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CATTLE MARKETS IN CITY

Buyers increasing, prices still high

Sellers fear incurring losses

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The sale of sacrificial animals gathered pace in the capital's cattle markets two days before the Eid-ul-Azha yesterday, although traders were charging higher prices compared to last year.

However, many traders are worried about incurring losses if there are not enough customers at the cattle markets as a good number of animals have already been sold online. Besides, many will not sacrifice animals this year due to loss of income amid the pandemic.

There was a good supply of animals, especially cows and bulls, at the city's 19 cattle markets.

"I have bought a bull for Tk 72,500. A bull of the same size was sold for about Tk 52,000 last year," said Iftekhar Zaman, a resident of Gendaria, who purchased the sacrificial animal early this time fearing there might be a crisis of the animals at the last moment like

He said though the number of bulls is good in the Dhupkhola cattle market, traders are not selling those at reasonable prices.

Prices of each bull were higher by Tk 10,000 to Tk 50,000 than the previous year, depending on size.

Mohammad Hannan Mollah, a trader from Faridpur, said he brought 18 bulls to Sadeque Hossain Khoka playground cattle market and sold two of them with a small profit. He said the number of cattle in different markets is almost double this year compared to last year.

"Ĉattle could not be sold outside Dhaka on the occasions of different programmes, including marriage ceremonies, due to the pandemic. That's why farmers have brought such a lot of animals to

He said it would be really tough for traders to sell all the bulls if there were not enough buyers.

Another trader Tofazzal Hossain Tofa has brought 22 bulls from Kushtia to the capital's Kachukhet cattle market. He said they had to purchase bulls from rural cattle markets at higher prices due to an increased competition from traders. The number of traders has gone up this year as many made a good profit in this trade last year, he added.

Golam Mostafa, who brought a bull weighing 22 maunds to Dhupkhola cattle market, said he was asking Tk 9.5 lakh for the bull, but was ready to sell it for Tk 8 lakh. He said no customer was showing interest

in buying the animal. The number of customers for big bulls are less, but the demand for small and mid-sized bulls is high, he added

"I have brought a bull to Dhaka for the first time this year, but I am not getting any response from customers. If the situation remains unchanged, I will not come here anymore," said

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

yesterday hit out an EU court ruling

allowing employers in some cases to

ban staff from wearing headscarves at

Erdogan, a devout Muslim leading an

Islamic-rooted party, presents himself

as an advocate of Muslims worldwide,

frequently defending the faith against

(ECJ) ruled on Thursday that a ban on

religious symbols such as headscarves

The European Court of Justice

Mostafa who reared the bull for around three and a half years.

As the demand for cattle has increased on digital platforms, many traders sold their bulls online and brought only a few to the cattle markets in the capital.

"I have reared 39 bulls at my farm and sold 23 of them online. The rest 16 have been brought to Sadeque Hossain Khoka field," said Mohammad Abdul Mannan, proprietor of Zamana Agro.

Alamgir Hossain, a resident of Gendaria, said he sacrificed a bull last year, but he cannot afford sacrificing one this year due to losses in business amid the pandemic.

"I am now thinking of relocating to my village home to cut my living expenses," said Alamgir who lives in a flat for a monthly rent of Tk 21,000.

According to statistics of the Department of Livestock Services, 3.18 lakh sacrificial animals, mostly cows and bulls, were sold online across the country till Sunday. Of them, 42,514 were sold in Dhaka

About 1.19 crore sacrificial cattle are reared each year on average for slaughtering during the Eid-ul-Azha. Last year, over 1.1 crore animals were slaughtered during the religious festival across the country.

HEALTH SAFETY RULÉS IGNORED call The government's maintaining health guidelines at the cattle markets seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

Issuing a circular on Tuesday, the government had instructed the market authorities to check the visitors' body temperature at the entrances, make arrangement for washing hands and set up disinfectant chambers.

It said the markets must have separate entry and exit points to enable one-way movement of buyers and avoid crowding.

Visiting the cattle markets in Gabtoli, Kochukhet, Dhupkhola, Sadeque Hossain Khoka playground, and Kachukhet, The Daily Star found that none of these instructions was being followed.

The entry of elderly people and children to the markets were supposed to be restricted. But many people aged below 18 and above 60 were seen moving in and around markets.

The only exception was the cattle market in Eastern Housing area of Mirpur. The market authorities were seen ensuring the enforcement of health safety rules, including wearing masks and checking body

yesterday fined the lessee of Gabtoli Cattle Market Tk 10 lakh for not maintaining health safety rules at the

The mobile court was operated during a visit to the market by DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam, said an official of the city corporation.

"may be justified by the employer's

need to present a neutral image

towards customers or to prevent social

Erdogan said the ruling impinged

The court should change its name.

"There can't be a court of justice

It has no relation to a court of justice.

For it to be a court of justice, it should

first learn what freedom of religion is,'

that doesn't understand freedom of

religion," he added during a press

Sitting inside her car, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia takes her first shot of Moderna Covid-19 vaccine on the premises of Sheikh Russel National Gastroliver Institute and Hospital around 4:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Sufferings all along the way home

"I have been waiting to buy a ticket for more than an hour and a half, but still there are more than 100 ticket-seekers ahead of me," Ripon Islam, an honours student, said.

It only seemed to get harder for those who managed to leave the capital as they were met with severe traffic congestion on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway.

Golam Khan Pappu, a privateservice holder, made a post on Facebook group "Traffic Alert" about the congestion.

When this correspondent contacted him over phone, he said, "Our bus left Mohakhali Station around 6:00am today and it took around five hours to reach Gazipur Chowrasta area.

"We were stuck in a jam for oneand-a-half hours at Square Masterbari area and finally reached Mymenshigh around 2:00pm. A journey that usually takes three or there and half hours ended up taking eight hours," he said.

Like the last few days, the Dhaka-Tangail-Rangpur highway witnessed traffic congestion yesterday, reports our Tangail Correspondent. The pressure from vehicles leaving

Dhaka caused a 13-kilometre tailback from Alenga to Bangabandu Bridge east end in the morning. Traffic movement towards Dhaka, meanwhile, was almost normal. The tailback eased in the afternoon

but traffic started to slow down again in the area from the evening as vehicular pressure mounted.

found a huge rush of people there. Except some major operators, most of the bus operators were found carrying passengers at full capacity, violating government directives.

Many passengers bought tickets at inflated prices -- when countermen of many bus companies said they had no empty seats, conductors and helpers were seen selling tickets outside the counters, charging extra.

Even state-run BRTC buses were seen taking extra passengers and charging extra.

Md Shohel, a private service holder, bought a ticket to Rajshahi for Tk 1,200 in a BRTC "reserve" bus. "I was not getting any tickets and so when I found one [of the BRTC bus], I did not bother about the amount."

This correspondent found the BRTC double-decker bus operating at full passengers capacity.

Asked about it, its helper said, "We had to pay extra to bring the bus here and manage its route, so I have to take the extra money."

Contacted, BRTC spokesman Amjad Hossain said there is no scope to charge extra and take extra passengers.

"We will take action if specific allegation is found," he told The Daily Star last night. Many passengers were seen waiting

for buses as those were running three to four hours behind schedule due to congestion on the highways.

Meanwhile, ferry terminals on the Shimulia-Banglabazar and Paturia-Visiting Gabtoli Bus Terminal Daulatdia routes saw huge pressure around 3:30pm, another correspondent of vehicles and passengers had to wait

several hours to cross the river. Launches

on the Shimulia-

On the other hand, ferries were

route also faced huge pressure, especially since the afternoon. Around 500 to 600 vehicles were waiting to cross the river around 4:00pm, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

Terminal witnessed huge pressure of launch passengers from the morning and the number rose in the evening. Most of the launches were found overcrowded while health safety guidelines were being ignored.

police and mobile courts were trying their best to make passengers follow

more launches are likely to leave, he said.

stations in the city. A total of 34 inter-city and local trains were being operated from Dhaka to different

Banglabazar routes were found overcrowded and law enforcers were struggling to control the mad rush, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

taking more time to cross the river due to strong currents. Several hundred vehicles were seen waiting for the ferry. Ferries on the Paturia-Daulatdia

Meanwhile, Sadarghat Launch

Shahidul Alam, acting officer-in-charge of Sadarghat River Police, said

health safety guidelines. Zainal Abedin, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), said a total 75 launches

left the terminal till 7:00pm. Around 50 A total of 102 launches left Dhaka on

Besides, many people left Dhaka through Kamalapur and other railway

wearing masks and checking body temperature. Meanwhile, a mobile court of Dhaka North City Corporation The leak contains a list of more than 50,000 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that it is a list of more than 10 phone numbers that 10 phone numbers that 10 phone numbers that 10 phone numbers

50,000 phone numbers that, it is believed, have been identified as those of people of interest by clients of NSO since 2016, writes The Guardian.

specifically Bangladesh was not mentioned in the report published on Sunday, which sent shockwaves across the world. But the Washington Post in its Q&A:

A guide to 'spyware' said Citizen Lab, a Canadian cybersecurity organisation, has documented suspected Pegasus infections in 45 locations Bangladesh was named among the

locations mentioned by the Washington Post, which also said, "However, the presence of infected phones does not necessarily mean a country's government

In Sunday's reports, the media outlets said they would gradually publish the names of countries and clients of NSO

Bangladesh government last night outright rejected the claim of the international media.

Post and Telecommunication Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star, "It is an attempt to tarnish the image of Bangladesh. ... I am saying that neither telecommunication division nor ICT division purchased such spyware. There is no question of purchasing such spyware."

He also said the media outlets did not mention which organisation bought the

When asked whether law enforcement agencies used the spyware, the minister said, "I cannot say anything about this they [law enforcement agencies] can say this.

Md Sohel Rana, AIG (media and public relations) of Bangladesh Police, Al Moin, director (media and legal wing) of Rapid Action Battalion, told The Daily Star that Rab does not use the spyware. Sunday's revelations -- part of a

collaborative investigation by The Washington Post, The Guardian, Le Monde and other media outlets -- raise privacy concerns and reveal the farreaching extent to which the private firm's software could be misused, reports The leak consists of more than 50,000

smartphone numbers believed to have been identified as connected to people of interest by NSO clients since 2016.

Among the numbers on the list are those of journalists for Agence France-Presse, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, The New York Times, Al Jazeera, El Pais, the Associated Press, Le Monde, Bloomberg, The Economist, and Reuters, The Guardian said.

On the list were 15,000 numbers in Mexico -- among them reportedly a number linked to a murdered reporter - and 300 in India, including politicians and prominent journalists.

Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, election strategist Prashant Kishor, Trinamool leader Abhishek Banerjee are among the many potential targets of Israeli spyware egasus, reported Times of India.

The Pegasus list reportedly has also names of two ministers in the Indian central government, including technology information minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who had earlier said in Lok Sabha that there was no substance in Pegasus Project report.

The Wire, which was a part of Pegasus Project, confirmed that at least two mobile phone accounts used by

listed as potential targets. Last week, the Indian government

which in 2019 denied using the malware to spy on its citizens, following a lawsuit reiterated that "allegations regarding government surveillance on specific people has no concrete basis or truth associated with it whatsoever."

The Washington Post said a forensic analysis of 37 of the smartphones on the list showed there had been "attempted and successful" hacks of the devices including those of two women close to Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in 2018 by a Saudi hit

NSO has denied any wrongdoing, labelling the allegations "false".

A liberal party in Israel's governing coalition said yesterday it would ask the defence ministry about exports of Israeli spyware that media reports have linked to hacking of phones of journalists, civil servants and rights activists worldwide reports Reuters. POCKET SPY

The Washington Post said the numbers on the list were unattributed, but other media outlets participating in the project were able to identify more than 1,000 people in more than 50 countries. They included several members of

Arab royal families, at least 65 business executives, 85 human rights activists, 189 journalists and more than 600 politicians and government officials -including heads of state, prime ministers and cabinet ministers.

Many numbers on the list were clustered in 10 countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

Pilgrims flock to Mt Arafat

garment worn during the hajj. 'My whole body is shivering. After noon prayers, the worshippers, carrying water bottles and umbrellas, made their way up the 70-metre (230-

Misting devices installed by the authorities helped relieve the oppressive conditions as the pilgrims performed the rites in the glare of the Gulf summer.

and Mina, where they will sleep under the stars before performing the symbolic "stoning of the devil". The scene was dramatically different

to past pilgrimages, which have drawn

up to 2.5 million people, and this year the mountain was free of the huge crowds that descend on it in normal

PRIVILEGED FEW

A member of the Council of Senior Scholars, Bandar Balila, who delivered the sermon at the Namira Mosque, praised the Saudi government's measures which he said had prevented the hajj from being "a site for the spread of disease and a focus of the epidemic"

Authorities were intent on staging the ritual "in a healthy manner that meets the requirements of disease prevention and social distancing," he said in the sermon that was translated into 10 languages for the benefit of the multi-national pilgrims.

Worshippers described a sense of tranquility descending on the

mountain, also known as the "Mount of Mercy".

To be one of only 60,000 doing hajj... I feel like I am part of a (privileged) group that was able to reach this place, said Baref Siraj, a 58-year-old Saudi

Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims with the means to travel at least once in their lifetime, is usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings

legitimacy

But barring overseas pilgrims has caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

GSK Sputnik Proposal

Health ministry has not worked much on it

Says Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry has not worked much on the Gonoshasthaya Kendra's proposal for buying 20 million Sputnik V vaccine doses from Russia, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said. "Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury met me

We were very excited as he said he could bring vaccine from Russia in seven days at half the price. Naturally, we were very happy," Momen told reporters at his residence yesterday upon his return from Uzbekistan after a five-day visit. He said he had a communication with Bangladesh Ambassador to Russia

Kamrul Ahsan, who informed him that Russia did not appoint any private agent in Bangladesh as distributor of Sputnik V vaccine. "Later, we heard that the person who got the agency [ship] is an American. He

Dr Zafrullah] will bring [vaccine] from the American. I don't know," Momen said. The minister said many journalists, singers and intellectuals repeatedly

proposed bringing vaccines from abroad at cheap rates if the government permitted.

"I don't know. It is the health ministry's issue and we refer them to the health ministry.'

Earlier, Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GSK) said it asked the government to buy 20 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine from Russia and that the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital has been appointed the vaccine manufacturer's sole distributor in Bangladesh.

Each dose will cost \$8, according to a proposal submitted to Foreign Minister K Abdul Momen during a meeting on June 6. Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and the Covid coordinator of the ministry were also present at the meeting, said GSK sources.

On June 9, GSK wrote to the minister informing him about getting the distributorship of Sputnik V. Getting no response, it sent another letter to the Prime Minister's Office on June 15. It also wrote to Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Ahmad Kaikaus on June 24, sources told The Daily Star. Speaking to this newspaper, Zafrullah

had said Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) appointed LLC MEBTEX as the distributor of Sputnik V vaccine and the latter appointed Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital the sole distributor in Bangladesh.

have attached relevant documents to our letters. We did not communicate with the Russian company for the partnership. They were the ones who approached us," said Zafrullah. Asked why the Russian firm contacted

GSK instead of the government, he said, "When RDIF wants to have a partnership with a country, they communicate with the country's government through a non-government agent. This is why they contacted GSK. But I do not know why they particularly contacted me.

Gonoshasthya Kendra's About proposal, DGHS DG Prof Khurshid Alam told The Daily Star on July 14, "I don't know about it. I don't have any

information in this regard." Bangladesh is in talks with Russia to buy Sputnik V vaccine and co-production of it. However, an agreement is yet to be

signed in this regard. Foreign Minister Momen said the agreement is at the final stage.

Three killed in 'gunfights' with law enforcers

STAR REPORT

Three alleged robbers were killed in 'gunfights" with Rab in Mymensingh and Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The identities of two "robbers"

killed in Mymensingh's Gafargaon could not be known immediately. A Rab team raided Bharoil area

acting on information that some robbers were planning to commit a robbery in the area around 3:00am. said Lt Col Abu Nayeem Md Talat, commanding officer of Rab-14.

Sensing the presence of Rab members, the criminals opened fire. The Rab members retaliated, triggering a "gunfight", said the Rab official.

Record Covid deaths

FROM PAGE 1

and Rajshahi divisions turned into Covid hotspots in mid-May due to the transmission of the highly contagious Delta variant. By mid-June, the variant spread all over the country, leading to a rush of Covid patients at hospitals.

Yesterday, the overall virus positivity rate rose to 29.59 percent from 29.09 percent the previous day. It was around 14 percent on June 15.

The occupancy of general beds at Covid-dedicated hospitals across the country was 68 percent, the ICU beds 87 percent, and the High Dependency Unit beds 83 percent, according to the Covid-19 Dynamic Facility Dashboard of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). Of the 231 deaths yesterday, the

highest 73 were recorded in Dhaka division followed by 57 in Khulna livision and 43 in Chattogram. Besides, 17 deaths were logged

in Rangpur, 16 in Rajshahi, 11 in Mymensingh, eight in Sylhet and six in Barishal.

Offices, factories to stay shut

Erdogan condemns EU court

ruling on headscarves ban

disputes".

Erdogan said.

on religious freedoms.

conference in Istanbul.

Islamophobia.

factories, for whom a 17-day production recess can leave them gasping to meet the lead time on work

Faruque Hassan, president of the

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers

and Exporters Association, questioned this last-minute decision. "Now, the situation is messy and the workers might face the similar kind of difficulties that they faced last year in the absence of public transports on the

road during the lockdown," he said. Anticipating that the government would give in to the factory owners' request to keep factories open lockdown, tens of throughout thousands of garment workers had put off from going to their villages this Eid. The latest decision, which has left

them with a 17-day leave, means

there would be a mad dash today to

head to their villages, a development

that can fan the flames of coronavirus

transmission further. The industries are also apprehensive about being able to make timely shipments although land, sea and airports will continue to function,

But he is hopeful that the factories might be opened from August 1 if the

coronavirus transmission slows down.

The latest round of lockdown is the

second time during the pandemic that factories are being closed down; the first time was in March last year. Even during the previous "strict" lockdown when the army was deployed onto the streets and people were

out of their homes, the factories were The new gazette circulated vesterday is an extension of the old order issued on July 13, 2021, which outlined what can and cannot operate during the upcoming lockdown that ends on

midnight of August 5. The order had stated that all shopping malls and markets will be closed. Only kitchen markets and corner shops can stay open from 9 am to 3 pm, two hours less than what it used to be before.

All forms of social gatherings will be prohibited, including religious and political gatherings. No restaurant can provide dine-in service and can only offer takeaways.

she told AFP as she stood among the arrested and imprisoned for stepping other emotional pilgrims, wearing the ihram, the traditional seamless white

> foot) high hill for hours of prayers and Koran recitals to atone for their sins.

After sunset they headed to Muzdalifah, halfway between Arafat

national The hajj, one of the five pillars of

Hosting the pilgrimage is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is their most powerful source of political