

Going up as supply runs

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fish have gone up by Tk 50-100 per kg. Upon visiting the market, it was, however, seen that the prices of farm chickens, local chickens, golden chickens, as well as eggs, oil, sugar, potatoes, ginger, garlic, spices remain the same.

Abdul Latif, proprietor of Shah Ali Bhandar and a tomato importer in Karwan Bazar, said he was selling tomatoes in the wholesale market at Tk 110-120 per kg, which was Tk 65-70 per kg before Eid.

He said he got the latest imported products in hand last Monday, adding that another reason for the price hike is that 20/25 percent of the produce began rotting.

"But imports and exports have started again on Saturday [yesterday]. Those products will hit the market tomorrow. Then the price will come down a bit again."

Some traders said truck fares have gone up from Tk 12,000 to Tk 25,000 due to the recent lockdown.

Our reporter visited Kazi Para Bazar, Shewrapara Bazar, Mirpur-11

Bazar, Karwan Bazar and Farmgate Bazaar, Mirpur-6 yesterday – a day after Eid.

During the visit to Kazipara market, only five of about 20 fish shops were open.

Traders of market said, "There are fewer customers but we have to buy fish at a higher price than other times. So, we have to sell at a higher price."

Monir Hossain said the price of any cultivated fish has gone up by Tk 20 per kg. The price of shrimp has gone up by Tk 50 per kg. The supply of fish is low at this time every year, which also contributes to the increase of prices.

At Karwan Bazar, a few shops were open and fewer customers were seen buying eel, putty, tangra, gusla and baila (different breeds of fish), which were being sold at Tk 500-800 kg.

Karwan Bazar fish trader Md Shafiq said there are fewer buyers in the fish market at the moment. But prices are higher because the supply of local fish is low. The price of small fish has gone up by Tk 50-100 per kg.



A girl has her temperature checked as she arrives to receive China's Sinovac Biotech vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) during a mass vaccination program at Ancol amusement park in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Massive offensive against

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when I visit there later." NISHIMURA CRITICISES YAHYA Nishimura, Japanese Socialist Party parliamentarian, said in Kolkata today that it was wrong on the part of Gen Yahya Khan to order army crackdown instead of handing over power to the Awami League.

Nishimura, who visited several camps sheltering the evacuees from Bangladesh at Bongaon in 24-Parganas district said in an interview that violence could not solve any problem.

Nishimura said that the UN should intervene to start fresh negotiations between the West Pakistan authorities and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for a political settlement in the trouble-torn Bangladesh.

Giving a horrifying picture of miserable situation of the people in Bangladesh, Nishimura said that during his tour of the camps in the border areas, he had found thousands of men, women and children trekking long distances to cross over to India for safety. When such a condition was prevailing in Bangladesh, people of

the world should try to assess the real situation, he commented.

AID BID FOR BANGLADESH

Headed by a young white South African, a group of 10 people would assemble in Kolkata within the next few days and then try to drive two SUVs loaded with food and medical supplies across the closed frontier into East Pakistan. The leader, Colin Jackson, was a 29-year-old writer whose family lives in Johannesburg. Operating under the title Omega, the group would include an American woman married to a Bangladesh activist, a British nurse in her fifties, a Peace News journalist, an ex-policeman and an official of British European Airways, who is devoting his leave to the enterprise.

Jackson said yesterday that he believed aid, desperately needed inside East Pakistan, was being prevented from getting there by "the principle of national sovereignty", backed up in this case by the Pakistan Army.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Scientists find tiny mountains

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these dense stars; anything greater than that will continue to collapse until they eventually form black holes.

The gravitational forces on a neutron star are about one billion times greater than those on Earth, which compresses every feature on the surface down to tiny dimensions – creating an almost perfect sphere.

However, on the surface of this sphere are minor imperfections, known as 'mountains'.

"For the past two decades, there has been much interest in understanding how large these mountains can be before the crust of the neutron star breaks, and the mountain can no longer be supported", Southampton University PhD student Fabian Gittins, who built a computational model to depict and study neutron stars, said in a statement.

The largest mountains possible to produce in this mathematical model were only one fraction of a millimetre tall, one hundred times smaller than was previously estimated.

Past work suggests that neutron stars can deviate from their perfect spherical shape with a margin of a few parts in a million, suggesting that mountains as large as a few

centimetres could be possible, but this new data shows that this is impossible as the crust would be too close to breaking at every point.

"These results show how neutron stars truly are remarkably spherical objects. Additionally, they suggest that observing gravitational waves from rotating neutron stars may be even more challenging than previously thought," Gittins said.

Understanding these slight deformations is vital to physicists hoping to garner a better understanding of our universe. Spinning neutron stars cause ripples in the fabric of spacetime known as gravitational waves, started from these slight imperfections.

These gravitational waves have yet to be observed, but future advances in more sensitive scientific equipment at the Ligo (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) and Virgo observatories could prove astounding results.

These observatories have already found astounding phenomena, including a black hole swallowing a neutron star for the first time, and the violent merging of two huge black holes in deep space.

Fewer cattle sacrificed

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the pandemic, he added. The development can be viewed as a blow to the country's meat production industry, which began growing with gusto in 2014, right after the BJP-led government imposed a ban on cattle export from India, a major source of sacrificial animals for Bangladesh.

The ban coupled with the improving purchasing power capacity of Bangladeshis brought on by the stellar economic growth clocked in over the past decade meant cow fattening targeting Eid-ul-Azha became a lucrative venture in the hinterlands.

In 2017, 44.7 lakh cows were slaughtered on Eid-ul-Azha. In 2019, the number stood at 56.6 lakh.

According to industry insiders, despair among the cattle traders and farmers were high this year as many

had to leave Dhaka with their unsold cows, incurring huge financial losses.

More than 28 lakh cows have remained unsold this Eid, according to Md Shah Emran, secretary of the Bangladesh Dairy Farmers' Association.

A cow trader in Keraniganj told The Daily Star that he bought 13 cows from Kushtia three days before Eid-ul-Azha, which was celebrated in Bangladesh on July 21, and all of the cows remained unsold.

"The marginalised cow farmers suffered a lot last year and this year the financial woes would be bigger," Emran said.

Although the country has become self-sufficient in meat production, the farmers are not getting financial benefit due to the increasing cost of cow feed and electricity, he added.

Millions sleep well because

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for governments because law enforcement agencies around the world are in the dark and there's no regulatory solution that allows them to monitor malicious acts on instant messaging and social media", the company said.

On the controversy around its snooping software that has rocked the world, the spokesperson asserted that "NSO does not operate the technology, nor do we have visibility to the data collected".

"We are doing our best to help create a safer world," it said.

NSO in a written response to PTI in October 2019, when the issue first came to the limelight with reports of misuse in India, had said that it considers "any other use of our products than to prevent serious

crime and terrorism a misuse, which is contractually prohibited".

"We take action if we detect any misuse. This technology is rooted in the protection of human rights – including the right to life, security and bodily integrity – and that's why we have sought alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to make sure our products are respecting all fundamental human rights," it said -- a stand its executives still maintain.

Without confirming, or denying, if the software was sold to India, the company had said that its "products are licensed to government intelligence and law enforcement agencies for the sole purpose of preventing and investigating terror and serious crime".

Frontliners' loved ones above 18 to get shots

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Maleque said 21 crore doses of vaccine have already been arranged or have been assured by different sources. "Of those, three crore doses are from China, three crore more from Serum Institute of India, seven crore from Covax, one crore from Russia and seven crore doses from Johnson & Johnson. If these are available in time, Bangladesh will be able to vaccinate 80 percent of its population, he said.

The minister also said 26 cold freezers were being brought through the World Health Organization (WHO) for vaccines that need to be stored at minus 70 or minus 80 degrees Celsius.

Besides, the government has directed the authorities to prioritise the elderly people in rural areas in the vaccination drives and to bring teachers, students and their family members above 18 years under the campaign, he said.

"The elderly are at risk of death, they have to be vaccinated first," the minister said, adding that around 75 percent of the Covid patients in public hospitals are from rural areas and 90 percent of all patients are non-vaccinated. It means they needed hospitalisation because they did not take vaccines.

"If we can vaccinate elderly people in rural areas quickly, the number of patients and deaths will decrease," he added.

He also said the rural people who cannot register online using the "Surokha" website would get vaccines by showing their National Identity cards and that they would be able to register for the inoculation after taking the shots.

About the latest spike in Covid-19 transmission, the minister said, "The infection rate has definitely increased as a result of people going to the cattle

markets and shops for Eid. We will see that [result] in the future."

DAILY OXYGEN DEMAND 270 TONNES

At the same event, the minister said the daily demand for medical oxygen has risen to 270 tonnes from the usual demand of 60 to 70 tonnes.

He said 40 oxygen generators would be installed in 40 hospitals across the country by next month. "So we will not have any oxygen shortage."

Explaining the latest oxygen supply chain, Director General of the health directorate Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam said there would be enough supply of oxygen from India to meet the rising demand.

"From now on, 400 tonnes of oxygen can be imported from India twice a week. As such, 1,600 tonnes of oxygen will be imported each month. Then there will be no more oxygen crisis," Khurshid said.

Drowning remains dominant reason

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interventions on the government's part to prevent this dominant cause of death.

A report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, released last month, suggested that drowning is highly prevalent in rural areas, where 10 percent of all deaths by drowning occur.

"The major reason behind deaths due to drowning is the wide exposure to water-bodies as 80 percent of drowning occurred in ponds, ditches and buckets, and within 20 meters of the victims' houses," said Dr Aminur Rahman, deputy executive director of Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) and director of its International Drowning Research Centre-Bangladesh.

He said there is a lack of awareness about how to supervise children.

Around 60 percent of the drownings occur from 9:00am to 1:00pm, and children of big families are twice as vulnerable to drowning, said Aminur.

On July 11, three under-five children drowned in two unions of Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila. Each of them died when their family members were busy with household chores, and the children were exposed to the nearby ditches and ponds.

Aminur said, "We lack many sets of skills, such as swimming for children under five, rescue skills, and first aid management. The hospitals also lack

structured protocol to handle patients of drowning."

Apart from building awareness, he said proven interventions by CIPRB, such as community day-care centres, can help prevent such deaths by providing institutional supervision to vulnerable age groups (under-five) at vulnerable times (9:00am - 1:00pm) through trained caregivers.

Besides, providing training for swimming and rescuing to children and supervisors can also help prevent such deaths, Aminur said, adding that an inter-sectoral coordination between several relevant ministries, swimming trainers and the community is necessary in this regard.

SoMaSHTe director Mir Masrur Zaman said the government should develop a nationwide strategy and make long-term investments based on learnings from proven interventions such as community-based childcare centres to prevent children from drowning.

"The government should also promote the best practices for childcare centres with special focus on creative incentives for maintaining quality and effective care," he added.

Contacted, Fazilatun Nessa Indira, state minister for the women and children affairs ministry, said her ministry has already identified the child-drowning deaths as a serious concern and has submitted a detailed

project pro-forma to the Planning Commission prioritising prevention.

It will be approved shortly, she said.

"But the ministry cannot implement drowning prevention activities alone. We need to collaborate with other ministries like those of education, health, local government and social welfare," she said.

According to her ministry, the Tk 309 crore project for this will cover two lakh children from 16 districts through 8,000 childcare centres and will provide education and training by both national and international NGOs.

Health directorate officials said they are trying to revive a previous action plan that they submitted to the health ministry in 2019 in this regard.

The plan included the development of day-care facilities to improve child supervision so that their exposure to waterbodies could be reduced, said Prof Robed Amin, line director of Non-Communicable Disease Control of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Mustaqim Billah Farooqui, additional secretary of the Local Government Division, said since drowning is a dominant cause of children's deaths in rural areas, representatives of local bodies can play an effective role in creating awareness to limit their exposure to nearby water-bodies.

Some good news comes along

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Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ito Naoki Ito received the first consignment of the vaccines at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 3:00pm yesterday.

Thanking Japan, Momen said, "We thank Japan and are grateful to them. Japan is our old friend. After the independence, Japan has always been beside Bangladesh. Japan does not impose conditionality while helping."

In a message sent to Japan's Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu, he acknowledged and appreciated the continued assistance of Japan in facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

He also mentioned Japan's direct budgetary support separately.

Foreign Minister lauded Japanese Prime Minister Suga's leadership in hosting the Vaccine Summit on June 2 and committing vaccines and funds to combat the pandemic.

"As we prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between our two friendly countries in 2022, both the countries are now working to upgrade Bangladesh-Japan relationship from a 'Comprehensive Partnership' to the 'Strategic Partnership' level," Momen said.

Momen further said that Bangladesh has lined up vaccines after a gap and there will not be a vaccine

shortage in the coming months.

However, it is now time that Bangladesh goes for local production of vaccines. Bangladesh was in talks with China and Russia for co-production, which he said, would be finalised at the soonest.

Some 16 lakh Bangladeshis who got the first doses of the vaccine were waiting for the second dose as India halted the export of AstraZeneca vaccines in March this year.

The Serum Institute of India had supplied 7 million of the contracted 30 million AstraZeneca vaccines, while the Indian government had gifted 3.3 million others to Bangladesh previously.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh received 250 ventilators from the US, completely free of cost.

The ventilators, which had arrived in India earlier, were transported to Dhaka last night.

Some Bangladeshi and Indian doctors have arranged 1,000 ventilators from the US.

Of those, 250 were sent to Bangladesh by the Biman Bangladesh Airlines, an official at the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi told this correspondent.

Another 150 ventilators were sent to Bangladesh earlier.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's physician Prof ABM Abdullah, who received the ventilators at Shahjalal International Airport, said, "Each

of these ventilators would have cost \$15,000 to \$16,000, but thanks to the Bangladeshi and Indian doctors, we are getting it for free."

These ventilators can be used in rural areas for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. These will be of great help during the current situation, he added.

The Bangladeshi expatriate doctors who helped the country get the ventilators are Ziauddin Ahmed, Masudul Hasan, Chowdhury Hafiz Hasan, Mahmudur Shams Bappi, and Arifur Rahman, said Prof Abdullah at a short briefing at the airport.

He also expressed gratitude to them for their efforts.

Meanwhile, Indian Railways' Oxygen Express began supplying the much-needed oxygen to Bangladesh, according to a statement of the Press Information Bureau of India yesterday.

Yesterday, an indent was placed at Tata in Chakradharpur Division under South Eastern Railway to transport 200 metric tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to Benapole, Bangladesh.

"The oxygen being sent to Bangladesh is commercially procured, but using Oxygen Express to transport it to Bangladesh can be quick and smooth," said an official of the Bangladesh High Commission to India.

Linde Bangladesh was importing 200 MT oxygen by Oxygen Express.

Teen rape victim

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trio intruded into their house, took Rekha to an abandoned place and gang-raped her, he added.

Hearing her scream, locals rushed to the spot and rescued her. The criminals fled the scene, he further said.

The rescuers took the girl to her home where she took poison around 2:00am.

She was rushed to a local hospital where she was declared dead, he said.

Contacted, Kanan Sarkar, inspector (investigation) of Pekua Police Station, said a case was filed in this connection and necessary legal actions would be taken against the accused.

Talking to The Daily Star, local union parishad member Nezam Uddin said the accused persons used to stalk the girl on her way back home from the madrasa.

Govt plans

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for vaccine registration. He said the digital e-commerce policy of 2018 aims at creating 20 lakh jobs in the ICT sector by this year.

The e-commerce, hardware, software and BPO sectors will be able to meet the target of more than 20 lakh jobs by 2021, he added.

The state minister hoped it would be possible to earn \$5 billion in export revenue by 2025.

Probe body finds

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onboard the ferry were injured after the ferry heading towards Shimulia, Munshiganj, from Banglabazar, Madaripur, hit the pillar.

Thirty-eight vehicles and over 300 people were onboard at the time.

Shafiqul Islam, project director of Padma Multipurpose Bridge, told The Daily Star after the incident that no damage was apparently done to the pillar, but the officials were investigating.

He added that his department would write to the BIWTC to take the measures necessary to avoid any such incident in future.

Master of the ferry Abdur Rahman was suspended by the ferry services operator, BIWTC, soon after the incident.

BIWTC's four-member probe committee is led by SM Ashiquzzaman, general manager (commerce) of BIWTC. The committee was asked to submit its report in three days. Besides, project officials of the Padma bridge filed a general diary with a local police station.

On Tuesday, another ferry hit another pillar of the bridge, which damaged the ferry.

The 6.15km bridge, which is expected to be open to traffic in June next year, is being constructed with a cost of more than Tk 30,000 crore.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a member of the probe committee said the speed of the current at the particular spot was 3.5 nautical miles per hour (6.48kmph) at the time of the accident and the ferry was at 15-16kmph.

"The master and quartermaster should have been more careful. They failed to prove their skill in that situation," the official said, wishing not to be named.

The master gives directions while the quartermaster operates the ferry.

Soon after the incident, Abdur Rahman, the master, claimed that the accident was caused by a mechanical error.

But the official said, "We did not find any major technical flaw in the ferry."

The committee will recommend departmental action against Rahman and quartermaster Saiful Islam, he said.

Contacted, Probe committee chief Ashiquzzaman said his team was working on the report to submit it today.

He did not talk about the content of the report.

SHIPPING SECY BLAMES MASTER "The master wasn't careful. Such an accident could have been avoided if the master was careful," Shipping Secretary Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury told our Munshiganj correspondent while visiting the scene.

Probe committee members, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Commodore Golam Sadeq, and BIWTC Director (finance) Shahinur Rahman Bhuiyan, accompanied the secretary.

Meanwhile, police yesterday questioned Abdur Rahman at Banglabazar terminal, said Miraj Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shibchar Police Station.

Our Munshiganj correspondent contributed to the report.

Fourteen dead in China warehouse fire

AFP, Beijing

A warehouse fire in northeastern China yesterday left at least fourteen people dead and twelve seriously injured, state media reported.

The logistics warehouse, located in Changchun, the capital of the northeastern province of Jilin, caught on fire Saturday afternoon, and rescue work is still underway, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Images published by the agency showed firefighters using ladders and cranes outside the burned-out shell of a glass-walled building.