

Poor Eid sales disappoint cattle traders

Many returned home with unsold animals

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Md Sirajul Islam had brought nine cows from his hometown in Sirajganj's Shahjadpur upazila to Kaliabazar in Dhaka in hopes of selling them at the cattle market a week ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

One of his nine cows weighed 12 maunds (one maund equals 37 kilograms), while the others averaged about six to eight maunds.

Islam had planned to sell the big cow for Tk 3 lakh and the others at Tk 1.5 lakh to Tk 1.75 lakh each.

"I was able to sell the big one at the price I had wanted, but I could not get adequate buyers for the others," he said.

After waiting for five days, Islam eventually sold six of his remaining cattle for Tk 1.2 lakh to Tk 1.4 lakh per cow.

As a result, he was left to lament losses of about Tk 25,000 to Tk 30,000 per animal. He had to return home with two of his cattle.

He bought each cow for more than Tk 1.5 lakh six months ago and took care of them to make a profit.

"But I am so unfortunate," Islam said. He now has to sell the remaining two to butchers.

Bohulal Bepari, a cattle trader in Barabeel village in Sirajganj, seems to be in an even more critical condition as he returned home with four of his 11 cows.

He took 11 healthy cows to Dhaka a week before Eid to sell each of them for Tk 1.2 lakh to Tk 1.5 lakh. But despite waiting till Eid night, he was able to sell seven of them for Tk 1 lakh each, which was lower than Tk 1.2 lakh he paid while buying them.

His woes were amplified by the troubles he faced in transporting the cattle back from the capital.

"Hiring a truck for Tk 35,000, I brought back the cows," he added. Bepari went on to say that he did,



A total of 90.9 lakh cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep and other animals were sacrificed this year, down about 3.8 per cent from a year earlier, according to data from the Department of Livestock Services. The photo was taken from Hazirhaat cattle market in Pabna before Eid.

however, expect combined losses of about Tk 1 lakh this year.

The pandemic-induced lockdown has left many people without jobs or with lower incomes, hurting the retail market.

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Md Shah Alam, a cattle trader in Pabna's Bhangura upazila, used to take 15 to 20 cows to the capital for sale ahead of Eid. But he did take even a single cow this year, fearing losses.

"Due to the alarming coronavirus situation, the cattle business has

faded as many people did not come to markets. Moreover, the middle-income groups were uninterested in sacrificing animals. So, traders did not get their expected sale," Alam said.

He sold 10 of his animals to local cattle traders in Bhangura for no loss.

Md Abdul Jobbar, a lease-holder of the cattle market in Chatmohar Notun Bazar in Pabna, said the sale of cows was less than last year's.

"Last year, we were able to sell 100 to 150 cows in each haat day weeks ahead of the festival. But this year, we couldn't sell more than 50 to 60 cows till the last haat day."

Because of the growing cases of the virus, many people avoided

going to cattle markets. They bought a record number of animals online. Goats, however, witnessed remarkable sales in this year's Eid market.

Md Abdullah Al Mamun, the local livestock officer of Pabna, said that due to the pandemic, many people opted out of sacrificing animals.

Most middle-income people teamed up with others to sacrifice animals, so the number of animals bought reduced this year, he said.

A total of 1.19 core sacrificial animals were prepared for Eid, said Jinnat Sultana, a deputy director of the livestock department.

Of them, 45.47 lakh were cows and 73.65 lakh goats and lambs.

Huge potential exists in startup collaboration

Indian envoy says

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India sees huge potential in collaborations with Bangladesh regarding fostering startups, especially those in the entertainment industry that produce films and music or provide streaming services.

"There is a unique opportunity for Bangladesh and India to work together in the startup sector, particularly to make cultural products and content," said Vikram Doraiswami, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh.

"Since Bengali is an official language of both countries, these services could reach South Asian audiences all over the world," he added.

Doraiswami made these comments during the first of a six-episode webinar styled, "Shotoborsho Shotoasha-Rise Up", jointly organised by the Indian high commission in Dhaka, Startup Bangladesh, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and Startup India.

However, he went on to say that certain regulatory issues, especially in payment solutions, need to be addressed to facilitate any such collaboration.

For example, the roughly 2.8 million Bangladeshis that visited India each year during the pre-pandemic era faced a number of difficulties in conducting financial transactions.

"So, there needs to be payment gateway solutions that are low cost and credible," said the Indian envoy.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, said a big chunk of the population in both countries were young, talented and tech-savvy.

India has developed its startup ecosystem to a great extent despite facing many challenges in the process, he said.

"Bangladesh has enjoyed growth in the sector as well but could still learn a lot from India's journey in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes," Palak added.

He also invited 50 Indian startups to visit Bangladesh and meet a matching number of their local counterparts and exchange views to facilitate further collaboration.

Similarly, Doraiswami reiterated Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation for 50 Bangladeshi startups to visit India for the same reason.

During the webinar, various tech and

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financial analysts and entrepreneurs from India and Bangladesh shared their experiences, suggesting that while the private sector would be taking initiatives, the public sector should provide policy support.

Wasim Alim, co-founder of Chaldal, shared insights on how his e-commerce startup has scaled up over the years.

"The online consumer goods provider, which now employs about 2,600 people, played a critical role by serving its customers amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic," he said while thanking the government for providing support.

Tina Jabeen, chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director of Startup Bangladesh, and Bijon Islam, CEO of LightCastle Partners, moderated a session each.

Yamini Bhushan Pandey, CEO of the startup incubation and acceleration department at the Indian School of Business; Sharod Sharma, member of India's National Startup Council; and Rahat Ahmed, CEO of Anchorless, participated at the event.



GLOBAL BUSINESS

Global growth to stay strong but virus the top risk, say economists

REUTERS, Bengaluru

Global economic growth prospects are holding strong for this year and next, despite a significant majority of economists in Reuters polls warning new variants of the coronavirus pose the biggest risk to that outlook.

A global survey of nearly 500 economists taken this month also concluded recent rising inflation in key economies around the world would be transitory.

The global economy was now forecast to expand a sizzling 6.0 per cent this year, which would be its fastest in nearly half a century, followed by a still-robust 4.5 per cent in 2022. Both were marginal increases from the April poll.

Slightly more than half the 48 economies polled on each quarter were upgraded for both years. But a surge in the latest variant of the virus, which has kept the delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics an event without spectators, is a reminder vaccination may have improved but the pandemic has not gone away.

"In recent weeks, financial markets have caught up to the idea that the Covid crisis is not entirely over. The Delta variant adds to the challenge, raising the number of cases and the threshold for herd immunity," said Ethan Harris, global economist at Bank of America Securities.

"Overall, we see the Delta surge



The City of London financial district can be seen. A global survey of nearly 500 economists taken this month concluded that the recent rising inflation in key economies around the world would be transitory.

as a moderate headwind to global growth, but as new information comes in, we can be persuaded otherwise." Financial markets are on edge ahead of the US Federal Reserve's meeting this week, where policymakers are grappling with increased coronavirus infections and a disrupted global supply chain that could induce more price pressures.

As for risks to the global economy, nearly 80 per cent of economists, or 160 of 202 responding to an extra question, said the biggest was a spread of new coronavirus variants. Over 70 per cent of economists, or 152 of 209, said the current uptrend in global inflation was transitory.

But respondents upgraded their 2021 inflation forecasts for 35 of

48 economies polled on and 31 of them for next year. At the same time, there were 29 economies with growth upgrades for this year and 26 for next, suggesting some price stickiness.

"What makes market pricing in the US more instructive is that they clearly rate the Fed's policy willingness to look through higher inflation as being credible.

This is at a time when US inflation has surprised to the upside again, and is leading a spate of upside surprises across DMs and some EMs," said Christian Keller, head of economics research at Barclays.

While economists expected the Fed to end its bond-buying program by end-2022, with a few more analysts now predicting a rate hike as early as next year, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England were predicted to keep policy unchanged through to the end of next year. The European Central Bank, meanwhile, will start tapering its pandemic-related asset purchases sometime after its September meeting and stop buying them by the end of March.

While developed economies have handled the pandemic with massive vaccination drives, emerging ones are still dealing with shortages of doses.

"Vaccination remains the key," noted Vishwanath Tirupattur, strategist at Morgan Stanley. "Risks remain elevated in countries with low vaccine penetration, especially in South and South East Asia, Africa and other EM economies." In China, the world's second biggest economy, economic growth likely slowed sharply to 8.1 per cent in the second quarter from a record 18.3 per cent in January-March as new Covid-19 outbreaks have weighed on consumer spending.

NEWS In Brief

Indonesia's BRI Life probes reported data leak of 2m users



REUTERS, Singapore

BRI Life, the insurance arm of Indonesia's Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), said on Tuesday it was investigating claims that the personal details of over two million of its customers had been advertised for sale by unidentified hackers.

Hudson Rock, a cybercrime monitoring firm, told Reuters that it had found evidence which showed that multiple computers belonging to BRI and BRI Life employees had been compromised.

"We are checking with the team and will provide an update as soon as the investigation is done," BRI Life CEO Iwan Pasila said in a text message.

Tesla posts record profits

REUTERS

Tesla Inc posted a bigger second-quarter profit than expected on Tuesday thanks to higher sales of its less-expensive electric vehicles, as it raised vehicle prices and cut costs.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk, however, said a global chip shortage that led to temporary factory shutdowns for the automaker, remains serious, and offered no details on the timing of its Cybertruck and next-generation batteries.

For the first time since late 2019, Tesla profits did not rely on sales of environmental credits to other automakers, a sign of increasing financial health for the manufacturing operation. Shares of the world's most valuable automaker rose nearly 1 per cent in extended trade.

In a call with investors and analysts, Tesla executives said that volume production growth for this year will depend on parts availability, as it aims to grow deliveries by more than 50 per cent.

UPS beats revenue estimates

REUTERS

United Parcel Service beat Wall Street estimates for second-quarter revenue on Tuesday, helped by e-commerce deliveries, air shipments and specialized handling of healthcare products such as Covid-19 vaccines.

Analysts expect the company to benefit from sustained volume growth as people prefer to order online rather than visit stores due to the spread of coronavirus variants.

Under Chief Executive Carol Tomé, UPS has been reining in costs and focusing on high margin packages under her "better not bigger" strategy.

Revenue in its core US domestic unit rose 10.2 per cent. The parcel delivery company said adjusted earnings per share rose 43.7 per cent to \$3.06 in the second quarter.

IMF cuts emerging Asia growth forecast

REUTERS, Tokyo

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday cut this year's economic growth forecast for emerging Asia, as a spike in coronavirus cases from new variants and slow vaccinations cloud the region's recovery prospects.

The downgrade, which contrasted with an upward revision in the IMF's forecast for advanced nations, highlights the divergence emerging across countries on the pace of recovery from pandemic-

induced strains.

In an update to its World Economic Outlook (WEO), the IMF forecast emerging Asia will grow 7.5 per cent this year, down 1.1 per cent points from its previous projection made in April.

That was a much bigger downgrade than a 0.4-point mark-down for emerging economies across the globe.

"Growth prospects in India have been downgraded following the severe second Covid wave during March-May and expected slow recovery in confidence

from that setback," the IMF said.

"Similar dynamics are at work in the ASEAN-5 group...where recent infection waves are causing a drag on activity," it said. The IMF cut this year's growth forecast for India by 3.0 points to 9.5 per cent. The projection for the ASEAN-5 group consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam was marked down by 0.6 point to 4.3 per cent.

China's 2021 forecast was revised down 0.3 point to 8.1 per cent due to a slowdown in public investment and fiscal

support. For 2022, the IMF raised the growth forecast for emerging Asia by 0.4 point to 6.4 per cent.

Southeast Asia has become a global epicentre for the contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus, forcing countries to impose travel bans and lockdown measures that are dragging on growth.

"We expect renewed virus outbreaks and a subsequent tightening in restrictions to delay the economic recovery, particularly in South East Asia," Oxford Economics said in a research note.