

Jashore's largest Satmile Haat sees poor sale

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The pandemic has badly affected the sale of cows at Satmile Haat, the largest cattle market in Jashore, although there is huge supply of cattle.

The haat is located some 36 km southwest of the district. Cattle traders from different parts of the country come here to buy cows ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, a festival marked by sacrifice of animals, and take the cattle to different haats for sale.

Local cattle farmers are worried because of the thin presence of buyers at the haat. The farmers have to return home disappointed as they are not getting buyers despite waiting in the market for all day long.

Meanwhile, cattle supply from India has also been restricted this time, said locals.

The farmers said it is found huge supply of cattle but the sale at the market has dropped drastically this year. It happened as people avoided to buy cattle at the haat fearing the spread of coronavirus infection.

Nazmul Hasan, the lessee of Satmile Haat, said traders from different districts including Kushtia, Faridpur, Sirajganj, Tangail, Chapainawabganj, Jhenaidah, Rajshahi, Chattogram and Dhaka come to the market to buy cattle in Eid.

Although Eid-ul-Azha is only two days away, the cattle market, which usually becomes busy two weeks before the festival, sees very little sale this time due to coronavirus outbreak, he added.

The local farmers brought the cows to the market but could not sell them due to thin presence of buyers, said Nazmul.

During a visit to the cattle market, this correspondent saw that farmers have brought large number of sacrificial animals to the haat, but there is very little sale.

Anisur Rahman, a farmer from Narayanpur village in Benapole, said he cannot sell his five cows as prices have gone down alarmingly at Satmile Haat. He then returned home disappointed.

Another cattle farmer Akhtaruzzaman of Sharsah upazila said he brought 15 cows to the market last year and sold each of them for Tk 60,000, but this year the same small size cow was sold at Tk 45,000 each.

He incurred a huge loss this time due to thin presence of buyers at the market, said Akhtaruzzaman.

Kamal Hossain, a buyer from Benapole, said there is huge supply of cattle in the market but the cattle farmers are not ready to reduce the prices of the animals. That's why, the market is witnessing small sale.

Local union parishad chairman Elias Kabir



Although Eid-ul-Azha is only two days away, Satmile Haat in Jashore still sees poor sale due to coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: STAR

Bakul, also the president of the cattle market committee, said disinfectant is being sprayed in the market due to coronavirus outbreak. They have also made arrangement for hand-washing at the haat.

The haat sits two days (Saturday and Tuesday) a week, said Bakul.

Sharsha Upazila Animal Resources Officer Masuma Akhter said this year, around 990 farmers in the upazila raised 3,745 bulls, 602 bullocks and 2,841 goats centering Eid-ul-Azha.

The sale of the cattle has drastically fallen this year due to thin presence of buyers at the market, said Masuma, adding that it happened because of coronavirus outbreak.

As a result, the cattle farmers are incurring huge losses, said the officer.

Meanwhile, Jhenidah Livestock Department has recently opened an online cattle market ahead of Eid-ul-Azha to prevent Covid-19 spread, reports our correspondent.

They have launched the online haat so that people can buy their sacrificial animals from their home during coronavirus, said Jhenidah Livestock Officer Ananda Kumar Adhikary.

He further said that to buy and sell the

sacrificial animals, anyone can login from his Facebook. Videos and photos of cows and its weight and price and the address and mobile numbers of the cattle farmers in different upazilas have been uploaded on the Facebook page of the online haat.

By visiting the page, the buyers can select the cow of their choice and purchase the animal by calling the mobile number given by the farm, he said.

Jhenidah livestock office sources said, there are 60,000 cattle in different farms of six upazilas in the district.

Imran Hossain, a farm owner of Goyashpur village in Sadar upazila, said the sale of sacrificial animals has drastically fallen this year due to coronavirus outbreak.

He has incurred huge loss from the sale of his two cattle this time, said Imran, adding, that a few days ago, each cow was sold at Tk 2.80 lakh while he expected to sell the cows at Tk 5 lakh each.

If the ordinary people buy their sacrificial animals from this online cattle market, it will be possible to avoid the possibility of Covid-19 infection, said the livestock officer.

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

Famed poultry farm goes into nosedive as demand falls

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Universal Poultry Hatchery Limited, a large poultry farm in Jhenidah, faces closure due to various problems including drastic fall in demand of poultry meat during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

This farm was set up on eight acres of land with three three-storied buildings, four tin-shed structures, a large incubator room and office room at Khayeratala village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah in 2000, said Arabindu Biswas, manager of the farm.

"Another branch of the farm was made on three acres of land with two large two-storied buildings at nearby Bejpara village in 2011. The two set-ups had a total of 80,000 hens and produced 90,000 to 1,20,000 broiler chickens per week," he said.

Around 150 workers worked at the two farms.

The business was profitable as each broiler sold at Tk 60 to Tk 65.

But the trade saw a decline since mid-2017 as some people refrained from taking poultry meat following propagation that it carries harmful germs as poultry feed is made from garbage and dirty things.

Lastly the poultry business faced a debacle following the first coronavirus case in the country on March 8, as rumour spread that people should avoid poultry

meat because it is a potential carrier of the virus.

Fearing infection, many workers left and now 60 people are serving at the farm. Now the farm at Khayeratala village is closed while there are only 30,000 hens at its Bejpara branch, the manager said.

Now each broiler is sold at meagre Tk 10 while the average production cost is Tk 32. The farm has to spend Tk 60 lakh to 70 lakh per month but the earning has fallen to Tk 30 lakh to 35 lakh.

Md Abdul Kader, managing director of the farm, said he invested a total of Tk 20 crore for the farm set-ups and he has a loan of Tk 8.50 crore, which he took from Islami Bank for the business.

"The government provides subsidy for agriculture. Now we demand subsidy for survival of the poultry industry during the crisis period," he said.

If any dishonest company produces feed from harmful items they should be brought under trial, he added.

Jhenidah livestock officials said the sale of broilers has fallen due to coronavirus pandemic as social functions are not held that much and most of the fast food shops and restaurants remain closed.

However, some varieties of hens like Sonali are still in good demand in the market, they said.



Universal Poultry Hatchery Limited's main set-up at Khayeratala village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah lies empty as demand of broiler sees a drastic fall during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: STAR

ROUNDTABLE

POST-COVID-19 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECTION IN BANGLADESH

The Daily Star in association with ActionAid Bangladesh organised an online discussion titled "Post-COVID-19 youth employment projection in Bangladesh" on July 19, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

Farah Kabir, Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh and the Chair of the Session

The aspirations of young people, particularly of young women, must be included in the national and local planning. We also need to collate all the ideas we have heard so far, such as targeting, having affirmative plans and programmes regarding creating opportunities for young people to enter the labour market, creating opportunities for influencing the Eighth Five-Year Plan, ensuring that the allocations are effectively working for the groups that they are targeted towards, ensuring the stimulus packages reach the people they are meant for, and guaranteeing the skills of migrant workers are recognised. Skills certification needs more focus while recognising that plumbers, cobblers, carpenters, nurses and paramedics are all equally important to society instead of denigrating them to second class status. At present such recognition doesn't exist, which is why people are unwilling to join these occupations, even though we have witnessed the need for these essential workers much more during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher, The Daily Star

Our younger generation can be divided into two groups. One group is creative, self-motivated, and can manage to find a niche in the digital realm with their innovation. However, besides this small number of advantaged youth, there is another larger group we often fail to reach. This group of youth doubt if hard work can make their lives better. We need to address them and find ways to reach them immediately to lead them towards a better direction.

Nazmul Ahsan, Manager-Young People, ActionAid Bangladesh

Bangladesh is moving forward to face the Fourth Industrial Revolution and hence, a lot of our manual workers will lose their jobs due to increased automation; the COVID-19 pandemic will intensify this. We need to provide our young people with market-oriented, updated skills, including the essential soft skills. Hence, the quality of the skills development trainings should be standardised and monitored accordingly. A comprehensive database is required to keep track of the country's workforce and help enhance the coordinated efforts.

Md Hatem Ali, Deputy Manager, Young People, Economic Opportunities & Decent Work, ActionAid Bangladesh

According to recent research, around 41 percent people, among which 8.7

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million are youth, will be pushed into poverty while 1.64 crore people have already been driven under the poverty line. 87 percent of job postings have declined in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

We need to introduce schemes to convert skilled youth, especially women, into entrepreneurs. The youth should be included in the social safety net (SSN) to create employment retention schemes, tax relief, or interest-free loans for SMEs to expand the given opportunities.

Md Shah Alam Mojumder, Specialist (Course Accreditation), NTVQF Division, Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB)

The three learning domains under the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) are cognitive, psychomotor, and attitude development. However, we still give cognitive domain utmost priority, leading to no real skills development. The National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) was introduced to adjust this, but now there are contradictions between NSDA and BTEB. This has caused development partners and training providers to be confused about who the actual certification authority is and who decides the standards of skills development. This issue must be addressed. All institutions and workers from all sectors need to be brought under the NTVQF to create a classified workforce.

Labib Tazone Utshab, Founder and CEO, Light to Life

To think inclusively, we need to believe in diversification, going beyond the borders of race or gender. We also need to keep in mind the idea of the global market in the long run. We must not be content with five-year plans during employment projection and go beyond

to directly compete with developed countries.

Somen Kanungo, Founder & President, D Engineers Club (DEC)

Our organisation tries to connect multi-dimensionally through skills development and career counselling with the youth, who have failed to receive their expected results in HSC, leading them to drop out of education. These people are often ignored and humiliated by society, and they suffer from depression.

Arman Khan, National Executive Vice President, JCI Bangladesh

Work-from-home has provided us with new perspectives. New entrepreneurs have realised that a commercial space is not always necessary to conduct their work. Also, if work-from-home gains more traction, a lot of women who leave their jobs due to family issues can build their careers again.

Nazma Akter, Founder and Executive Director, Awaj Foundation

Due to a lack of education, there is a shortage of women's participation in decision and policymaking positions. Digitalisation is also leading to unemployment, especially among young women, who usually have less training in this aspect. Thus, the government should provide the necessary skills training.

COVID-19 has had an adverse effect on the RMG sector with decreased orders leading to the suspension of employees, but we are still hopeful. The retail prices of clothes have not gone down and it is only the workers who are suffering due to cancelled orders and discounts that our buyers are imposing. Our youth should raise their voices against injustices to bring social change.

Kamran T Rahman, President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF)

The pattern of businesses is changing due to five global trends. These include: technological innovation, global economic integration, demography in generational shifts, climate change and sustainability, and global shortage of skilled labour. The sooner we adopt technology, the sooner we will be able to increase our sustainability.

We need to check how much of the 12.1-billion-dollar stimulus package disbursed by our government has reached the beneficiaries. The faster the stimulus packages reach the beneficiaries, the faster the demand will be generated in our country which will ultimately help us overcome the effects of the ongoing crisis.

Tahsinah Ahmed, Executive Director, UCEP Bangladesh

The training institutions should come forward and analyse how they can be more competent and adaptable to the changes occurring. An Act needs to be implemented through National Skill Development Policy-2011, making it compulsory for institutions to follow it. We must change the types of training we are providing as traditional methods will not work efficiently anymore. The government and private sector must invest to develop the capacity of the training institutions.

Innovative steps, such as providing tabs instead of books and free internet packages to underprivileged children, can be taken to help them get access to education.

We need to be more inclusive by making separate budget provisions for occupational and social minority groups and providing them with sufficient training.

Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor, a2i (Access to Information)

The trend in our country is such that the more educated the graduates are, the

higher is the unemployment rate. If we don't take drastic steps now, we will lose a total of two crore and 80 lakh jobs by the end of 2021.

We need to create a top-notch brand for vocational education and training. Otherwise, we won't be able to convince children's parents and the government

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide more skills training and employment opportunities to women and girls
- Create employment retention schemes, tax relief, or interest-free loans for SMEs
- Encourage youth entrepreneurship, especially in terms of digitalisation
- Include all institutions and workers from all sectors under the NTVQF to enhance integration and move beyond the traditional education system

➤ Encourage youth to speak up against injustices

➤ Distribute stimulus packages properly to quickly recover from the effects of COVID-19

➤ Training institutions must take initiatives to become more competent and adapt to the new normal

➤ Provide separate budget and training for occupational and social minority groups

➤ Provide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), for both returnee migrant workers and those already employed in the country

will also refrain from providing first-class funding.

We need to provide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), for both returnee migrant workers and those already employed in the country. We continue to term them as unskilled labour but since they have earned a few years of job experience, we can provide them with certificates to recognise their acquired skills.

In a recent study, we have identified five sectors through which we can create around 40 lakh jobs. The sectors are agro-food processing supply chain; healthcare; pharmaceuticals; creative media; and ICT, e-commerce, digital credit. We need new entrepreneurs for job creation, especially digital entrepreneurs.

be allocated for skills development. The number of trainers should be increased and training modules for online training should be developed.

Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) Bangladesh

We should tie in entrepreneurship, informal economy investments and skills investments for both the formal and informal economies.

We should invest in creating a centralised hybrid private sector and public sector labour database that is actionable, usable, updated and made available on a continued basis. We also need to continue to invest in the middle ground of skills since not everybody will have high-skilled jobs.