



An Eid like no other Chattogram edition

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MD NAZRUL ISLAM

Eid is a celebration for Muslims across the world, a celebration that brings people together. However, different countries have different customs and cultures of celebrations, and even within the same countries, the celebrations take different faces in different regions.

This beautiful paradox is more prominent when it comes to Eid in Chattogram, which is somewhat different from all the other regions of the country. Considering the size and population of the district, Chattogram has more sacrificial animals than other districts.

Moslem Uddin, president of Chattogram Rawhide Traders Association, estimates almost four lakh animals will be sacrificed in Chattogram this Eid.

Given the context of the grandeur, one may wonder – how an average Chittagonian celebrates Eid?

Let's start with the sacrificial rituals.

The people of Chattogram prefer to offer their sacrifice on the very first day of Eid-ul-Azha, however, in a few cases that may be an exception. Traditionally, they prefer a single animal's sacrifice, be it – a cow, buffalo, or camel under the name of seven people. In the case of goats, sheep, and ewes, there is a religious provision for sacrificing under a

single name.

Individual family units prefer to sacrifice one cow. Some also prefer oxen, while others prefer bulls. In many remote regions of Chattogram, there's also a prevalence of conducting bull-fights. However, it's hard to convince any Chittagonian, who usually sacrifices oxen, to buy bulls.

Families engaged in business are more prevalent in Chattogram. This is why many families sacrifice more than one animal due to their affluence, breaking convention. Wealthy families tend to sacrifice large quantities of expensive animals. Whereas, lower-income residents prefer small-sized bulls. Although there are different breeds of bulls in the country – “Red Chittagong Cattle” or RCC is more of a popular choice in Chattogram.

A prevalent culture in this subcontinent is to share the joy of any religious festivities among relatives. But when it comes to treating in-laws' families during Eid-ul-Azha, Chattogram can be a bit too extra.

Sending sacrificial animals to the daughter's in-law's house is an age-old custom in Chattogram. This practice still goes on in the region per the person's affordability.

SM Abu Tayyab, former first vice-president of BGMEA and former president of Chittagong Club, told this correspondent

that it is a traditional custom in Chattogram to send sacrificial animals to the house of the girl's father-in-law.

“However, this age-old practice at times creates pressure on the lower strata of the society,” he said.

Then comes the food. If extravagance needs any other synonym, it should be Chittagonian food during festivals. Preparations start on the of Eid with the preparations of flatbreads – an essential Eid breakfast in Chattogram, like many other regions of the country.

However, the difference is in the numbers. Hundreds of flatbreads are made in every house centring on Eid. Hosting guests with freshly cooked meat and hand-made bread is a must-have of Chatgaiya culture. It is also a traditional custom in Chattogram to distribute these hand-made flatbreads and cooked mezbani meat or kala bhuna to the homes of relatives.

Manjurul Haque, managing director of Barcode Limited and former vice-president of Chittagong Club, said the prime delicacy of Chattogram on Eid-ul-Azha is freshly cooked meat with rice-flour flatbread.

Chittagonians who live abroad also takes rice husks with them so that they can also celebrate Eid-UI-Azha the traditional way in those countries.

Cattle sales get momentum

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Cattle sales have started to gain momentum in the port city as Eid-ul-Azha inches closer. Although activities in seven cattle markets managed by Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) began in July 1, traders said sales would reach their peak after July 6.

There are three permanent cattle markets in the city – Sagarika Cattle Market, Bibirhat Cattle Market and Postar Par Goat Market. In addition, there are four temporary cattle markets – Karnafuli Cattle Market, the field adjacent to Saltgola Railway Crossing, Khejurtola field adjacent Patenga Link Road and the field adjacent to Butterfly Park in South Patenga.

Abdul Hannan came to Bibirhat Cattle Market with 20 oxen. He was demanding a price between Tk 1.5 lakh and Tk 4.5 lakh for each one. He said he has sold one ox in the last three days.



“Customers ask for the price but none seem interested to make their purchase at the moment,” he said. “Usually, sales increase three or four days before Eid.”

Rezaul Karim Liton, a representative of Bibirhat Cattle Market leasing company, said, “In cities, many don't have the space to accommodate sacrificial animals or the time to feed them, take care of them for six to seven days. Thus, they prefer to purchase two to three days before Eid,” he said.

Rozdar Mandal, a cattle trader, brought 15 oxen with him from Kushtia at the Karnafuli cattle market – setting the price between Tk 2.5 lakh and 4.5 lakh for each.

One of his oxen, weighing 12 mounds and named “Lal Badsha” was priced at Tk 5 lakh. Many buyers and visitors were coming to the temporary cattle market to see the ox.

Rozdar said, “I've taken care of them for the last one and a half years. Everyone's bargaining the price of 'Lal Badsha' but I won't sell it under Tk 5 lakh.”

Meanwhile, Sagarika Cattle Market was abuzz with buyers and sales have already gained momentum there.

Ariful Islam, a representative of the market leasing company, said a total of 80 bulls and oxen and over a thousand goats have already been sold there till Sunday.

Meanwhile, sales in the small markets in the vicinities, lanes, and by-lanes have also been gaining crowd. One of these markets, set up on KB Aman Ali Road set up with around 80 cattle and was seen quite crowded with buyers.

Spice prices going down as supply picks up ahead of Eid

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Prices of several spices have gone down in the port city's wholesale and retail markets, due to increased supply ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

Normally, prices of all kinds of spices go up ahead of such festivals. This year, however, traders had to reduce prices, as supply increased but the desired demand did not.

Prices of cumin, cinnamon, turmeric, clove, garlic, ginger and cardamom have dropped 3 to 20 percent in just a month. Many ambitious traders have suffered huge losses, as prices continue to fall.

Amidst all this, the price of onion has risen by Tk 10 during the period. It is being sold for Tk 50 to 60 per kilo at wholesale markets and Tk 55 to 65 at retail markets.



According to Chattogram Customs House, total imports of seven spices – pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, cardamoms, cloves, cumin and garlic – through Chattogram port from April to June stood at around 37 lakh tonnes, 7 lakh more than previous year's imports during the same period.

Sagir Ahmed, general secretary of Khatunganj Traders Association, told The Daily Star, “Traders imported and stocked more due to the Covid-19 situation, but the demand has decreased. If this continues, most importers and wholesalers will face losses.”

On the bright side, people of Chattogram are happy with the prices.

Amirul Islam, former banker and resident of the city's GEC area, said, “The traders artificially increase prices every year, but that didn't happen this year.”



Tough time for RAWHIDE TRADERS

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Rawhide traders are facing a tough time with their business as 21 out of 22 tanneries in Chattogram have been shut down. They are now forced to sell hides at a cheaper rate due to the absence of a competitive market in the port city.

Every year during Eid-UI-Azha, rawhide is sold at a lower price than the price fixed by the government, which is decreasing the collection of rawhide, said traders.

They claimed there were at least 22 tanneries in the port city. Over the years since 1971, various reasons contributed to the factories shutting down. At present only one tannery has survived.

A total of 112 merchants operate under Chattogram Rawhide Warehouse Traders (CRWT) and another 150 operate outside the association in the port city. However only 55 merchants, out of 112, are running their businesses. The rest were forced to close shop in the last few years.

Merchants expect that they'll be able to collect at least four lakh pieces of rawhide including cow, goat and buffalo post Eid-UI-Azha. Although they collected 4.82 lakh pieces of rawhide in 2021, the numbers significantly decreased since 2018, when

about 5.75 lakh pieces were collected.

Moslem Uddin, president of CRWT, said, “This year, we have a target of procuring around 4 lakh pieces of rawhide (20% less than the previous year) due to a capital crisis and also since many merchants have closed their businesses.”

“The port city tanneries, which used to only depend on cowhide collected across Chattogram region including the hill tracts got shut down over the years, increasing dependence on Dhaka markets.”

He also said 20-30 thousand skins are wasted every year as they cannot be collected properly or sold by traders.

Khurshed Alam, an adviser to Chattogram Rawhide Traders Samaboy Samiti said, “Over the years most tanneries got shut down as the government enacted strict law against pollutant factories.”

“At present the one factory that exists purchases 15-20 percent of the total collection of rawhide. The rest of us have to depend on Dhaka tanneries for business.”

“The shutdown of Chattogram tanneries has been a great loss for us. We urge the government to bring back tanneries ensuring necessary precaution for environmental safety,” Kader added.

Blacksmiths: men of the hour

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The blacksmiths in the port city have been passing busy days ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, making and sharpening tools for sacrificial animals.

Besides cattle markets, the people are approaching different blacksmiths shops to buy machetes, choppers, cleavers and different sizes of knives where workers are preparing iron-made tools to attract customers.

When visiting several blacksmith shops in Chattogram's Lal Dhigi's Jail Road, Choumuhuny, Riazuiddin Bazar, Muradpur, Bakalia-Kalamia Bazar, Halishahar-Boropol and EPZ area, this correspondent found all of them extremely busy. Even at the last minute, a large number of people were seen thronging the shops to buy new, ready-made tools.

Sixty-year-old Ajoy Karmakar, whose shop is on Nayabazar's Dhaka Trunk Road of Nayabazar, told this correspondent that they have made different kinds and sizes of tools depending on the customers' demand.

“The prices of knives start from Tk 150 to Tk 350 per piece, while those of machetes start from Tk 350 to Tk 1200 depending on its size and iron quality,” he added.

Siddiq Mia, a 65-year-old blacksmith in Halishahar's Boropol area, said, “Usually there is no rush before Eid-ul-Azha. This year, a month or so before Eid, the demand is growing high.”

“As the time is running out fast, we are whetting the tools with electric machines,” he added.

Besides blacksmiths' shops, hawkers who sell knives or sharpen sharp tools by visiting door to door are also on a busy schedule.

“The sharpening business will go on around the clock till Eid day. We earn Tk 800-1,000 per job by removing rust from the tools,” said Md Mozammel, a mobile vendor at Halishahar.

According to the data provided by livestock officials of Chattogram, around 8 lakh cattle are likely to be sacrificed this Eid.

