



Overcrowded launches set sail from Sadarghat terminal in Dhaka yesterday carrying Eid holidaymakers as home rush takes its final stride. The photo was taken from Postogola Bridge in the afternoon.  
PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## CRISIS IN ST MARTIN'S ISLAND



**We are ready. We won't attack [first]. But we will not spare anyone if attacked. We have no antagonism with Myanmar. The door of discussion is open.**

OBABDUL QUADER  
Al. General Secretary



**There is a food crisis in Saint Martin's Island. The government does not seem to care about this. Can't we even say anything to a country like Myanmar?**

MIRZA FAKHRUL  
BNP Secretary General



**They are trying to come into our land. But we are not seeing any roles of the armed forces in this regard.**

GM QUADER  
Leader of Opposition

# Cattle prices STILL HIGH

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Though the price of sacrificial animals has dropped slightly due to a lack of customers, it remains high compared to the same time last year.

With only a day left before Eid-ul-Azha, the number of buyers was still low, despite a large supply of bulls.

High inflationary pressure on the middle- and lower-middle classes is believed to be behind the poor turnout at different cattle markets in Dhaka.

In the fiscal year 2022-2023, the average inflation rate was 9.02 percent. However, many traders remain hopeful for a surge in customers on Saturday night and Sunday, the last days before Eid-ul-Azha.

"I have purchased a bull for Tk 92,000, which is still high as sellers are not willing to reduce the price," said Nafur Rahman Asif, a resident of Wari.

Md Sakib Hossain, a resident of Malibagh, said, "I bought three bulls for Tk 9.5 lakh, which is high compared to last year."

Traders are unhappy as they were forced to reduce prices because of less customers. They said cost of rearing cattle was significantly high due to soaring fodder costs.

"I have already faced losses by selling six of my 28 big bulls as I am not getting satisfactory customers," said Abul Kashem Sheikh, who came to Kamalapur cattle market from Natore.

Rashid Mollah, a trader at Gabtoli



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

who brought 24 bulls from Manikganj, said he sold six of his bulls for between Tk 1 lakh and 1.50 lakh, facing some loss.

"I am sensing more loss on the last day if I do not sell, so I have started selling without thinking about the profit," he told this correspondent.

Many residents are not sacrificing bulls this year. Ruhul Amin, a private job holder in Ibrahimpur, purchased beef from a meat trader instead.

"I will not sacrifice animals this year as the Tk 30,000 bonus I received is not enough due to the increase in my daily expenses,"

Ruhul Amin said.

Amzad Hossain, another trader at Gabtoli who brought two camels and five dumbas (sheeps) from Pakistan, managed to sell one camel for Tk 23 lakh and two dumbas for Tk 2 lakh each.

"I am asking Tk 26 lakh for each camel. I have two dumbas priced at Tk 2 lakh each, along with a big one for Tk 4 lakh," he said.

He also claimed to have spent Tk 30 lakh to bring the animals from Pakistan by aeroplane.

Meanwhile at Gabtoli cattle market, a bull weighing 38 maunds was priced at Tk 16 lakh.

"There is an expenditure of Tk 7 lakh, and I am considering selling it with a minimum profit due to poor customer turnout," said the owner.



## 'Why fix prices if you can't enforce it'

Decry customers as govt fails to curb rising cost of essentials

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The government efforts to control rising commodity prices by setting fixed rates are failing, as essential items are being sold at much higher prices in Dhaka's major kitchen markets.

Despite the Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM) setting fair prices for 29 products on March 15, consumers are still paying exorbitant prices for daily essentials. With Eid-ul-Azha approaching, prices have soared further.

During recent visits to Karwan Bazar, Kathalbag, and Malibagh markets, traders were found openly flouting government-mandated rates.

Take the case of potato for example. Although the production cost of this vegetable is Tk 14 per kg and the retail price set by the government is Tk 29 per kg, potatoes were selling for Tk 60 per kg at Karwan Bazar.

Hamidul Islam, a private employee, managed to bargain the price down to Tk 55 per kg but still

FOOD PRODUCTS	FIXED PRICE (TK)	MARKET PRICE (TK)
Chili pepper	60.2	150
Garlic	120.8	220
Ginger	180.2	300
Cabbage	28.3	40
Onion	65.4	80
Beef	664.39	780
Potato	29	60

paid almost double the fixed price. "Four days ago, I purchased potatoes at Tk 48-49 per kg. Prices have only soared since," Hamidul said.

Traders blamed higher wholesale costs and lack of supply. They said selling at government fixed rates would incur losses.

The price disparities are even more noticeable for other essential items. Local garlic is being sold at

Tk 220 per kg, 82.2 percent higher than the fixed rate of Tk 120.80. Ginger sells for Tk 300 per kg instead of Tk 180.20 (66.5 percent increase), chilli for Tk 150 against Tk 60.20 (149.2 percent increase), and cabbage for Tk 40 compared to Tk 28.30 (41.3 percent increase).

Other items like beef, lentil, chicken, and onions have also witnessed double-digit price hikes. Although the government fixed

the production cost of beef at Tk 588 per kg with a Tk 664 retail ceiling, it sells for Tk 780 at Karwan Bazar, nearly 18 percent higher.

"It's been three months since they fixed rates, but we see no intent to actually implement the directives on the ground," rued Shanaj Begum, a homemaker. "If they won't enforce the prices, why fix them at all? We are ultimately suffering for their failure and indecision."

Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, criticised the government's strategy, saying, "Commodity prices depend on market dynamics like production costs and the demand-supply chain. Fixed rates alone cannot control these unless by effective monitoring."

Masud Karim, director general of DAM, said, "Our directives are not fully implemented on the ground. Sellers don't follow them. We try to ensure they don't collect excess profits. We don't want to destabilise markets by any unwarranted intervention."

## ANIMAL WASTE

# Cities plan quick disposal

STAR REPORT

The authorities of Chattogram, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Khulna city corporations are gearing up for prompt disposal of all wastes from sacrificial animals on Eid-ul-Azha.

The Eid-ul-Azha will be observed across the country on Monday.

CHATTOGRAM

The Chattogram City Corporation will deploy 4,500 conservancy workers and 322 vehicles to clean up a total of around 5,000 tonnes of wastes from 8:00am to 5:00pm on Eid day from six city zones, each led by a ward councillor, said Mobarak Hossain, chairman of CCC's Standing Committee on Waste Management.

A central monitoring cell led by CCC mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury has been formed to this end.

CCC panel mayor Gias Uddin said 20 tonnes of bleaching powder and 55,000 polythene bags have been allocated to 41 wards of CCC for distribution among people.

RANGPUR

Rangpur City Corporation has planned to clean sacrificial animal wastes within 12 hours.

A total of 66 slaughtering spots have been designated to the 33 wards under three zones of RCC, said mayor Mostafizar Rahman Mostafa.

Also, 42 waste-carrying trucks and 550 workers will be engaged in removal of wastes.

MYMENSINGH

In Mymensingh, 650 conservancy workers, 24 dump trucks and seven water vehicles will be engaged in cleaning wastes from a total 508 designated slaughtering spots in 33 wards from 2:00pm.

Residents have been distributed eco-friendly biodegradable bags, bleaching powder and disinfectants for cleaning wastes from the spots, said Mohabbat Ali, conservation inspector of MCC.

His plan is to remove wastes within 12 hours, he added.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Customers feel the heat as spice prices spike

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

With consumers already feeling the pinch from soaring spice prices, the costs of many items have gone up further just before Eid-ul-Azha.

Over the past week, the price of coriander has surged from Tk 100 to Tk 360 per kilogramme at the capital's Karwan Bazar wholesale market.

Last year, coriander was sold at Tk 160 per kg ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The price of cardamom, a must have item for cooking meat during the festival, has shot up to Tk 4,000 from Tk 3,800 per kilogramme.

The price of cinnamon has increased by 1.70 percent to an average of Tk 600 per kilo while

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