-laws.

Given his health condition, Raihan

is unable to support the family much, though he sometimes pulls rickshaw or sells peanuts on the streets.

Rokeya's monthly income of Tk 2,300 cannot even pay the house rent, and so her son, aged only 14, shoulders the family's responsibility.

Globally, poverty is defined by income of \$1.9 or below per person per day, but life in a village and a city can be two poles apart with the same income.

Migrants may see a significant income rise when they move to cities from rural areas, but that fails to improve their living standards because of high living cost.

"There is a misconception among policymakers that poverty can be eradicated only by addressing rural poverty," Ashekur said.

There are many government programmes aimed at encouraging the poor migrated population to return to their villages. But those have not been much of a success because economic activities have not increased in rural areas in proportion to the overall economic development, he added.

### LACK OF SAFETY NET FOR URBAN POOR

To lift people out of extreme poverty in rural areas, the government has taken many initiatives like tagging microcredit programmes with social safety net programmes. Some have been successful.

One such project -- Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) Programme -- was taken up and coordinated by the government, World Food Programme and Brac in 1985.

Under the programme, widowed and abandoned women are given free food grains as well as some credit at the end of six months' training. The food support continues for 18 months, by which time they start making a steady income with the loan money.

Such an approach helps the ultra poor to leave behind their bleak present and give them hope for a better future, as studies by NGOs, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation and Brac Development Institute suggest that the bottom 10 percent of the country's population don't have access to microcredit.

Currently, about 10 percent of the urban poor are under social safety net programme against 30 percent in rural areas, according to the latest HIES report.

Except for Open Market Sale and Urban Community Development programme meant for the urban poor only, other safety net programmes cover mostly rural areas -- 94.03 percent old-age allowance and 98.32 percent of the allowance meant for widowed and distressed women go to the rural poor, said Prof Eusuf, citing Planning Commission data from 2015.

Recently, the government has adopted a more inclusive National Social Security Strategy to address poverty and inequality. But the DU teacher warned that policymakers must keep in mind that the need of the urban poor is very different from that of the rural poor.

Urban poverty is an ever increasing crisis, but no policy has been formulated to tackle it, the DU teacher said.

"The government thinks if the issues of urban poverty are addressed, the poor will be encouraged to migrate to cities, which is wrong."

Globally, migration has remained one of the popular livelihood strategies. So, if the middleclass can move to cities looking for better jobs, the poor should also have the right to move to urban areas for a living.

That's what Sabina Begum did seven years back.

Her family moved to Dhaka from Nasirnagar upazila of Brahmanbaria when she and her husband were struggling to repay the loans they had taken to buy food for their children -- a toddler and an infant.

Her village Goolgar is surrounded by rivers. Farmlands in the village remain under water half of the year. People mostly do fishing for living.

"The income was low and so we came here," Sabina says.

The first few years went well. With her income from sewing and work as house help and her husband's from construction job, they paid off the loans.

But then her husband's developing asthma came as a fresh blow to the family and the whole financial burden fell on her.

To break the cycle of falling into a crisis and then recovering, she took a gamble this time.

She decided to send her husband to Oman after one of the house owners she worked for promised to arrange a decent job for him.

She borrowed Tk 90,000 from two local people before her husband flew to Oman in January. Sabina needed the money for applying for her husband's passport, medical check-up and plane fare.

She promised to repay the loan, including the interest of Tk 45,000, by July. Four months have gone but her husband could send only Tk 30,000.

Sabina says her idle days are spent worrying. She is now thinking of taking loan from a centre of ASA, a microcredit organisation, in the village on the pretext that she would invest the money in poultry farming.

"Still, if he doesn't send enough money, how will I manage?" Sabina now wants to return to Dhaka to work, but fears for her safety in one of those clustered shanties in Bhasantek slum she lived in before.

Like her, slum dwellers face constant social and financial threats, but the authorities hardly notice their ordeals.



A woman doing the dishes with water that is being supplied illegally to the Korail slum, right, in the capital.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON