

## Cattle prices

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musclemen forcing cattle-loaded trucks to markets of their choice took place this year, unlike in the past.

During a visit to three cattle markets at Golapbagh, Kamalapur and Gandaria yesterday, the supply of Indian cattle was found to be lower than that of the previous years.

The prices of a medium-sized cow ranged from Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000 yesterday. Lessees of the makeshift market are to get five percent of the sales prices.

At Kamalapur market, the seller demanded Tk one lakh buyers offered up to Tk one lakh twenty five thousand. Interestingly, the seller offered a goat free of cost to one who would buy the bull.

Owner of the bull and goat M Anisuzzaman from Chuadanga said, "The bull named Samrat and the goat named Saddam used to take feed together always. So, I decided to give away the goat with the bull free of cost."

"I did not face any trouble on the way to Dhaka," said Anisuzzaman, who has brought 20 bulls and 100 goats.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) selected 16 sites for makeshift cattle markets this year.

These include the open spaces beside Armanitola playground, at Khilkhet Tanpara, Agargaon slum, Talota bus stand, Banani-Kakoli railway station and Sector-12 in Uttara and near Alam Market at Postagola, Golapbagh ground, Rahamatganj playground, Dhupkhola ground, Hosseini Dalan Road, Kamalapur eastern ground of Bangladesh Bank Colony, Meradia Bazar, Jigatola-Hazaribagh playground, Sunrise Sporting Club ground and Rayer Bazar playground.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: the cattle market in Chittagong has yet to witness a momentum in sales and purchases as expected by traders, especially those who brought high priced sacrificial animals from different parts of the country and also from India and Nepal.

Badraddin Biswas from Jhenidah, who usually brings high quality and high-rated cattle to the markets of the port city before the Eid-ul-Azha, came here three days ago with 32 large cattle of 'Nepal Shah' breed. He looked disappointed yesterday at Sagarika cattle market as none of his cattle had yet sold.

"I've got no customers offering the prices I expected far," he said in frustration.

Badraddin wanted Tk 1,20,00 for each of his cattle while buyers offered Tk 70,000 to Tk 80,000.

Another trader, Anwar Sowdagar, imported 10 camels from Rajasthan in India two days ago but he too couldn't sell any of those.

A Sagarika market yesterday, a local trader sought Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 each for a camel but he found no buyer.

## Fertiliser still sells

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stocks of DAP, MoP and TSP ran short because they have not been able to procure them during the last thirty days, following the declaration of a subsidy in the sector. Instead they are still selling from their old stock at previous non-subsidised rates.

Following the approval of the fertiliser subsidy, the imported consignments of TSP, MoP and DAP are being approved for subsidy-eligibility by the finance ministry.

Addressing a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar said a subsidy proposal for 26 consignments of 18,000 metric tons of TSP and 52,000 metric tons of MoP has been sent to the finance ministry and is expected to be approved within the next two or three days.

This correspondent visited different hats and bazars in the Kurigram, Rangpur and Lalmonirhat districts, enquiring about the rate of TSP, DAP and MoP during the last few days. It was found that MoP was being sold at between Tk 670 and 680 a bag (50 kg), DAP at Tk 970 a bag (50 kg), and TSP at Tk 880 a bag (50 kg).

## First one-day today

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The day-night match, starting at 1pm, will certainly test the nerve of both teams 48 hours after a gruelling five-day battle at the same venue.

Bangladesh Television and ESPN will provide live coverage of the game from the Big Bowl.

After the match, the series will go for a three-day Eid break between the second ODI in Chittagong on January 24.

Buoyed by their 1-0 series victory, the spirited Tigers now eye their maiden one-day series win against an inexperienced Zimbabwe who are coming to the game on the back of a 17-match losing streak.

Zimbabwe's only two ODI victories in 2004 came against Bangladesh at home in March last year when they took the five-match series 2-1. The first two matches were washed out in Bulawayo.

Zimbabwe, however, are not the same side that have won 12 games out of total 13 between the two teams. Going through a transition period following a revolt of the senior cricketers over selection policy, Tatenda Taibu's side lost series to Sri Lanka, Australia, Pakistan and England and both their ICC Champions Trophy matches.

Still, it is expected that experi-

Hasan Bepari from Comilla brought 20 'Hariyana' type cattle from Nepal two days ago but was unable to find any buyers. He was demanding Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 each.

A trader from Comilla, Shamsul Haque brought two big goats at Sagarika market on Tuesday and was seeking Tk 15,000 for each. Only one buyer yesterday offered Tk 8,000.

Traders said however that well-off families would come to the markets on the day before the Eid and give their sales a boost.

All of them were happy at the law and order this year. "We didn't face any extortionists or criminals yet," one of them said.

## Prof Miah

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man and other member over several decisions and steps including the inclusion of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) staff in the commission.

"Formation of the commission is a good step but you're obstructing its activities. Stop this," Prof Miah quoted the caller as saying.

The former Dhaka University vice-chancellor said he could not realise whether the person was calling from Sweden or Dhaka. "I invited him to my office for a talk today and waited for him all day long, but no-one turned up," Miah said yesterday. "I've learnt at the office today that one of the five Bac directors we asked to withdraw has relatives in Sweden," he added.

Meantime, ACC Commissioner Maniruddin Ahmed yesterday sat with four of the five directors and received a list of the corruption allegations under investigation.

"I sat with them (directors) for knowing everything as they may be withdrawn anytime," Maniruddin told The Daily Star.

On letters seeking the whereabouts of government vehicles of different projects under 22 ministries, he said, "After sending letters to 13 ministries, yesterday we approved sending letters to rest of the ministries."

The planning ministry earlier informed the commission about 4,230 vehicles, which were purchased for various government projects under 35 ministries. The vehicles are being used for personal purpose on completion of the projects.

Maniruddin said most of the nine ministries who sent their reply earlier did not provide adequate information about the vehicles being misused. Four other ministries did not even reply to the commission's letter.

"We're again sending letters to them seeking complete information," he said, adding that the ministries will get 15 days to reply.

Former Bac director Lt Col MA Hannan Mridha, one of the five directors, has been tasked with sending the letters.

Taking advantage of the farmers' emergency needs, most of the dealers and retailers of the region have hiked the price of fertilisers.

Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur Rafiqul Islam, who is also president of the district fertiliser monitoring committee, told The Daily Star that the government fixed the rate of TSP (Tunisia) at Tk 606.67 and DAP (Kargil) at Tk 747 per bag (50 kg). The rate of MoP has yet to be fixed, he added.

Motahar Hossen, Secretary of the Rangpur unit of the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, said the dealers are preparing to procure TSP and DAP at the subsidised rate.

Sohel Khondoker, a big potato farmer of the Mahiganj area, said potato farmers would not need fertilisers after two weeks. He asked what the use of the subsidised rate of fertilisers would be after two weeks when potatoes in all fields would be ready for harvest.

According to the record of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), about 70,000 hectares of land have been brought under potato cultivation this year in five districts in greater Rangpur.

ence of playing against the big guns in recent times will make them a much harder side to beat in the limited-overs series.

Bangladesh's only win against Zimbabwe also came in March last year when Habibul Bashar's men recorded an eight-run victory at Harare to take a 1-0 lead which they could not prevail in the end.

But Bashar's men reached even greater heights last month when they celebrated their 100th ODI with a stunning 15-run triumph over mighty India at the same venue. Incidentally, it was their first one-day victory on the home soil.

But going into the first game, injuries to some key players remain a worry for coach Dav Whatmore. Champion left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique has been ruled out from the first three games. Besides, young paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and record-breaking left-arm spinner Enamul Haque will also be tested for today's match.

Zimbabwe also have injury problems for senior paceman Mluleki Nkala and all-rounder Elton Chigumbura.

Both teams have decided to announce the playing eleven today.

## Khulna police hunt for suicide squad women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) started special drive to nab members of women suicide squad from Tuesday night.

We have already sent photos of nine women outlaws of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddho faction to all the police stations of Khulna division, a senior KMP official said.

Besides, two women outlaws of Rupsha upazila and two of Batiaghata upazila are being closely watched suspecting their secret connection with Janajuddho leaders.

Members of law enforcing agencies, journalists, some business tycoons of Khulna and political leaders are targets of the women suicide squad, police said quoting two arrested women outlaws Rashida and Rina.

Hearing on the prayer for their seven-day remand will be held today. Women outlaws belonging to the newly formed suicide squad work on monthly salary drawn from the top Janajuddho leaders whose source of money is toll collection, KMP sources said.

## Tsunami toll tops 226,000

REUTERS, Indonesia

The global death toll from the Asian tsunami shot above 226,000 yesterday after Indonesia's Health Ministry confirmed the deaths of tens of thousands of people previously listed as missing.

The ministry raised the country's death toll to 166,320. It had previously given a figure of 95,450 while Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs had put the death toll at around 115,000 before it stopped counting.

Dodi Indrasanto, a director at the health ministry's department of health affairs, said the new death toll reflected the latest reports from the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra, which were directly in the path of the killer tsunami spawned by a magnitude 9 earthquake the day after Christmas.

## Rice denies she is Bush yes-woman

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice denied yesterday she was a yes-woman for President George W Bush and pledged to argue her case vigorously if she disagreed with him on foreign policy.

But Rice said on the second day of her Senate confirmation hearing that the government must ultimately speak to the world with a single voice and "we are one administration with the president in the lead."

During her four years as Bush's national security adviser and one of his closest aides, Rice was accused by critics of blindly following his hardline policies in Iraq and elsewhere in Washington's war on terror.

## Train barely

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the sleepers at any time on Tuesday night," said a railway engineering department official.

A serious accident could have happened as there is a bridge near the spot, a railway employee said.

Some unknown men earlier threatened the local railway authorities of doing sabotage, sources said.

## 3 cops caught

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reached Noulbazar by microbus, No. Dhaka metro CHA-02-3236, at approximately 9pm on Monday night. They allegedly identified themselves as members of RAB and then sought out one Ohidul Mullik, owner of Bismillah Fish, hoping to realise a toll of Tk 2 lakh that they had previously demanded from him.

But Mullik challenged their authority and then contacted by phone a high RAB official, who confirmed the men were falsely identifying themselves as members of RAB. A physical altercation then ensued between local traders and the false RAB members, who were seriously beaten. Two of them managed to escape, while the others were handed over to the Abhoyanagar thana police.

The seven arrested persons include three police constables identified as Amarat Ali (No. 276), Yar Ali (No. 266) and Litu Mia (297) of the police training centre, Khulna. Four others were identified as Ishrat Hossain of Jogipole village, Shiromoni, Khulna, Akbar of the same address, Asaduzzaman Asad of Kashipara village of Lalpur thana in Natore district and Lalmonoh of Khulna.

Asaduzzaman Asad said he had brought the other eight persons with him to realise his dues from Ohidul Mullik. But Mullik denied this, saying Asad and his companions had demanded a toll of Tk 2 lakh.

The OC of Abhoyanagar thana said the three police constables violated official rules by going to Noulbazar. Departmental punitive measures will be taken against them, he added.

## Mad rush to home

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taking as much as two hours.

Advance booking of cabins in luxury launches has almost finished, although the black marketeers are selling tickets at more than double the regular fare.

Brokers harass passengers if they do not agree to buy tickets at higher rates, passengers alleged.

A ticket seller at one launch said they have no way of preventing anyone from buying five or six tickets at a time and selling them later at higher prices.

As during the past few days, most of the launches have anchored at mid-river, forcing passengers to reach the vessels by overloaded boats, risking accidents.

Many launches were seen overloaded with passengers.

Low and middle-income passengers who usually travel on deck are also paying exorbitant fares as some brokers in connivance with launch staff have already booked all the tickets for the deck.

"I had to pay Tk 200 for a deck ticket for Bhola and the normal fare is Tk 80," said Reza, a small trader at the Sadarghat terminal.

Ticket sellers of the Parabat, Sagar, Rajdoot and Suvoil launches were charging Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,500 for a single cabin whereas the normal rates are from Tk 350 to Tk 500.

For a double cabin, Barisal and Patuakhali-bound passengers had

to pay the black marketeers Tk 2,000 to 2,500 against the normal price of Tk 600 to Tk 800.

The law enforcement agencies removed all makeshift shops at the terminal yesterday, easing movement of passengers.

### KAMALAPUR STATION

Although passengers were not getting tickets at the station counters, brokers were selling those at higher prices near the Kamalapur overbridge while the Rapid action Battalion (Rab) was present at the station.

Railway staff at the counters said all advance tickets up to the Eid have been sold out and authorities are bound to sell standing tickets to avoid gathering of passengers.

Hundreds of passengers were desperately looking for tickets, only to be disappointed yesterday, since they had no option but to look for brokers to collect tickets for an extra price.

### BUSTERMINALS

The situation at the Sayedabad, Gabtali and Mohakhali bus terminals was somewhat better yesterday mainly because of the presence of Rab. Harassment of passengers was not seen but some bus operators were charging extra fares.

"We have to pay extra fares to go home on the eve of the Eid, but we forget the sufferings for the sake of reunion with our near and dear ones," said a passenger Abul Kalam.

house Jamuna in Dhaka in the morning and later attend the concluding ceremony at the International Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office.

The leaders' departures are scheduled for the same day, likely to be started off by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

A programme for the Saarc leaders' spouses has also been planned on the concluding day (February 7). An exhibition of traditional Bangladeshi products, including handicrafts, will be arranged at the state guesthouse Padma.

Although the Saarc cultural festival has been cancelled, a performance by Bangladeshi artists would follow the prime ministerial banquet at the CBFFC.

Fifteen foreign ministry officials have been appointed to co-ordinate different programmes and events of the pre-summit agenda meetings and the main summit, Reaz Rahman told the journalists.

## Cattle traders pay

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Belpukur in Puthia, Baneswar, the Natore bypass crossing, the Bonpara Crossing and the Nalka crossing at Sirajganj.

Rab members arrested a Customs constable, Nasim Uddin, while he was collecting tolls from a truck at the Rajabari check post point.

Two of Nasim's accomplices fled, but Nasim was handed over to Rajshahi divisional customs officials.

In another raid, Rab officials rounded up 14 extortionists as they were taking tolls from traders near the Tanore Police station. Tk 4,500 of the collected tolls, along with four wristwatches, were seized from them, according to a Rab press release.

The arrestees are allegedly hired men of local police and the truckers' union.

The traders are required to pay Tk 200 to 300 for each cattle truck at different hats (large markets), said Kawsar, adding that money is collected in the name of the local truck union.

"If anyone wants to avoid levies, he has to pay Tk 300 to the hat leaseholders. The later will arrange interrupted passage for the trader",

said a market source.

Abdul Bari, a leaseholder of Mohishalbari hat, said the toll money is usually spent to ensure that the market runs smoothly.

Mofazzal Hossain, general secretary of the Truck Labourers Union, said the money was collected for the welfare of the labourers.

Traders pay Tk 300 at the Rajabari check post, with the money distributed among police, BDR and Customs, said traders.

Police collect Tk 20 to Tk 100 at Kasiadanga, Gourhanga and Talaimari crossing in the city from each cattle truck, said the sources.

Hired men of BDR collect Tk 300 to Tk 600 at the Belpukur Checkpost, Tk 50 to Tk 100 at Baneswar, Natore and Banpara crossings.

Azmatullah, a trader from Dhaka, said the toll at Belpukur was collected from traders who do not pay proper duties for cows.

Talking to The Daily Star, a top BDR official denied the allegations against BDR and said that some other men might have been using BDR's name.

Seeking anonymity, he said, "We would take action if any allegation is found against any BDR member".

## Anti-Islam hostility

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control it" and called on Muslims to "rally around their leaders to preserve the interests of the nation."

"Don't become a tool in the hands of your enemies and let them attack your nation," the mufti said, warning Muslim leaders against plans by "the enemies of Islam who want to divide us and provoke conflict" between Muslims.

"Kowtowing to the enemy does not resolve the problems of the nation," he added.

From sunrise, convoys of more than 20,000 buses carried the pilgrims from Mina valley where they spent the night in a city of tents.

The faithful -- men clad in a two-piece seamless white cloth, the women covered except for the hands and face -- spend the day praying for forgiveness and beseeching Allah for success in a symbolic enactment of the Final Judgement at the scene of the Prophet Mohammed's last sermon 14 centuries ago.

Tens of thousands then gathered for prayers in the Namera mosque on Arafat, a small plain some 250 metres (800 feet) above sea level and surrounded by high mountains from all directions.

"Here I am, Allah, answering your call, here I am," the pilgrims chanted as they approached Mount Arafat.

Despite warnings from the Saudi religious authorities, the more zealous climbed up the 70-metre (230-foot) high Mount of Mercy (Jabal Al-Rahma) where pilgrims pray for

mercy in a symbolic re-enactment of the Prophet's only pilgrimage.

### TSUNAMI VICTIMS

Most pilgrims said they were asking Allah for forgiveness and a better future. But among the personal requests were prayers for the nations ravaged by tsunami disaster, which killed 175,000 people, mainly Muslims.

"I am praying to Allah to avert the disasters that are happening to Muslims," said Ethiopian pilgrim Fouad Amin yesterday.

"We are praying for them in Indonesia and elsewhere," added Pakistani Asef Iqbal.

Saudi Arabia has cranked up its largest security operation for the ritual, a once in a lifetime duty for every able-bodied Muslim, fearing attacks or deadly stampedes like one last year that killed 250 people.

"Being at Arafat is the essence of Hajj," said Khalid Amal, a Burmese who has spent all his life in Saudi Arabia.

About 50,000 police and 7,000 special forces have deployed around Mecca to prevent stampedes, protests or attacks. So far, no major incidents have marred the ritual.

The pilgrims will return to Makkah today, the first day of Eid Al-Azha.

Most will sacrifice an animal, generally a sheep.

On Friday and Saturday, they will return to Mina to stone the "jamarat", or three pillars symbolising the devil.

## Tiger kills fisherman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sakkhira

A Royal Bengal Tiger on Tuesday pounced on a band of fishermen, killing one and injuring five others in Madar Baria in the Sundarbans.

Police said six fishermen went to fish in the Sundarbans when a tiger attacked them. It injured five of them and dragged Fazar Ali, 14, son of Mohammad Ali of Gar Komor Pur village in Shyamnagar upazila, into the deep forest.

Locals later recovered the body and sent the injured to Shyamnagar Health Complex in critical condition.

## BDR pushes back 8 Indians

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Border Security Force (BSF) of India pushed eight Bangla-speaking Indian Muslims into Bangladesh territory through Haibandha border in Lalmonirhat district at midnight on Tuesday.

On information, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel of Doikhawa outpost reached the spot and pushed the Indians back through Mogolhat border yesterday morning.

BDR sources said the Indian border guards of Lalbazar camp assembled eight Indian Muslims near the barbed-wire fencing adjacent to the pillar no 903 at about 11:00pm and forced them to enter Bangladesh at gunpoint.

BDR men nabbed the Indians, provided them with food and warm clothes and pushed them back at about 5:30am, the sources added.

BDR personnel along with local people are guarding the area to foil fresh push-in bid by the BSF.

## Rab seizes arms

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Maheshkhali Police Station. They filed a case against him under the Arms Act, Rab sources said.

Hamid, son of former UP Chairman Abdul Mabud of Hoakong, is known in Cox's Bazar as a godfather of criminals. He was involved in various crimes including murder, extortion and abduction, police said.

Sources at Cox's Bazar said Hamid possessed at least four AK47 rifles. He was arrested on several occasions in the past but freed on bail. His brother Enam is now in jail after police arrested him with firearms recently.

## Free Mongla Port

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officials of Mongla Port Authority, a fertiliser dealer of Noapara in Jessore district and five top former and present leaders of Mongla Bandar Samik Sangha. Vigorous investigation is already going on against them.

When contacted, Mayor of Khulna Shaikh Tayebur Rahman said none of the mafia group would escape punishment under the law of the land.

Meanwhile, most of the 11 mafias have reportedly gone to Dhaka to persuade top officials of the shipping ministry to stop investigation against them. They are also trying to influence members of the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry, sources said.

One of the two prominent industrialists, who heads the mafia group, is among those now in Dhaka. He was also wanted by Rapid Action Battalion last year on charges of harbouring outlaws, the sources added.

## EC worried

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opposition candidates are being published in newspapers," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

The election was scheduled for September 9 last year but the ruling BNP men did not allow any opposition man to submit nomination papers in the polls. The ruling party men were elected uncontested, without voting.

The EC last month declared the polls null and void after an inquiry and a fresh date for the election was announced. In its judgement, the EC asked the local administration to take adequate measures for the security of the opposition candidates.

The EC also stressed holding the polls in a free and fair manner.

"It is not possible to hold a free and fair election as the law and order situation is deteriorating day by day," local journalist yesterday told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Local journalists said the chairman and commissioner candidates backed by the main opposition Awami League are being intimidated by the ruling party men. "They are feeling insecure and cannot campaign for the polls," said another journalist.

The EC, a quasi-judicial body, had scrapped the September 9 election results finding gross irregularities in the election process. It asked the police and local administration to take appropriate measures for the protection of candidates in the fresh polls.

"Police and local administration failed to control the situation and maintain the law and order which is necessary to hold free and fair election," said the EC judgement.

But the opposition candidates said the situation is still uncongenial to hold a fair election as the EC directives are not being followed by the local administration.

## Judiciary not sensitive

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Pointing to flaws in probe in rape cases, the attorney general said police should be more victim-friendly.

"Unlike other criminal activities, rape is a more violent crime, as it affects not only the victim but also the whole society," he observed.

"If the property of a person is robbed or stolen, they could overcome the loss. But if a woman is raped, a crime is committed that destroys her entire life," he added.

On medical test of rape victims, he said, "I can't imagine how doctors could submit false medical reports."

He also emphasised that the local government and community leaders have to work together to prevent rape.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed told the session that the government has strengthened the Women and Children Repression Act by bringing a few amendments.

"Only stringent laws can't stop rape, rather proper investigation and implementation of effective laws are vital," Moudud said.

The minister said police force

needs to be upgraded with proper equipment to deal with any sort of investigation.

On shortage of police personnel, Moudud said the number of police force in New York is 52,000, while Bangladesh has only 113,000 across the country.

The minister regretted that the application of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act is mostly for harassing opponents.

"The rate of conviction under the Act is less than five percent," Moudud observed.

BSEHR Executive Director Elina Khan presented a set of recommendations of the workshop. She said the government must ensure that rapists should not go unpunished.