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## Fake refrigerants seized at Ctg port

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Chattogram Customs House confiscated 62,000 suspected substandard refrigerant gas-filled cylinders at the port.

An intelligence agency recommended intercepting the shipments from China, customs officials said.

An intelligence report noted that poor-quality gas for AC and refrigerators posed health risks and can lead to accidents.

Numerous importers received shipments of refrigerant valued at Tk 400-500 crores at the port by providing false declarations, said the report.

The products are of extremely low quality and manufactured by a fraudulent company, the report added.

On papers, the confiscated cylinders were brought from a Chinese company named FORANE which maintains international standards. However, the confiscated cylinders were labelled FORAN and they resembled genuine FORANE cylinders, according to the detention report from customs.

The actual company's cylinders are priced at \$7-8 each, whereas the fake cylinders cost less than \$2.

Mohammad Fyzur Rahman, commissioner of Chattogram Custom House, said, "More than 10 shipments were confiscated during the clearance process. Additionally, release of approximately 40 consignments have been temporarily halted. It has been determined that counterfeit goods were brought under false declarations."

"Further steps will be taken based on the advice of the Directorate of Explosives," he added.

Importers are required to follow the Explosives Policy-1991 and obtain prior approval from the directorate.

Similarly, the importers also have to follow the

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**EID RUSH BEGINS ...** Due to the pressure of holidaymakers, the Dhaka-Tangail highway saw tailbacks of several kilometers till at least 7:00pm. People in and around the capital have begun their Eid journeys yesterday, ahead of the weekend, as the festival will be celebrated on June 17. The photo was taken from Ashulia's Baipail area around 2:30pm.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Bus, launch terminals see huge rush of homegoers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In spite of the rain, the capital's bus and launch terminals, as well as the Kamalapur Railway Station, began to fill up with passengers as thousands made the journey to their village homes yesterday, the last working day for government employees before the Eid-ul-Azha holidays began.

The rush of people heading home for Eid is expected to peak tomorrow after all the ready-made garment factories closed for the holidays, according to the police and transport operators.

Eid will be celebrated in the country on Monday.

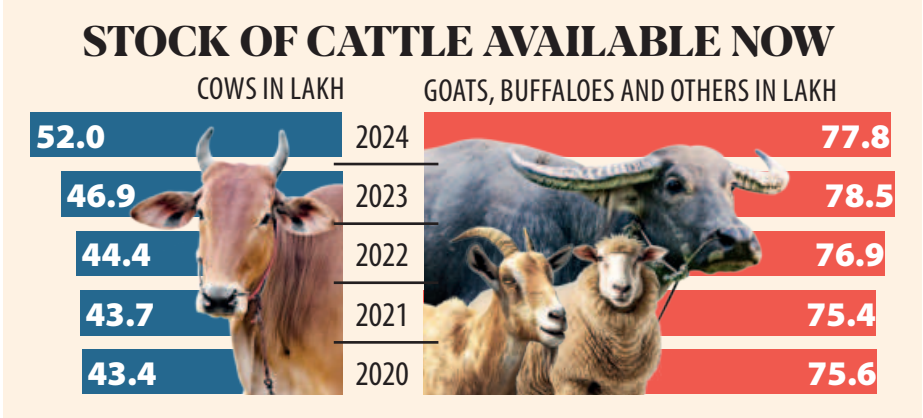
No traffic congestion was reported on any major highways until 6:00pm.

But heavy rain did pose challenges for the homegoers trying to reach the bus and launch terminals and railway stations.

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## Record number of sacrificial animals up for Eid sale

Traders anticipate low sales due to inflationary pressure on the middle class



SUKANTA HALDER

A record number of sacrificial animals are up for sale this Eid-ul-Azha due to the surplus of the animals, which were left largely unsold during last year's Eid.

The number was over 1.25 crore in 2023 and crossed 1.29 crore this year, according to Department of Livestock Services (DLS) data.

Of the animals, there are 53 lakh cows

and buffaloes; 76 lakh goats and sheep; and 1,850 other mammals, it said.

The DLS data said there is a demand for 1.7 crore sacrificial animals this year.

According to businesspeople, this year's is the highest number of sacrificial animals for Eid-ul-Azha in the history of Bangladesh, which is why they would not be sold at prices as high as previous years.

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## Tk 29.40 lakh looted from bank's vault

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Robbers looted Tk 29.40 lakh after breaking into the vault of Matidali sub-branch of IFIC Bank in Bogura Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Quoting bank officials, Saihan Oliullah, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said the robbers entered the first floor of the two-storey building through the roof access and got into the branch breaking its locks.

Seeking anonymity, a police official said there were three CCTV cameras inside the branch. Two masked men entered the bank around 2:30am and covered the cameras with tissue paper.

Branch Manager Fahmida Firoz declined to comment when asked about the security at the branch. Contacted, Snikdho Akhtar, additional superintendent of Bogura police, said, "Only four people are operating the branch -- manager, cashier, cleaner, and a watchman who is on duty during the daytime."

The branch did not have any nightwatchman, he said.

Police said two bank officials kept the money in the vault Wednesday. When they reached work yesterday morning, they found the vault broken and the money taken.

Filing of a case in this connection is underway, said police.

On January 26, robbers took away Tk 9 lakh from a sub-branch of NRBC Bank at Pallimanga under Sadar upazila breaking into its vault.

Police are still investigating the case.

## Israeli forces strike deeper into Rafah

30 more Palestinians killed; Hamas urges Blinken to put 'direct pressure' on Israel for permanent ceasefire

AGENCIES

Israeli tanks advanced deeper into the western area of Rafah, amid one of the worst nights of bombardment from air, ground, and sea, forcing many families to flee their homes and tents under darkness, residents said yesterday.

Residents said the Israeli forces thrust towards the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah near the beach, which is designated as a humanitarian area in all announcements and maps published by the Israeli army since it began its Rafah offensive in May.

The Israeli military denied in a statement it had launched any strikes inside the Al-Mawasi humanitarian zone.

The Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, said its fighters were battling Israeli troops on the streets of the same area, reports AFP.

The Israeli military said it was

» Hamas fighters battle Israeli troops on streets

» Israeli military strikes 45 targets across Gaza

» Gaza death toll rises to 37,232

continuing "intelligence-based, targeted operations" on Rafah, saying forces in the past day had located weapons, and killed Palestinian gunmen in close-range combat.

The military said it had struck 45 targets across the Gaza Strip from the air, including "military structures, militant cells, rocket launchers, and tunnel shafts".

The top world court, the International Court of Justice, in May issued a binding ruling for Israel to halt any offensive in Rafah and elsewhere that could bring about "the physical destruction" of the Palestinians.

Israel responded that it had not "and will not" engage in such operations against the Palestinians, reports Reuters.

At least 37,232 Palestinians have been killed and 85,037 have been injured in

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## 1.5m pilgrims reach Makkah as hajj begins today

AGENCIES

More than 1.5 million Muslims will begin the annual hajj pilgrimage in the Saudi holy city of Makkah today.

Crowds of worshippers have already begun to gather in Makkah in the days ahead of the hajj, the focal point of the Islamic calendar.

Saudi officials said they expect the number of pilgrims this year to exceed those in 2023, when more than 1.8 million people performed hajj.

The pilgrims included 4,200 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank who arrived in Makkah earlier this month, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were not able to travel to Saudi Arabia for hajj this year because of the Israeli offensive in the enclave that began eight months ago.



**A western hooded pitta spotted in the Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary in Chattogram. It's one of Asia's most frequently observed and familiar pitta's and it's no surprise that its range spans from eastern to southeastern Asia and maritime southeast Asia, where it lives in different kinds of forests, plantations and other cultivated areas. As lowland species, it's easily identified throughout its range due to the striking colours: emerald green body plumage, dark head, bright blue wings and a dash of red in the underbelly. Though it is abundant in its range, a slow decline in its population shows that within a decade or so, it might become a vulnerable species. Spotted from April to August during its breeding season, this bird highlights the sanctuary's dense forest and undergrowth as a vital habitat, underscoring the importance of preserving such natural environments and celebrating the region's rich biodiversity.**

PHOTO: MONJUR MORSHED

## US, Ukraine ink 10yr defence deal

REUTERS, Italy

US President Joe Biden and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement yesterday aimed at bolstering Ukraine's defence against Russian invaders and getting Ukraine closer to NATO membership.

The deal, signed on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy, aims to commit future US administrations to support Ukraine, even if former President Donald Trump wins November's election, officials said.

"Our goal is to strengthen Ukraine's credible defense and deterrence capabilities for the long term," Biden said at a joint news conference with Zelenskiy.

He said the G7's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin is "You cannot wait us out. You cannot divide us." The group of rich nations also agreed to a \$50 billion loan for Ukraine backed by profits from frozen Russian assets.

The US-Ukraine security deal is a framework for a long-term effort to help develop Ukraine's outdated armed forces and serve as a step towards Ukraine's eventual NATO membership, according to the text.

The Ukraine president called the agreement historic, saying it is a bridge toward his country's eventual NATO membership. "This is an agreement on security and thus on the protection of human life," he said.

Zelenskiy has long sought NATO membership, but the allies have stopped short of taking that step. The Western alliance regards any attack launched on one of its 32 members as an attack on all under its Article Five clause.

In the event of an armed attack or threat of such against Ukraine, top US and Ukrainian officials will meet within 24 hours to consult on a response and determine what additional defense needs are required for Ukraine,

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