

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
Week-on-week		As of Friday		Friday Closings				As on Wednesday			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	BUY TK	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 0.95%	▲ 0.68%	\$1,786.79 (per ounce)	\$76.17 (per barrel)	▲ 0.32%	▲ 0.27%	▲ 0.15%	▼ 1.95%	83.95	98.84	115.38	12.76
6,150.48	10,695.22			52,484.67	28,783.28	3,128.95	3,518.76	84.95	102.64	119.18	13.41

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Global container crisis hits local exporters

Creates unprecedented tailback of outbound cargoes

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Bangladesh's export is facing unprecedented delays because of the deepening container crisis globally and squeezed capacity in vessels, fuelled by the rebounding demand in the Western economies.

As a result, anxiety has gripped many exporters as they worry about whether they would be able to ship products on time.

Such crisis has been prevailing for the last few weeks as the inland container depots (ICDs) are failing to send the goods to the port due to the acute shortage of containers and delay in getting space in vessels.

Cargoes have piled up in and outside of 19 private ICDs located in and around the port city, and they are overloaded with export cargoes and can't receive any more goods.

Export goods are usually sent from factories to the ICDs. The cargoes are kept at the container freight stations first as freight forwarders, on behalf of exporters, book space for containers in feeder and mother vessels for the shipment and submit cargo loading plan (CLP) to the ICDs.

The ICDs then send the containers to the port following customs procedures.

Chattogram-based garment exporter Pacific Jeans Ltd sent 27 covered vans loaded with export-bound cargoes to four private ICDs three to four days ago. But the goods are yet to be unloaded due to a space shortage at the ICDs.

Syed M Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said that due to the supply chain disruption in the global shipping sector caused by container shortage and congestion in the transshipment ports, export goods were currently reaching the destination countries following a delay of 15 to 30 days.

"The problem has been prevailing for months," he said, adding that the in shipment might further worsen.

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Another dismal Eid looms for rawhide trade

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Like in the last two years, rawhide trade may be very dismal this year too for the inflow of low funds and for the severe fallouts of the Covid-19 that has already unnerved the global economy, including that of Bangladesh.

Over the last two years, people at the grassroots have either thrown away or buried thousands of rawhides on not getting proper prices from seasonal traders.

This year too if the tanners fail to release a substantial portion of the Tk 160 crore in arrears owed to rawhide merchants, just another bleak season awaits in the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, said industry insiders.

This year the merchants are owed Tk 160

crore by the tanners as arrears, said Aftab Khan, president of the Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants' Association.

"We are expecting that the tanners will pay a significant portion of this amount to the merchants before the Eid so that the merchants can also give money to the seasonal traders to purchase the rawhides from the field level," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Khan also said of a total of 156 tanneries at Savar Tannery Industrial Estate (STIE), some 132 were running, including 50 in full swing.

"We are expecting some 10 well-reputed tanneries, those which are financially sound, to make full payments to the merchants ahead of the Eid," he said.

The remaining tanners could make half or even less of the payment as their financial condition was not good now, he added.

The tanneries owing the Tk 160 crore does not include the reputed 10 as they always make their payment in full to the merchants, he added. These 10 companies bought rawhide worth Tk 22 crore last year, he said.

"If the tanners cannot pay the merchants, the rawhide business might be the same as it was over the last two years," he said.

Financing from banks is also a major challenge in almost every year ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, he said, adding that many banks were interested in financing the well-reputed companies, not the less reputed ones.

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Operators eye SIM-locked phones to ramp up 4G use

SHAHID BAPPY

Mobile phone operators are seeking permission from the government to sell network-locked or fixed-SIM handsets at lower prices so that more people can afford smartphones and use 4G service.

A SIM (subscriber identification module) lock or network lock is a technical restriction built into mobile phones by manufacturers to restrict the use of the devices in specific countries or networks.

Operators in Bangladesh now want to sell 4G-enabled handsets in cooperation with manufacturers on instalments ranging from 12 months to 24 months.

The Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh (AMTOB) and handset manufacturers have jointly made a proposal to the telecom regulator as the use of fourth-generation (4G) services is not growing as expected due to the high price of smartphones.

"We are analysing the proposal, and we will make a decision soon," said Md Shahidul Alam, director-general for spectrum at the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

He said handset prices were at a tolerable level, so selling the devices in instalments would not suffice.

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RASHED SHUMON

Operators now want to sell 4G-enabled handsets in cooperation with manufacturers on instalments ranging from 12 months to 24 months.

C&F AGENTS Ctg customs revokes 245 expired licences

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

Custom House, Chattogram has revoked 245 expired licences of clearing & forwarding (C&F) and shipping agents in an attempt to prevent misuse.

Revoked between May and June this year, most of the licences have not been renewed since 2013, despite repeated requests by customs officials to do so.

Of the licences, 122 are of C&F agents and the rest of shipping agents. The Daily Star spoke to some of them, who expressed intent to appeal against the decision.

Once licences are revoked, the holders have to apply for a new one.

According to the Customs Act, 1969, the customs house authority concerned may issue licences for C&F and shipping agents to represent importers and exporters and ship and container owners who are using the port.

According to the law, the customs authority can also revoke the licences if they find evidence of irregularities and if the licences are not renewed on time.

AKM Sultan Mahamud, deputy commissioner of customs, told The Daily Star that they revoked many licences on finding agents involved in irregularities.

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Cattle traders in a blue funk as Covid rages on

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

The worsening Covid-19 situation has generated apprehensions among cattle farmers of Sirajganj and Pabna, two of the biggest cattle rearing hubs of the country.

The lockdowns and restrictions on movement have got them wondering whether there would be enough customers and markets available to recoup their investments through sales during Eid-ul-Azha this year.

Though some are opting for marketing their animals through online platforms, most are looking forward to the traditional markets since they are more used to that

mode of trade.

Md Sirajul Hossain of Barabeel village in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj has fattened nine cows, investing around Tk 22 lakh.

With only a couple of weeks to go before Eid, no cattle trader has contacted him. This has dampened his hopes of making sales anywhere between Tk 25 lakh to Tk 30 lakh.

"Last year I prepared six cows ahead of Eid and sold to cattle traders of Narayanganj three weeks prior to the festival," said Hossain.

"If I do not make a sale in the festival, I have to opt for butchers," he said.

"Due to uncertainty over whether

traditional cattle markets would be opened, I have started selling cattle through online platforms such as Facebook and YouTube," said Md Abdul Kader of Haropara village in Pabna's Vangura upazila.

Kader prepared 117 cattle and sold 27 through online platforms last week. He expects to sell the rest in the same way.

"I have prepared two bulls in my house targeting to get handsome prices ahead of Eid. Due to poor market facility, I did not take the bulls to the market and nobody has offered a good price," said Md Saban Ali of Maligasa village in Pabna sadar upazila.

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Cattle rearing is growing costly and with the prevailing lockdown, farmers are in a tense situation, apprehending that the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions would put off customers from visiting makeshift markets or even sacrificing animals this upcoming Eid-ul-Azha. Though some have opted for online marketing platforms, most farmers feel comfortable displaying animals and making sales through the traditional markets. The photos were taken at Haropara village in Pabna's Vangura upazila and Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj recently.



AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

X Ceramics to go for high-end tiles May shell out Tk 244cr



JAGARAN CHAKMA

The demand for premium quality tiles has grown by around 10 per cent annually for the past decade thanks to a section of affluent customers who look for the finest products to decorate their homes and offices.

Encouraged by the rising demand, a number of local firms are lining up to enter the industry.

For example, X Ceramics is set to make a fresh investment of Tk 244 crore to establish a high-end tile production facility to cater to the demand among upscale product seekers.

"Our target is to catch the premium segment of customers who want to use imported or high quality tiles," said Md Mamunur Rashid, deputy managing director of the company.

Other than rapidly growing domestic demand, high-end tiles have good export potential as well, he added.

With 4,000 employees, X Ceramics is a market leader in the tiles industry with a combined production capacity of 30,000 square metres per day at two manufacturing units.

The company's annual turnover is about Tk 350 crore. X Ceramics has already placed its investment plan to the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, seeking 30 acres of land at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar in Chattogram for the new unit.

Other than X Ceramics, Mir Ceramic, Sheltech, Excellent Ceramic, DBL Ceramic, Akij and CBC all manufacture high-end ceramic items to meet more than 80 per cent of the local demand, which stands at nearly Tk 700 crore annually. The rest is met through imports, according to market players. X Ceramics aims to produce 1.34 crore square feet of both interior and exterior ceramic tiles at the new unit, Rashid added.

However, Ruslan Nasir, deputy managing of Mir Ceramic, said the demand for premium tiles is still low compared to the common variety.

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