

Prolonged heat wave, drought threaten litchi production in Pabna

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Online Desk: The ongoing heat wave condition and drought have posed a serious threat to the production of litchi, a mouth-watering summer fruit, in Pabna district.

Pabna's Ishwardi upazila is known as one of the leading litchi production zones in the country. But this year, farmers and traders are fearing losses as small litchi pods are falling from the trees due to the prevailing heat wave.

At the beginning of this season, litchi farmers had expected a bumper production of litchi but 50% of buds had fallen due to the heavy rains with hails in the middle of Chaitra (Bangla) month.

On the other hand, due to the extreme heat at the beginning of summer, a large part of the litchi pods are now falling.

If summer heat continues, the litchi farmers have to count a huge loss this year.

Besides, the wholesale traders who had bought the orchards with the sprouting of trees have become worried over possible losses this season.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), this year, a total of 4,721 hectares of land have been brought under litchi cultivation and among these, 3,150 hectares are in Ishwardi upazila of the district.

They also set a target to produce 48,801 metric tonnes of litchi this year.

During a recent visit to some litchi orchards, the UNB correspondent found that at the beginning of the month of Falgun, there were enough buds coming in each litchi tree. Seeing a lot of buds on trees, the traders bought the orchards at a higher price in advance.

But due to the ongoing drought and untimely rains with hailstorm at the end of Chaitra, most of the buds have been damaged.

Mirajul Sheikh, a litchi grower of Ishwardi upazila, said about 40-50 percent litchi buds were destroyed during hailstorm but now a large portion of litchi pods are dropping due to the prevailing heat wave.

Manirul, a trader, said he had bought a litchi orchard at a cost of Tk 25 lakh but he is too frustrated. He is now doubtful whether he will be able to sell litchi worth Tk 10 lakh.

Though the DAE officials suggested the farmers to spray water and continue irrigation but farmers said it is not possible to spray water in vast tract of land that was brought under litchi cultivation.

However, the DAE officials are still expecting bumper production this year.

Sheikh Mehedi, a litchi grower and trader, said the biggest economic activity of the farmers of Ishwardi upazila depends on litchi production. Farmers of the upazila will be severely affected if they don't get expected output.

Jamal Uddin, deputy director of Pabna DAE, said this year, litchi trees saw profuse flowering and if litchi comes from half of those it will be huge.

However, some litchi is being damaged due to drought and the current heat wave.

Farmers are being suggested to spray water on the upper side of the litchi trees and irrigate the lands, he added.