Mango export season kicks off with hopes for higher earnings

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sweet summer mangoes have reached markets in different parts of the country, while exports to multiple countries have also begun, raising hopes for higher foreign earnings and stronger demand in international markets.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid yesterday inaugurated this year's mango export season at a ceremony held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council in Dhaka.

Mohammad Arifur Rahman, director of the Department of Agricultural Extension's exportable mango production project, said the official inauguration of mango exports was held yesterday, although shipments had already begun two days earlier.

He said 52.5 tonnes of mangoes have so far been exported to 14 countries, including Germany, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ireland, the UK and Italy.

"New export destinations will become clearer later in the season, as exporters usually explore new markets around the last week of June," he added.

Regarding consumers, he said Bangladeshi mangoes are being sold to both expatriate Bangladeshis and local consumers in foreign markets.

However, exports have not yet entered major supermarket chains as retailers require several conditions to be met, including a regular daily supply.

He added that flight limitations from Bangladesh remain a challenge in ensuring consistent shipments to all destinations.

He also said Bangladesh exported 2,194 tonnes of mangoes to 27 countries in the last export season.

The agriculture minister said the farm sector is one of the pillars of the national economy, with enormous potential to generate foreign exchange earnings through agricultural exports.

He said that although Bangladesh is among the world's most favourable countries for agricultural production, the sector has yet to achieve its full potential due to various policy and legal challenges.

He further highlighted that the adoption of modern agricultural technologies and strict quality assurance are essential for success in international markets.

According to him, China has shown strong interest in importing Bangladeshi jackfruit on a large scale. However, to meet international standards, Bangladesh must establish a modern packaging and quality control system.

He also underscored the importance of preserving the authentic taste and quality of Bangladesh's indigenous fruits while encouraging scientists to enhance fruit colour, shelf life and storage capacity in line with market demands.

Addressing export challenges, he identified high air cargo costs as a major obstacle.

"Biman Bangladesh Airlines is taking steps to expand its fleet and introduce dedicated cargo flights to help resolve the issue," he added.

The minister said that in today's global market, ensuring food safety is just as important as maintaining taste and quality.

He said Bangladesh could establish a strong international position by guaranteeing proper quality control and safe agricultural production.

He expressed optimism that mangoes and other agricultural products would eventually become major sources of foreign currency earnings for Bangladesh.

To realise this vision, he called upon producers, exporters and all relevant stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner.

The tea boy test

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Recently, I visited a multinational company with a female colleague. The tea boy entered the room, looked at me with great administrative seriousness, and asked, "Sir, tea or coffee?" He checked with his boss, took my order, and left the room without asking my colleague. She leaned towards me and whispered, "You see, he did not care what I wanted."

The painful truth is that I had not noticed.

Not because I am a bad person, but because I am a man trained by society not to notice. We often see discrimination only when it becomes loud, ugly, and reportable. But most discrimination in Bangladesh does not arrive with a microphone. It arrives quietly with a tea tray, a meeting agenda, a boardroom silence, a family dinner, or a shopkeeper who speaks to the husband while the wife makes the actual decision.

That small incident took me back to moments with my wife. At banks, shops, and hospitals, men would address me while she stood beside me, as if she were an attachment to the main file. I am ashamed to admit how often I failed to see it.

Later that day, we met the female CHRO of another multinational. She shared how difficult it had been to establish herself in male-dominated boardrooms. She often had to pitch her voice 20 percent higher than men just to be heard. When a man speaks firmly, he is "confident". When a woman does the same, she is "too aggressive".

Another young female colleague once tried to join the office adda to build relationships. The boys club immediately went silent, as if the Anti-Corruption Commission had entered the room. Promotions, projects, trust, and informal power often travel through tea, gossip, and "bhai-brother" networks. If women are excluded from the adda, they are excluded from opportunity.

This hurts companies before it hurts annual reports. A company that does not listen to women makes decisions with one ear blocked. It loses customer insight, talent, risk awareness, culture, and, eventually, people. Fair treatment is not a favour. It is how a company protects its future.

It also hurts the nation. Bangladesh cannot become a smart economy while half its talent remains polite, patient, and invisible. The World Bank says closing gender gaps in labour force participation can raise GDP per capita by about 20 percent on average. Globally, women's labour force participation remains around 53 percent, compared with 80 percent for men. That is not a "women's issue"; it is economic leakage large enough to flood the Ministry of Finance. The ILO has also found that the benefits of gender diversity begin to appear when women hold around 30 percent of senior management and leadership positions.

There are examples to learn from. Nordic countries strengthened their workforces through childcare, leave policies, and acceptance of working women. Germany's largest companies crossed 25 percent female leadership in 2025. Many global companies treat gender balance as strategy, not decoration.

So, what must we do? First, men must learn to notice. The first reform is not in policy; it is in eyesight. Second, leaders must redesign meetings, mentoring, promotions, and informal networks so women are present where decisions are shaped. Third, HR departments must stop celebrating Women's Day with flowers while ignoring those who are interrupted, excluded, underpaid, or denied assignments.

Our female colleagues are not asking for sympathy. They are asking for fairness. They carry families, teams, institutions, and our national conscience while being asked to prove themselves twice for half the recognition.

The next time a tea boy enters the room, the revolution may begin with a simple sentence: "Please ask everyone." Because if we cannot include women in a tea order, our speeches on inclusive growth should be served cold.

The writer is the founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd and BuildNation Ltd

Eid cattle sales rise in north, mid-sized cows lead

Large cattle are selling below expected prices, and traders fear a last-minute influx of Indian cows could crash the market

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Sacrificial animal sales are running ahead of last year's pace in Pabna and Sirajganj, with medium-sized cows, weighing three to six maunds, clearing fastest.

Despite strong volumes, traders say overhead costs are squeezing returns on large cattle. They also fear that a late surge of illegal Indian imports could crash local prices overnight.

The Department of Livestock Services (DLS) says the country is well-stocked. Demand is estimated at 1.01 crore animals against a supply of 1.23 crore, leaving a surplus of roughly 22 lakh. The surplus was 20.68 lakh in 2025 and 22.77 lakh in 2024.

Eid-ul-Azha accounts for nearly 40 percent of Bangladesh's annual animal slaughter. Cows and buffaloes account for 56.95 lakh of the total animals this year.

Eid cattle sales are rising nationwide, driven by strong demand for medium-sized cows, though high costs squeeze profits. Traders fear illegal Indian cattle imports may hurt local farmers and prices. PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

SALES UP BUT RETURNS UNEVEN

Sales volumes are up, but returns are uneven depending on animal size and trader scale.

Md Saiful Alom, a Faridpur upazila trader and president of the Pabna District Cattle Farmers' Association, told The Daily Star that he has already sold 22 of the 23 cows he prepared for this season and kept one for himself.

"Last year, I brought 20 cows to the Eid market. I sold 17 before Eid and the rest to butchers afterwards," he added.

His four-to-five maund cows fetched Tk 1.2 lakh to Tk 1.5 lakh each. He said selling large animals is a different calculation, as high maintenance costs mean farmers often accept lower margins just to recover their investment.

Md Sadek Ali Pramanik, a trader from Bhangura upazila who buys cattle from villages and sells across markets in Pabna, Sirajganj, and Rajshahi, has booked 200 cows this season and sold more than 100 in the past 10 days.

"The flow of cattle sales is much better than previous years. A trader can easily sell five to 10 cows per haat," he said. "But although we make good profit on some animals and take a loss on others, the average comes to about Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000 per cow."

Another trader, Abdur Rahim, said he has already sold 23 cows so far this Eid, compared to 50 cows in the month before last year's Eid. "This year, I expect that number to double."

Meanwhile, small farmers raising heavy cattle report the sharpest squeeze. Raju Ahmed, resident of Ramkharua village in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj, spent four years and over Tk 2.5 lakh raising an 11-maund cow, expecting to sell it for at least Tk 3 lakh.

"I had to sell it for Tk 2.6 lakh," he said, adding that there were not enough buyers for large animals. "But, if I don't sell during Eid, it is nearly impossible to move an 11-maund cow at any other time, so I did not wait and sold without getting my price."

The second cow, weighing six maunds, sold for Tk 1.5 lakh and was profitable, he added.

Traders say cows in the three-to-five maund range are fetching around Tk 30,000 per maund. Animals above six maunds are drawing around Tk 24,000 to Tk 28,000, a discount they attribute to buyers stretching budgets rather than seeking prestige.

Buyers confirm the pressure. Zafar Sadek, a retired college teacher, said he paid Tk 90,000 for a cow he estimates will yield about three maunds of meat. "This is a high price for me."

Rafikul Islam, another teacher, said he had visited two haats without finding a cow within his Tk 1.40 lakh budget and expects to try again before Eid.

FEAR FOR INDIAN COW INFLUX

The market's biggest variable remains what happens at the border in the final days before Eid.

The concerns come as the newly elected BJP government in West Bengal recently enforced strict cattle slaughter rules, including mandatory fitness certificates. Animals under 14 years or not permanently incapacitated do not qualify.

The restrictions have disrupted cattle trade there, a situation that traders here say could push Indian sellers to seek buyers across the border.

Riazul Haque Baperi, a seasoned cattle trader in Pabna, said, "We are hearing that cattle sales ahead of the sacrificial festival have slowed in India."

"If Indian cattle enter the local market, prices will fall sharply and it will be damaging for traders and farmers," he said.

Livestock officials said that border security forces have been put on high alert to block illegal cattle entry in the country.

"For the sake of our local traders and farmers, we are monitoring the situation rigorously," said Shakawayet Hossain, deputy director of the DLS export unit.

Nvidia posts record $81.6b quarterly revenue

REUTERS, *San Francisco*

Chip giant Nvidia on Wednesday posted record quarterly revenue of $81.6 billion, blowing past Wall Street forecasts as insatiable demand for its artificial intelligence hardware powered another blockbuster quarter.

The results for the first quarter of fiscal 2027, ending April 26, marked an 85 percent jump from the same period a year ago and a 20 percent rise from the prior quarter, underscoring Nvidia's status as the primary beneficiary of a global AI infrastructure buildout.

Net profit surged to $58.3 billion, more than tripling from $18.8 billion in the year-earlier period.

Nvidia's data center business, which sells the processors powering AI systems at tech giants and technology companies worldwide, was the engine behind the quarter's performance.

Data center revenue, which includes Nvidia's key graphics processing units (GPUs), hit a record $75.2 billion, up 92 percent from a year ago.

A GPU is a specialized computer chip originally designed to render video game graphics at high speed, but Nvidia has since made it the engine powering artificial intelligence.

The world built more coal power in 2025, but used less

AFP, *Bangkok*

The world built and commissioned more coal power in 2025, but used the polluting fuel less, with the United States the only major economy to substantially increase generation, analysis showed Thursday.

Coal is a key contributor to planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, and phasing it out is crucial to taming climate change.

The growing affordability and abundance of renewable energy means solar and wind power can now cover growing electricity demand in much of the world.

That helped push coal generation down globally by 0.6 percent in 2025 from a year earlier, according to a new report from Global Energy Monitor, which has tracked coal power for more than a decade.

But despite the generation drop, coal power capacity -- plants that came online or were commissioned -- jumped 3.5 percent last year.

The overwhelming majority of that -- 95 percent -- was in China and India, GEM said.

China's coal capacity grew six percent last year, but coal-powered electricity generation fell 1.2 percent, in part because of soaring renewable capacity.

The same was true in India, where capacity grew almost four percent, even as generation fell nearly three percent.

The Mill Creek Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant, is seen from the Valley Village neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky on February 14, 2026. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

In both countries, "many of the provinces and states leading coal development are major coal-producing regions", said Christine Shearer, project manager of GEM's Global Coal Plant Tracker and author of the report.

They have "strong industrial incentives to keep building coal", she told AFP.

US ACTIVELY INCREASES COAL

China is the world's top emitter, while India ranks third behind the United States.

Beijing sees coal as a reliable failsafe for intermittent renewable supply, particularly after power shortages several years ago.

India, the world's most populous country, is leaning heavily on coal to meet soaring electricity demand. But coal's persistence is also the result of infrastructure issues.

Non-fossil fuels already account for 50 percent of India's installed capacity, but infrastructure and other issues mean the country still generates around three-quarters of its electricity from coal.

Globally, the retirement of coal power also slowed last year, with nearly 70 percent of units that were due to end operations instead staying online, GEM said.

In Europe, those missed targets were linked primarily to decisions taken during the 2022-23 energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In the United States however, retirement delays were due to a government push for coal, said Shearer. "US coal-fired generation rose by more than 80 TWh (terawatt hours) year-on-year, a figure so large that no other country came close," she said.

The surge "was not simply a function of (demand) growth, it reflected a policy environment that actively encouraged it," she added.

COAL 'FAVOURITISM'

The energy crisis sparked by the US-Israeli war with Iran has seen some countries turn back to coal, reactivating idle coal units or delaying retirements.

In China, coal-fired power generation also jumped in the first part of the year, in part due to "underperformance" by wind and nuclear.

"But the oversupply and favouritism of coal power is an important factor," added Lauri Myllyvirta, co-founder of the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, and contributor to the report.