



PHOTO: STAR

Pabna litchi growers eye bumper harvest

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Litchi farmers in Pabna are expecting a bumper harvest and record-breaking profits this summer after years of heavy losses – thanks to favourable weather conditions.

However, they remain cautious about potential damage from nor-wester storms.

During a visit to Ishwardi – Bangladesh's largest litchi-producing hub – a spectacular bloom was seen in most trees.

Sheikh Mehedi Hasan of Shahapur village estimated a harvest of 10,000-12,000 fruits from large trees, 7,000-8,000 from medium-sized trees, and 4,000-5,000 from smaller ones each.

Wholesale prices are currently set at Tk 1,200 per thousand fruits for local varieties and Tk 1,700-1,800 for hybrids such as Bombay and China-3.

While the prices are slightly lower than last year's, farmers and traders believe the sheer volume of the fruits

will ensure record profits.

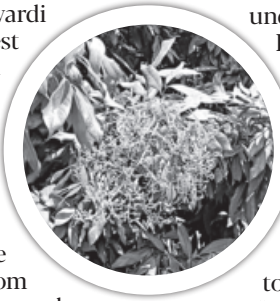
Sajahan Ali Badsha, a litchi grower in Pabna, said if 60-70 percent of the buds successfully mature into fruits, this year's business may exceed Tk 700-800 crore, surpassing all previous records.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, 4,620 hectares have been brought under litchi cultivation in Pabna this year, with over 3,000 hectares in Ishwardi alone.

Md Shah Alam, development section officer at DAE in Pabna, said last year's yield was the lowest in a decade at 34,898 tonnes, compared to 46,790 in 2024.

"We usually see an average yield of 10 tonnes per hectare, but this year we are expecting at least 11 tonnes per hectare due to abundant blooms," Alam said.

"We anticipate a total production exceeding 50,000 tonnes, provided there are no major damage from natural disasters."



Ex-army officials

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on the third day of his remand about his alleged rise to influence during the caretaker government and claims that he later benefited under the Awami League government by missing state machinery.

He did not provide any information on these matters, according to DB sources.

At least two DB officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said although Chowdhury was arrested in a human trafficking case, he has not yet been questioned about that case.

"His five-day remand has almost ended, and further time may be sought for interrogation," one official said.

Contacted, DB Joint Commissioner (Cyber) Syed Harun Or Rashid said the investigation is still at a preliminary stage, with no significant progress to report.

Mamun Khaled, arrested early Thursday in the murder case, was asked why "Ayna Ghor" was established, who the first victim was, and about detainees' experiences, a senior DB official said.

However, the former DGI chief did not respond, added the official.

The official claimed that the detention cells were first introduced during Khaled's tenure.

Defence sources said Sheikh Mamun, who joined DGI in December 2007 as director of the Forces Intelligence Security Bureau (FSIB), allegedly accumulated significant wealth by threatening political leaders and businessmen.

Another defence source claimed he was a key figure behind the establishment of "Ayna Ghor" and orchestrated staged militancy operations.

The Daily Star could not independently verify these claims.

Contacted, DB Joint Commissioner Nasirul Islam, however, said the questioning is focused on the case for which Mamun Khaled was arrested.

DB chief and Additional Commissioner of Dhaka DMP Shafiqul Islam echoed him. If evidence of sudden or unusual wealth accumulation emerges, the matter will be investigated further, he said.

Rescue operation

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received Tk 25,000 in government assistance.

Officials said no new missing persons had been reported to the district or upazila administration.

However, a woman named Mukta Akter, also known as Sohana Shova, from Baliakandi upazila informed the fire service that her elder brother, Ripon Sheikh, is missing.

Ripon, 40, a kiln worker of Shyamsundarpur village under Baharpur union, had left home on Wednesday afternoon with his younger brother, Sumon Sheikh, for Dhaka.

Sumon, who works at a factory in Islampur, Dhaka, said he left Ripon at the New Market poultry farm bus stand in Rajbari town and went to a nearby shop for tea. When he returned, he found his brother missing.

Assuming nothing unusual, Sumon continued his journey to Dhaka and later informed the family of his safe arrival. As Ripon

did not carry a mobile phone, the family was unable to contact him.

Mukta Akter told journalists that her brother had planned to buy a phone after reaching Dhaka and inform the family.

"We still don't know whether he reached Dhaka. Since the bus sank on Wednesday night, we have been in deep concern," she said, adding that Ripon's wife, who is now at her parental home in Rajshahi, has not yet been informed.

Fire service official Rana said the family has not been able to confirm whether Ripon was a passenger on the Souhardo Paribahan bus.

"If any body is recovered, we will try to match it with the missing person," he said.

Meanwhile, the registration of the bus has been suspended, said Muhammad Ahidur Rahman, assistant director (Rajbari Circle) at the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

6,000 litres

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The seized items have been taken into legal custody, and a case is being prepared in connection with the incident, the OC said.

Meanwhile, in Sherpur, a mobile court fined a businessman Tk 10,000 for illegally installing a fuel tank and storing diesel in a residential building in the district town early yesterday.

The court also ordered the removal of the stored fuel and the tank within the day.

The drive was conducted by Executive Magistrate Mahmudul Hasan around 12:30am in the Gopalbari area.

The businessman, Tapas Nandi, owns an establishment named M/s Shimla Traders.

Sherpur Sadar Police Station OC Md Sohel Rana said a tank with a capacity of 25,000 litres had been illegally installed on the ground floor of a multi-storey building to store diesel.

Tapas Nandi, along with one Shafiqul Islam, was storing diesel there. During the drive, approximately 18,000 litres of diesel were found.

In Chapainawabganj, a mobile court yesterday fined a filling station in Gomostapur upazila Tk 20,000 for refusing to sell fuel despite having a significant amount in stock.

The drive was conducted by Gomostapur UNO and Executive Magistrate Zakir Munshi at Brothers and Sisters Filling Station in the Boro Dadpur area.

During the operation, authorities found that the filling station had suspended fuel sales by displaying a "No fuel at the pump" sign.

However, upon inspecting the storage tanks, officials discovered 2,368 litres of petrol, 3,760 litres of diesel, and 3,655 litres of octane in stock, the executive magistrate confirmed.

He also ensured that the sale of the stored fuel resumed immediately.

(Our Chattogram, Sherpur, and Rajshahi correspondents contributed to this report)

New advisers in the offing

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The government had initially considered five to six names but is now narrowing the list to around three individuals for final selection, sources said.

Among those under consideration is Ziauddin Hyder, an adviser to the BNP chairperson and a former senior official at the World Bank. Ziauddin also served as a member of the BNP's central election steering committee. A senior health specialist, Ziauddin has also worked with a number of international organisations. He is likely to be appointed with the status of a full minister, sources said.

Another name under discussion is Saimum Parvez, who serves as a special assistant to the BNP chairperson's Foreign Affairs Advisory Committee and is also a member of the party's central election steering committee.

Sources said his profile is being considered useful in a government that is trying to strengthen both policy communication and coordination.

Party sources said there is also discussion about Tanvir Ghani, the president of The Osiris Group, an Asian investment firm, being appointed as an adviser with the rank of state minister. His inclusion, if finalised, would add a business and investment background to the team being considered.

Seeking anonymity, a PMO official said, "Ziauddin Hyder's and Saimum Parvez's files are ready. Once signed, the appointments will be

announced."

PMO officials did not confirm the final list of names. They said discussions are still ongoing and any decision will require approval from the highest level of government. The final decision on the new advisers is expected soon, with formal announcements likely to be made once approvals are completed.

Sources said that PMO officials are now scrutinising the candidates, seeking feedback on their qualifications and past work, while also assessing their political loyalty before making final decisions. The timing may depend on the completion of paperwork and final clearance from the top level.

The government has already appointed 10 advisers since taking office, including five with the rank of minister and five with the rank of state minister. These advisers are working with different ministries to support policy work and daily operations.

The planned expansion comes as the government faces pressure on multiple fronts, working to deliver election promises and rebuild weakened institutions, while also dealing with an ongoing energy crisis that has added strain on its overall operations.

Officials said the pressure is both political and administrative, as ministries are being asked to move faster on decisions and visible delivery.

Ministries are also dealing with routine governance work, development projects, and

public service delivery. Managing these tasks with limited manpower has slowed the pace of work in some areas.

In some cases, sources said, senior officials are spending large amounts of time on immediate operational matters, leaving less room for planning and follow-up.

Seeking anonymity, a state minister said, "The prime minister wants, alongside ministers and state ministers, an expert team to support them. Some in the cabinet lack experience, and there is also a need for more expatriate expertise. In that context, adding advisers will help improve outcomes."

Cabinet sources said several key ministries have recently reported weaknesses in administrative capacity and delays in work processes, affecting timely decision-making and implementation of policies.

"The government is trying to move fast, but the system is under strain. Adding more experienced hands is one way to deal with that," a state minister told this newspaper.

Officials said the new advisers will focus on policy planning, inter-ministry coordination, and faster review of pending decisions, working closely with ministers and senior officials to prepare reports and ensure timely implementation.

In some cases, advisers may also play a role in handling international communication and managing relations with development partners, said cabinet sources.

Ex-rapper Shah sworn

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patriotism and optimism for a bright future for Nepal.

"Nepal is not scared this time, the heart is full of red blood ... laughter and happiness will reach every household this time," Shah sang in the video featuring visuals of large crowds cheering him during his election campaign.

More than 200 Hindu priests and Buddhist lamas chanted hymns and peace prayers alongside the blowing of conch shells during the ceremony at the President House, attended by diplomats and senior government officials.

After being sworn in, Shah picked 14 members to his cabinet, keeping his campaign promise of having a small team to cut state expenses. He named Swamin Wagle, a Harvard-educated economist, as finance minister.

"The first test of the new government lies in transparent and prompt delivery of services to people, who expect early signs of good governance from Sunday itself," political analyst Puranjan Acharya said. Sunday is a working day in Nepal.

Acharya said Shah's sear challenge is to implement the report of a panel that investigated the violence during the anti-corruption protests, a key demand of the families of the victims. The report recommended the prosecution of those responsible for the crackdown, including then

Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli.

India and China congratulated Shah.

"I look forward to working closely with you to take India-Nepal friendship and cooperation to even greater heights for the mutual benefit of our two peoples," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote on X.

The Chinese foreign ministry said that Beijing would support its Himalayan neighbour in safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The youth-led protests were fuelled by a lack of jobs and endemic corruption in the country of 30 million people, where a fifth of the population lives in poverty and an estimated 1,500 people leave the country daily for work abroad.

Political instability has been a bane, with 32 governments taking office since 1990 and none of them completing a five-year term.

The Nepali Congress party, the country's oldest party, became a distant second group in parliament with just 38 seats. The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) of Oli, who was forced to resign after the Gen Z unrest, controls 25 members.

Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki led the nation through the interim period through to the parliamentary election.

Myanmar army

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New Light of Myanmar newspaper quoted Min Aung Hlaing's deputy Soe Win as saying at an official dinner Thursday.

Lawmakers are set to begin the process of selecting a president next week following a walkover victory by pro-military parties earlier this year in elections overseen by the junta.

Democracy monitors said the elections were stage-managed to shut out opposition.

Under the constitution, Min Aung Hlaing would have to step down from his military post to become president, and Soe Win's comments reinforce expectations that he will do so.

He is already acting

president, but taking the role on a permanent basis would bolster critics who say the transition to a new government is effectively the military transferring power to itself in a civilian disguise.

"Irrespective of who leads," the armed forces "will continue to follow the guidance of successive leaders, advisors and mentors," the newspaper cited Soe Win as saying in indirect speech.

Myanmar's military mythologises itself as the only force protecting the restive nation from disintegration.

The newspaper devoted its front page to the military pageant, with an image of missile launchers before three huge statues of ancient kings that dominate the parade ground.

Dog removal move

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street dog populations. Removing sterilised dogs often leads to the entry of unvaccinated animals, increasing both population and disease risks.

The issue has divided residents, with some citing concerns over dog bites, noise, and hygiene, while others say the animals have coexisted peacefully for years.

"There has not been a single verified case of aggression here," an AWBD member said.

Col (ret'd) M Abdul Hai, president of the Baridhara DOHS Parishad, denied issuing any personal directive to remove animals, saying the decision was made collectively.

"I have not personally given any instruction to remove dogs or cats. There is a general body, and decisions are made in annual meetings. These measures reflect residents' concerns," he told The Daily Star.

He acknowledged that dogs are being removed from the area but said the approach differs from the past.

"Earlier, dogs were killed. Now they are not being killed; rather, they are being taken outside the area." Citing complaints, he added, "Dogs make noise at night, people cannot sleep. They make the streets dirty. Many residents are facing problems."

Dismissing calls by activists to escalate the matter, he said, "Some want to go to the prime minister over this. I do think the prime minister has more important matters to deal with."

He also said the DOHS authority operates within cantonment regulations and does not act under RAJUK or other civilian authorities.

1 killed, 25 hurt

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dispute between the two families over control of shoal land in the Madhumati river.

Locals alleged that members of the Biswas family attacked a youth named Arif Sheikh with a fishing spear while he was travelling on the Chitalmari Patgati road.

The incident quickly escalated into a series of clashes between the two groups. Witnesses said more than 200 people, allegedly led by Sayad Biswas and Sohag Member, launched a coordinated attack on the Sheikh family's homes.

"They came with weapons, started beating people, and set our houses on fire," said local resident Md Bablu Sheikh. "As we tried to resist, police arrived and dispersed our people, while the attackers set fire to our homes right in front of them."

The damage extended to several multi-storey buildings.

Abdul Wadud, station officer at Chitalmari Fire Service, said four firefighting units worked for three hours to douse the blazes.

Police have arrested one Sourav Biswas, 19, in connection with the incident, while Rajib's body has been sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Bagerhat Additional Superintendent of Police (Sadar Circle) Md Shamim Hossain.

Additional police personnel have been deployed to prevent further clashes, while drives are on to arrest the culprits, he added.

Sri Lanka jails

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Iran, triggering retaliatory attacks that disrupted global supplies.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's office said he had held talks with visiting Russian Deputy Energy Minister Roman Marshavin on securing oil supplies.

In a statement, Dissanayake's office quoted the Russian minister as saying: "Russia is prepared to support Sri Lanka in facing any challenges arising from the Middle East conflict."

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and stagnant waterbodies to curb mosquito breeding.

"We regularly procure and use larvicides, adulticides and oils for our year-round spraying operations across KCC areas," she said.

"A tender process to purchase 2,000 litres of larvicide and 3,000 litres of adulticide for mosquito control is ongoing," she added.

Trump's name

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and that of US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent will be printed in June, followed by other bills in subsequent months. The new bills may take several weeks to circulate through banks.

The Treasury is still producing notes bearing the signatures of former President Joe Biden's Treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, and former Treasurer Lynn Malerba.

Malerba will be the last of an unbroken line of treasurers whose

signatures have appeared on US federal currency since 1861, when the US government first issued it.

The signature change is the latest effort by the Trump administration and its allies to put the president's name on buildings, institutions, government programs, warships and coins. A federal arts panel, whose members Trump appointed, approved last week the design for a commemorative gold coin with Trump's image.

1.23 lakh tonnes

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Business Ltd, the local agent for the two tankers, told The Daily Star that both vessels arrived on schedule.

Petrobangla sources said that although nine LNG cargoes were scheduled for March, only seven have arrived so far.

Two LNG shipments from Qatar, which were supposed to arrive this month, are yet to reach Bangladesh. Both vessels

remain stranded at Ras Laffan Port.

In 2025, Bangladesh imported 25.86 lakh tonnes of LNG. Of the total, 16.52 lakh tonnes, or 64 percent, came from Qatar.

Additionally, about 4,36,000 tonnes, or 17 percent, were imported from the US, while the rest was sourced from Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Angola, Malaysia, and Australia.

Sonali chicken

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Mir Rakib, a trader at Duaripara Market, said both demand and supply declined after Eid, leading to lower prices for some items.

However, tomatoes, cucumbers, green chilies, and lemons remained in demand.

Yesterday, tomatoes were sold at Tk 25-40 per kilogram, cucumbers at Tk 40-45, green chilies at

Tk 35-60, and half a dozen lemons at Tk 40-60.

Consumers expressed frustration at the renewed price hikes.

Borhan Uddin, a shopper at Tejturi Bazar, said prices had briefly eased after Eid, offering some relief.

"Now they are rising again. I paid nearly Tk 40 more per kg for a two-kilogram Sonali chicken," he added.