



Horses brought out on display at the "Livestock Service Week and Exhibition-2024" organised in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar by the Department of Livestock Services and Bangladesh Dairy Farmers' Association. The fair ended on Friday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Fair showcases commercial viability of exotic livestock

SUKANTA HALDER

Imagine your local Sonali chicken but on steroids. Weighing 4.5 kilogramme and of the height of a toddler, the breed is called Brahma, a chicken with its origins in America.

Now imagine another chicken that is completely black for a dominant gene, including its feathers, beak and even internal organs. It is known as Ayam Cemani, a rare breed of chicken from Indonesia.

Such exotic oddities were being showcased by a 22-year-old at a recent "Livestock Service Week and Exhibition 2024".

Sazzadul Islam can be best described as a self-made entrepreneur.

In his third year studying for an honour's degree in English at Gaibandha Government College in Bogura, he started off as a pigeon fancier before his interest expanded to commercial rearing of different chicken breeds during the pandemic.

"During the pandemic, I saw videos and pictures of some exotic Silkie chicken (originating in China and Japan) on a Bangladeshi Facebook page," he said.

He started thinking about how to do business with such chicken.

"I found out that this chicken is not for meat – people buy and keep it as a hobby. There is very high demand," he added.

Islam contacted the person running the Facebook page and bought a pair of Silkie chicks for Tk 2,000.

The two hens started laying eggs after six months and after another two months, 15 chicks hatched out.

Islam began purchasing different



breeds of chickens one after another from one importer.

At present, there are 300 chickens of 28 species on his farm. He and his brother ran the farm initially but now he has 14 employees whom he pays Tk 80,000 in salaries a month in total.

The operations have been kept running thanks to high demand, with as many as 10 chickens being sold to customers around the country every day.

The Ayam Cemani comes with the lowest price tag of Tk 1,000 each at his farm while Sultan, a Turkish breed of crested chicken, the highest of Tk 30,000.

Every month, after meeting all expenses, Islam makes a profit of Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000.

"It is really amazing for me," he said, adding, "My father didn't like it at first.

But he doesn't say anything anymore."

Islam's chickens were a big draw at the two-day fair organised in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar by the Department of Livestock Services and the Bangladesh Dairy Farmers' Association marking "Livestock Service Week and Exhibition 2024".

Ending last Friday, the fair showcased over 3,000 animals and birds, many of which were also on sale, by entrepreneurs just like Islam.

One of them is Shoriful Islam Sunju who brought nine horses of different breeds, three of which were sold at the exposition.

On enrolling for higher secondary education in 2006, he bought a horse with money provided by his mother.

On graduating from a private university

in Dhaka, he returned to his home in Begunbari of Mymensingh sadar upazila in 2014 and took up a job as a community healthcare provider while setting up a farm to rear horses.

The hobby turned into a commercial venture three years ago when he hired two workers to look after 24 horses of different breeds such as Marwari, Sindhi and Nukra brought from Rajasthan, Bihar and Punjab in India, he said.

Sunju sells horses not only among affluent people but also those who participate in races and to Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Ansar and VDP. He also rents out horses for various social events, including marriages.

Many horses have to be imported every year to meet the demand, for which he is trying to breed and rear them in the country, he said.

Sunju declined to share details about his sales, but stated that he was "making a good profit".

Another big draw at the fair were two Hallikar cattle, a breed native to the state of Karnataka, India. They have long, vertical and backward bending white horns one and a half feet in length.

Hallikar animals are world famous for their excellent "draught power capacity", endurance and discipline at work and the two cattle, weighing about 2,600 kilogrammes in total, were priced at Tk 12.5 lakh each.

According to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, different breeds of animals and birds have been highlighted in the exhibition and people got to know about improvements.

Seeing this, many may become interested in farming, they added.



## A tribute to Mirza Azizul Islam

MAMUN RASHID

I came across Mirza Azizul Islam in 2002 while he was the chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) and I was a BSEC nominated director to the Chittagong Stock Exchange.

What grabbed my attention since then was his ability to go deep into any economic reports or thought papers we shared with him and more importantly, write brief but well-articulated feedback as well as thank you notes. His short stint as the chairman of Sonali Bank showed us how strong a person he could be.

Our relationship became quite extended during his stint as finance, planning and commerce adviser to a non-partisan caretaker government during 2007-08. I am devoutly thankful to him as he gave me access to public policy formulation dynamics.

What made him so different from his peers was his ability to look beyond the traditional public policy domain and ensure beneficial terms of trade for the farmers through encouraging crop procuring policy. His analytical writings on who to blame for the North American meltdown proved him as a solid macro-economist to me.

Afterwards, we were colleagues at Brac Business School. I never knew before he was personal secretary to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for a brief period and had a very dispassionate view of the Mujib regime as a brilliant public servant. I was fortunate to borrow from his wisdom gained through his North American PhD as well as work with development agencies across Asia.



Mirza Aziz, a strong figure in Bangladesh's bureaucracy, has made significant contributions to the nation's economic development. During his distinguished career, he held several prominent positions in the governments of East and West Pakistan and later, Bangladesh. His strategic insights and policy formulations as a brilliant student of economics played a larger role in shaping Bangladesh's economic landscape.

He advocated for fiscal discipline and sound budget management, which helped stabilise the economy and maintain macroeconomic stability. His efforts contributed to lower inflation and a more conducive environment for business investment.

He played an important role in putting up the Better Business Forum and the Regulatory Reforms Commission along with Dr Fakhruddin Ahmad. His understanding of the capital market helped Bangladesh list Grameenphone.

Within a limited span, he also prioritised human capital development as a critical driver of economic growth. He recognised the crucial role of access to education and healthcare in enhancing productivity and reducing income inequality and spearheaded initiatives for the advancement of these.

He emphasised skill development and vocational training to equip the workforce with the necessary tools to thrive in a competitive global economy. Additionally, Mirza Aziz championed initiatives to promote trade liberalisation and regional integration.

He prioritised investments in transportation, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure, recognising their role in improving connectivity, reducing transaction costs, and stimulating economic activity. His strategic infrastructure investments primarily laid the foundation for the sustainable development process in Bangladesh.

As Bangladesh continues its path of economic transformation, his contributions and work ethic serve as a guiding light, inspiring future generations of policymakers and economists to pursue policies that dispassionately and professionally foster sustainable and inclusive development.

The author is an economic analyst.

## Advanced economies pledge \$11b to boost WB lending

AFP, Washington

A group of advanced economies have pledged \$11 billion in new funding commitments to boost the World Bank's lending capacity by up to \$70 billion over a decade, the development lender announced Friday.

The 11 countries – including the United States, Germany and Japan – committed the funds to three lending instruments designed to increase capacity and allow the World Bank to take on "more risk for shared global challenges," the bank said in a statement.

By leveraging the resources pledged, the bank should be able to provide up to \$70 billion in new lending over a 10-year period.

"We worked hard to develop these new financial instruments that boost our lending capacity, multiply donor funds, and ultimately allow us to improve the lives of more people," World Bank president Ajay Banga said in a statement.

He added that the new commitments were "both an endorsement of the progress we have made to reform the bank, and a sign of their shared commitment to development globally."

The bank has previously estimated that developing countries will need an average of \$2.4 trillion each year between now and 2030 in order to address the "global challenges of climate change, conflict, and pandemics."

## China's imports of Russian oil near record high

REUTERS, Beijing

Russia remained China's top oil supplier in March, data showed on Saturday, as refiners snapped up stranded Sokol shipments.

China's imports from Russia, including supplies via pipelines and sea-borne shipments, jumped 12.5 percent on the year to 10.81 million metric tons, or 2.55 million barrels per day (bpd) last month, according to data from the General Administration of Customs.

That was quite close to the previous monthly record of 2.56 million bpd in June 2023. Seven Russian tankers under sanctions offloaded Sokol cargoes in Chinese ports in March, as Russia worked to clear a glut of stranded supply in the wake of tightened U.S. sanctions.

More than 10 million barrels of the oil supplied by Sakhalin-1, a unit of Rosneft had been floating in storage over the past three months amid payment difficulties and sanctions on shipping firms and vessels carrying the crude.

Stockpiling of Russian crude for storage in strategic reserves by state-owned CNOC also boosted imports from Russia.

Data from consultancy Kpler forecast

sea-borne shipments from Russia hitting a record high of 1.82 million bpd, including 440,000 bpd of Sokol and 967,000 of ESPO. Russia was China's top supplier throughout 2023, shipping 2.14 million bpd despite Western sanctions and a price cap following the Kremlin's 2022 invasion

of Ukraine.

Market fears of a major escalation to hostilities in the Mideast appeared to ease. In coordination with other Opec+ members, Russia opted to roll forward a voluntary reduction in crude oil output of 300,000 bpd into the first quarter of the

year to support energy prices.

Imports from Saudi Arabia, previously China's largest supplier, totalled 6.3 million tons in March, or 1.48 million bpd, down 29.3 percent on the same period last year.

Riyadh has said it would extend its voluntary cut of 1 million bpd through the end of June, leaving its output at around 9 million bpd.

The world's top exporter kept the March official selling price of its flagship Arab Light to Asia at \$1.50 over the Oman/Dubai average as the Kingdom sought to secure market share.

January-March imports from Malaysia, a trans-shipment point for sanctioned cargoes from Iran and Venezuela, soared 39.2 percent on the year to 13.7 million tons, or 3.23 million bpd.

The data showed 375,296 tons of imports from Venezuela, following a rare shipment of 352,455 tons of Venezuelan crude in February amid a temporary relaxation of US sanctions on Caracas. Sanctions were re-imposed on Thursday after the US said President Nicolas Maduro had failed to meet his election commitments.

Customs recorded no imports from Iran.



A vessel is seen near oil tanks at the China National Petroleum Corporation's Dalian Petrochemical Corp in Dalian, Liaoning province, China.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE