



Farmer Jasim Uddin of Lalchhara village in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila sorting out fresh oranges from the dried-up ones.

PHOTO: STAR

Scanty rainfall hits orange farming

Flowering, growth of the juicy fruit badly hampered

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The drought like situation caused by inadequate rainfall has badly hit orange farming, hampering growth and flowering of the fruit, in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila this



year. Farmers said orange plants on vast tracts of land are drying up due to drought that has been prevailing in the region for the last few months.

According to Juri Upazila Agriculture Office, there are at least 95 orange orchards on 96.5 hectares of land at several villages under different unions of the upazila.

Usually, farmers in the upazila used to cultivate oranges of Khasi and Nagpuri varieties, but recently two other varieties—Bari-1 and Bari-3—have been added to their list.

During a visit to the area this correspondent saw oranges are being cultivated at many villages under Sagarnal, Purbo Juri and Jafarnagar unions of the upazila.

Local farmers said if the weather remains favourable, they can produce oranges worth TK 5 to TK 8 lakh from a single garden

Local farmers said if the weather remains favourable, they can produce oranges worth TK 5 to TK 8 lakh from a single garden every year.

Tofayel Ahmed, an orange farmer from Rupachhara village, said his family has been doing orange farming for nearly six decades, but they have never faced such worst situation before.

He said not only green oranges are falling off the trees, but young plants are also drying up due to unknown reason.

If such a situation continues, they we will have to turn their attention away from orange cultivation, Tofayel added.

Jahangir Hossain of Hayachhara village, who has about 250 orange trees in his orchard, said although he has a good yield of the fruit this year, the quality is not satisfactory enough.

Many other growers, including Zainul, Morshed and Jasim Uddin of Lalchhara village, said when orange trees start flowering it requires adequate water and timely irrigation.

But farmers were unable to irrigate their orange trees due to lack of rainfall this year, they said.

Juri Upazila Agriculture Officer Mahmudul Alam Khan said the situation arises due to lack of rainfall during the flowering period of the fruit this year.

Moreover, many orange orchards in different hilly areas under Goalbari and Purbo Juri unions are badly infected with pest attacks due to the drought like situation that prevailing in the region.

Illegal sand lifting poses erosion threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Unauthorised sand lifting from the Jamuna river in Sarishabari upazila has continued unabated, causing serious threat to the river bank, different establishments and vast arable land in nearby villages.

Local people alleged that a section of some local influential people, including Raja Mia, Hafizur, Shamim, Rajnu, Dulal, Farhad, Forid, Jalil and many others, have been illegally extracting sand from the Jamuna river for the last four years, prompting erosion threat to the riverside villages.

The ill practice is also destroying the local environment and eco-diversity.

They said upazila administration sometimes conducts mobile court drives against the heinous act and destroys the dredgers or punishes the offenders, but the main culprits always remain out of reach and gets back into the business within two to three days.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw at least 30 locally assembled dredgers engaged in lifting sand from the Jamuna river at different villages including Pingna, Kawamara, Bhatara, Majibari, Konabari, Baushi, Jagannathganj and Jamira Char.



Some unscrupulous traders continue lifting of sand from the Jamuna river in Jamalpur's Sarishabari.

PHOTO: STAR

Manik Mia of Pingna village said, "Some local influential people have been lifting sand from the river for years, but no one dares to protest them."

Another resident of Kawamara village, seeking anonymity, said, "The dredger owners have been continuing the callous act in cooperation with the local representative for long."

Saiful Islam, an inhabitant of the area, said last year he lost his 28 decimals of arable land due to sudden erosion by the Jamuna, triggered by unlawful sand extraction from the river.

Another Hasan Ali of Jagannathganj Ghat area said several syndicates of sand traders have been lifting sand from the river illegally, prompting erosion threat to different roads and many establishments at a number of riverside villages.

Sarishabari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sarmin Akter said she was aware of the matter and soon necessary step will be taken against the perpetrators. Jamalpur Deputy Commissioner Shafiur Rahman said they have been continuing mobile court drives against the offenders to stop the illegal sand extraction.

NEWS

‘BNP out to foil election’

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"Give them [arsonists] a good lesson so that no one dares to harm any citizen of the country. Such incidents must not be allowed to happen again."

Hasina, also the AL president, asked the leaders and activists of her party and its associate bodies to protect the people with the help of the law enforcement agencies.

The PM said the country sees development and the people's welfare is ensured whenever the AL comes to power.

She said the only "virtue" of the BNP-Jamaat is killing people. She mentioned the incidents of October 28, including beating up of a cop to death in the capital.

The PM said the "BNP-Jamaat terrorists" injured 45 police personnel and attacked journalists who were covering their programmes.

She said the government has already declared a reward of Tk 20,000 for nabbing arsonists and handing them over to law enforcers. "We will not spare anyone involved in killing people through arson attacks."

Hasina said the continuation of the democratic process in the country is helping it achieve massive development, which is visible to all.

The premier requested all to vote for the AL in the parliamentary polls to enable it to serve the country and its people and continue the development of the country.

Talking about the unrest in the RMG sector, the PM said given the inflation, the salary of the government employees has been increased by only 5 percent, but the wage of the garment workers has been hiked by 56 percent.

"Why should there be a complaint?

A total of 19 factories have been damaged. Who are doing this? It is necessary to find them out," she said.

Mentioning that the RMG workers' minimum wage has been fixed at Tk 12,500, she said although the garment sector is a private sector, the government has hiked the workers' wage through discussions with the factory owners.

Regarding the introduction of the universal pension scheme, Hasina urged all to register for it.

The premier inaugurated 24 development projects, involving Tk 2,593 crore, and laid the foundation stones for another five schemes from the rally venue.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader and party leaders Sheikh Helal Uddin, Sheikh Salahuddin Jewel and Sheikh Sharhan Naser Tonmoy also spoke at the programme, chaired by Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque, also the Khulna AL president.

Polls schedule

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rounds of blockades.

The ruling Awami League and the BNP have been sticking to their guns on the election-time government.

The BNP wants a caretaker government to oversee the election and reconstitution of the EC, while the AL says the election will be held under the current government as per the constitution.

As part of the preparation for the schedule announcement, the commission met President Mohammed Shahabuddin on November 9. It also held meetings with Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan and the heads of the law enforcement agencies and ministries.

Biman does not land, carries

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was already presumed dead."

There was no doctor on board to declare him dead, said the pilot, who was relying on the flight purser.

The flight purser is not a trained medical professional. He is only trained in giving first aid.

According to the flight log, the plane took off on November 12, 2023, at 4:16am GMT/UTC, approximately 10:15am Bangladesh time.

The log states, "Cabin chief flight purser at approximately 6:55 UTC informed me about a passenger [who] became sick and [was] given first aid with oxygen, later cabin chief flight purser informed that passenger is presumed dead."

The purser told Fazal that the passenger was presumed dead approximately at 7:25am GMT.

According to the flight log, the plane landed at Heathrow at 4:16pm GMT.

Biman country head in London Irteza Kamal Chowdhury said Biman was yet to investigate the matter.

"We just know that the plane landed with a dead passenger. The authorities of Heathrow International Airport took over as soon as the plane landed and interviewed all concerned. The police and medical professionals responded. We are waiting for a written report," said Irteza.

The plane had to wait for two and a half hours at Heathrow before the passengers were allowed to disembark, he said.

The deceased was taken to a nearby hospital for confirmation of his passing.

Another bout of 48-hr blockade

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afternoon. Of them, 480 were held yesterday.

At least 16 new cases were filed yesterday, taking the total number of cases lodged against BNP men to 249 since October 28, he added.

Meanwhile, the Rapid Action Battalion, in a statement, said they picked up 393 people from across the country from October 28 till yesterday over violence and sabotage.

The Rab also claimed to have detained Mamun Majumder, 35, an assistant organising secretary of Chhatra Dal, the BNP's student front, in the capital's Abdullahpur.

Jahidur Rahman, company commander of Rab-1, said they detained Mamun around 9:00am yesterday

when he was fleeing after setting a bus of Projapoti Paribahan on fire.

SITUATION IN CITY

The number of public transport vehicles, cars, auto-rickshaws, and motorcycles plying the streets in the capital increased significantly yesterday compared to the previous day.

Traffic jams were seen in Moghbazar, Kakrail, Motijheel, Jatrabari, and some other areas. Many buses were packed with passengers, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. The Daily Star found altervisiting different areas of the capital.

However, no inter-district buses left Dhaka's Gabtoli, Sayedabad, and Mohakhali bus terminals till yesterday afternoon.

Some passengers willing to travel outside the capital were seen waiting at the terminals.

Liton Mia, a passenger, said he came to know that an Eagle Paribahan bus would leave Dhaka for Magura around 1:00pm if there were enough passengers. He told this newspaper around noon that he had been waiting at the Gabtoli terminal since morning.

Alamgir Hossain, a ticket seller for DD Paribahan at the bus terminal, said they had made all preparations to operate long-haul buses, but very few passengers turned up.

"If we have a minimum of 20 passengers, we will operate a bus on the Dhaka-Chuadanga-Darshana route at 10:15pm," he said.

Tanks surround Gaza hospital

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northern border with Lebanon, and the United States launching air strikes on Iran-linked militia targets in neighbouring Syria.

King Abdullah in neighbouring Jordan was quoted yesterday by state media as saying the root cause of the crisis was Israel's denial of Palestinians' "legitimate rights" and that there could be no military solution.

Israel launched its campaign last month after Hamas fighters rampaged through southern Israel killing civilians. Around 1,200 people died and 240 were dragged to Gaza as hostages according to Israel's tally, in the deadliest day in its 75-year history.

Since then thousands of Gazans have been killed and two thirds of the population made homeless by a

relentless Israeli military campaign. Israel has ordered the total evacuation of the northern half of Gaza. Gaza medical authorities say more than 11,000 people have been confirmed killed, around 40 percent of them children.

Since Israeli ground forces entered Gaza in late October and quickly surrounded Gaza City, fighting has been concentrated in a tightening circle around Al Shifa, the enclave's biggest hospital.

Gaza health ministry spokesperson Qidra said an Israel tank was now stationed at the hospital gate. Israeli snipers and drones were firing into the hospital, making it impossible for medics and patients to move around.

"We are besieged and are inside a circle of death," he said.

Fighting also took place at a second major hospital in northern

Gaza, al Quds, which has also stopped functioning. The Palestinian Red Crescent said the hospital was surrounded by heavy gunfire, and a convoy sent to evacuate patients and staff had been unable to reach it.

Meanwhile, UN agencies observed a minute's silence yesterday for 101 staff members killed so far in Gaza.

UN agency UNRWA is now housing around 800,000 people in Gaza, or half of those made homeless by the fighting. It yesterday said its emergency fuel depot for the enclave had finally run dry and it would soon be unable to run ambulances, resupply hospitals, provide drinking water or pump sewage.

The conflict has raised fears of a broader conflagration. Lebanon-based Hezbollah, which like Hamas is backed by Iran, has traded missile attacks with Israel.