

Rawhide traders in a bind

Fail to secure government-set rates

S DILIP ROY and MD AMINUL ISLAM

Menazul Islam, a seasonal rawhide trader from Matikata Mor area of Chilmari upazila in Kurigram, is in dire straits after taking a Tk 2 lakh loan for his business in hopes of turning a profit.

He purchased the rawhide of cattle sacrificed during Eid-ul-Azha, which accounts for more than half of the rawhide collected annually, for a very low price this year.

As such, Islam aimed to make comparatively higher profits but he is yet to find rawhide wholesalers who are willing to buy the untanned leather at prices of his expectations.

He now fears a complete loss of capital. Islam bought each piece of cowhide in the range of Tk 120 to Tk 200 while those of goats for Tk 50 to Tk 70 this year.

The cost to process each cowhide was about Tk 500 while that of goats Tk 250.

Considering his investment, Islam hoped to sell each cowhide for Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 and that of goats for around Tk 500.

"Last year, we sold cow and goat hides for Tk 600-700 and Tk 300-400," he said.

This year though, seasonal rawhide traders are struggling to secure even half of their expected prices.

"We are eagerly waiting to sell the hides but many of us could not sell our goods as the prices offered by buyers is lower than the expected rate," said Sujon Rabidas, a seasonal rawhide trader based in Purbadhala upazila of Netrakona.

Echoing him, Nikhil Rabidas, a rawhide trader from Char Nilaxia village in Mymensingh sadar upazila, said the prices being offered were around half the government-set rate.

Besides, since traders are having to wait for days to sell their rawhides, the storage costs will continue to rise, he added.

As a result, more than 200 seasonal rawhide traders in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram are facing a bleak situation as they are yet to recoup their capital from sales to wholesalers.

According to the Department of



MD AMINUL ISLAM

Seasonal rawhide traders are seen waiting for buyers at the Shambhuganj Bazar in Mymensingh. Despite having bought the hides for cheaper than usual this year, traders have been left disappointed by the low prices offered by wholesalers. The photo was taken recently.

DISTRICTS IN FOCUS

Livestock Services, 1.66 lakh cattle were sacrificed in Kurigram while 1.25 lakh in Lalmonirhat this Eid.

Zahid Hossain, a rawhide trader at Alorupa area of Lalmonirhat town, told The Daily Star that he bought and processed rawhides worth Tk 25 lakh this year.

Hossain had to borrow about Tk 15 lakh to make this purchase and despite being pleased with their low cost, he has been unable to get his desired selling prices.

"We don't have any companies nearby to sell these rawhides to and so, we depend on wholesalers," he

said.

"If I can't sell the hides in time, I will suffer a lot," Hossain added. Similarly, around 1,000 rawhide traders in Mymensingh, Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Sherpur have been left disappointed by the low prices.

On July 31, traders took over 25,000 pieces of rawhide to Shambhuganj Rawhide Market in Mymensingh but only 10 per cent of it has been sold so far, according to Jahangir Alam, a leaseholder at the market.

He went on to say that the presence of wholesalers in the

market is about 80 per cent less this year due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and subsequent restrictions on public movement.

Md Abdur Rahman, a representative of LIB Tannery in Dhaka, said he has so far bought 5,000 pieces of rawhide from Shambhuganj Rawhide Market. Last year, Rahman bought 20,000 rawhides from the market.

Asked about whether they have been making purchases at the government-set prices, Mohammad Amanullah, a representative of Dhaka Tannery, said if the government purchased skins at the fixed rate, he was ready to sell the 4,000 rawhides he had.

Dr Abdul Hai Sarkar, the local livestock officer of Kurigram district, told The Daily Star that the rawhide business was a national asset and should be preserved as such.

Public administration in socio-economic dev



SALEHUDDIN AHMED

The developing countries of the world started taking various activities for economic development in the sixties. After five decades, different countries have reached different stages of development.

Five decades after the independence of Bangladesh, it has reached a satisfactory stage of development. Despite facing a huge challenge with a large population in a small territory, Bangladesh has become a "model" for other developing countries by overcoming many ups and downs.

The contribution of various policies, strategies and activities of the state behind this is undeniable. The role of the country's peasants, workers, traders and above all, the general public was very important.

However, in a state system, it is not possible to manage and implement any activities without government, semi-government and private sector organisations, call it development activities or any other socio-economic activities.

Bangladesh is now at a crossroads of socio-economic development. Along with economic development, we have to make proper arrangements for social development, various aspects of people's lives, such as health, communication and civil rights.

So far, the main strategy for development has been achieving rapid economic growth. This has led to the development of various sectors of the economy. But with that came income inequality and wealth inequality. This is one of our main challenges.

Lately, Covid-19 has come up with enormous challenges. As a result of the pandemic, the income of the poor and marginalised people has decreased. A huge population has become unemployed, which means new poor people are being added to the pool of the impoverished population.

Efforts to overcome this situation require comprehensive and integrated

socio-economic development.

Satisfactory and lasting solutions can be found through four main processes: Bringing our people, especially the poor and marginalised, into the mainstream of the economy; Ensuring the rights of poor and marginalised people to the benefits of development, especially growth, so that they are not unjustly deprived; Ensuring the participation of the general public at various levels of administration and politics; Ensuring people-oriented public administration.

The main point in this article is the fourth process.

First, we need to understand the characteristics of people-oriented public administration. The four features are: First, participatory governance of the people; Second, it will be efficient administration; Third, there must be honesty, devotion and a sense of discipline; Fourth, the administrator must be altruistic and sensitive to the people.

In order to have these four characteristics, the person involved in public administration must be well-educated and trained and skilled in performance. But through education and training, "hard skills" can only be acquired. The rest of the features have to be acquired through what we call "soft skills".



OPINION

The "soft skills" and qualities are usually acquired by people through discussion, interaction, teamwork, and from examples and case studies and so on, which are continuous and usually a lot more informal. It can often be gleaned from the advice, experience and work ethic of senior officials.

In the case of Bangladesh, we see that the importance and interest in "soft skills" in public administration, especially in the public sector, is relatively low. On the other hand, education and training, which are largely institutionalised, are predominant.

The above characteristics, however, cannot be automatically instilled in people and society. It requires addressing three important issues: Institutional structure (system); The right process for everyone to participate; Active persons i.e., persons of administration, employees of the civil society organisations and persons engaged in business and trade.

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GLOBAL BUSINESS

Southeast Asia's factory powerhouses hit by vaccination woes, Delta

REUTERS, Bangkok

Fresh outbreaks of the Delta coronavirus variant in South-east Asia have crippled its factory sector, disrupting global supplies of goods such as rubber gloves, semiconductors and sports utility vehicles and threatening the region's recovery.

A series of factory surveys this week showed business activity across most South-east Asian economies fell sharply last month, a contrast to more resilient manufacturing economies in North-east Asia and the West, where business growth has slowed but remained in expansion.

The economic disruptions in South-east Asia caused by the virus have been made worse by slow progress in vaccinations in the region of 600 million people. Governments have struggled to secure doses and have imposed costly lockdowns that have left many factories without workers.

The setbacks threaten the growth of one of the world's more resilient emerging market blocs, which has withstood various global crises in recent decades thanks to broad robust economic reforms and its proximity to China.

HSBC Bank economists warn that the low inoculation rates in Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as the uncertain efficacy of their vaccines, put their economies at risk.

"This means that populations in these countries could remain vulnerable not only to the current outbreak, but any future mutations that may develop," HSBC



REUTERS/FILE

A worker inspects newly-made gloves at Top Glove factory in Shah Alam, Malaysia.

said. "Touch-and-go restrictions are likely to continue, weighing on the near-term growth outlook."

For South-east Asia's manufacturers, which are competitive largely because of low-cost labour and access to raw materials, the impact of new outbreaks on labour supply has been a major production bottleneck.

In Thailand, Asia's fourth-largest car exporter and a production base for major global car brands, Toyota Motor Corp

suspended production at three of its plants last month due to parts shortages caused by the pandemic.

Siam Agro-Food Industry, a Thai processed fruit exporter, is heavily reliant on migrant labour and has been able to fill only 400 of 550 roles needed as workers return to their countries and are unable to return due to closed borders.

"There are 350 tonnes of fruit per day but now we can take only 250 tonnes because we do not have enough workers," said

the president of Siam Agro-Food Industry Ghanyapad Tantipitapong.

"There is strong demand from export markets, such as the United States, our main market. The problem now is with the production."

In Vietnam, which hosts facilities belonging to global companies such as Samsung, Foxconn and Nike, companies in the country's south have been forced to keep workers isolated at their production sites at night.

Industrial output in several southern cities and provinces, where strict movement curbs were imposed from last month, has fallen sharply, the government's statistics office said last week.

In Malaysia, which supplies about 67 per cent of the global rubber glove market, lockdown restrictions forced many glove makers to suspend operations in June and last month.

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NEWS In Brief

Oil prices edge higher

REUTERS, London

Oil prices edged higher on Wednesday, supported by a fall in US inventories and Mideast geopolitical tensions, but the increasing spread of the coronavirus Delta variant in top consuming countries capped gains.

Brent crude oil futures were up 33 cents, or 0.5 per cent, to \$72.74 a barrel by 0815 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 16 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$70.72 a barrel.

"[Oil] bulls have drawn support from US inventory dynamics, with commercial stocks falling to their lowest since January 2020 and indications that the tightening is set to continue," oil brokerage PVM said.

US crude inventories fell by 879,000 barrels for the week ended July 30, according to two market sources, citing American Petroleum Institute figures.

Gasoline inventories fell by 5.8 million barrels and distillate stocks fell by 717,000 barrels, the data showed, according to the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Tensions in the Mideast Gulf also lent prices some support.

On Tuesday, three maritime security sources claimed Iranian-backed forces seized an oil product tanker off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, though Iran denied the reports.



A sticker reads crude oil on the side of a storage tank in the Permian Basin of Texas, US. REUTERS/FILE

Sony posts Q1 profit jump

REUTERS, Tokyo

Sony Corp raised its earnings outlook on Wednesday after a record first-quarter operating profit helped by pandemic stay-at-home demand for PlayStation 5 consoles, TVs, music and movies.

Operating profit for the quarter ended June 30 rose to 280.1 billion yen (\$2.57 billion) from 221.7 billion yen a year earlier, topping the 207.96 billion expected by 10 analysts, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

It raised its profit forecast for the year through March 2022 to 980 billion yen from 930 billion, bringing it closer to the 1 billion yen average estimate from 25 analysts.

Sony had expected growing pandemic demand for its devices and content to wane as coronavirus lockdowns eased, but with fresh waves of Covid-19 infections sweeping the world, restrictions are still common.

A shortage of semiconductors, however, which is also affecting the likes of Apple, means it cannot produce enough PlayStation games consoles to meet demand.

Investors call for action by steelmakers on carbon emissions

REUTERS, London

Steelmakers must take urgent action to produce less carbon in order to meet the Paris Agreement on climate change, investors with \$ 55 trillion in assets said Wednesday.

Emissions from steel production represent 9 per cent of the global total and must fall by 29 per cent by 2030 and 91 per cent by 2050 to reach the net zero scenario defined by the International Energy Agency in May, said the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change.

The IIGCC, as part of the Climate

Action 100+ initiative, said in a statement that while it was technically possible to achieve zero net greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century, the steel industry was too slow to act.

Steel companies were to set short, medium and long term goals in accordance with the IEA report and align their capital expenditure plans to net zero, including by not investing in new production capacity relentlessly, an added the IIGCC.

They were also expected to demonstrate that emerging technology can work and produce reports by the end of 2022 on

how carbon capture and storage and hydrogen-based processes can be used.

In addition, they had to be transparent about the public policy positions they would take to accelerate their transition, for example on carbon pricing and research and development.

While nine companies responsible for around 20 per cent of global steel production have so far made firm net zero emission commitments, they are mainly located in Europe and Asia and are broadly in line with national net zero commitments. And the regulations in force.

"We cannot afford to delay action -

while emerging technologies have a role to play, the IEA report points out that existing technology can provide 85 per cent of the emissions reductions needed by 2030," said IIGCC Executive Director Stephanie Pfeifer.

ArcelorMittal the world's largest steelmaker, and its German counterpart Salzgitter announced earlier this year hydrogen-based projects to help reduce their emissions. Read more

In Japan, the country's third-largest steelmaker, Kobe Steel, has announced plans to cut emissions by 30-40 per cent by 2030 from 2013 levels.