

Billions to be spent on sacrificial animals

By Aamir Shafaat Khan

KARACHI Pakistanis are projected to spend Rs150 billion this Eidul Azha, sacrificing an estimated 2.5 million cows, bulls and buffaloes — with each animal having an average price tag of Rs60,000.

The staggering sum of Rs150bn is based on the figures of the Pakistan Tanners Association (PTA) which show 7.3m hides and skin were collected last year after Eid and a similar number is expected this year.

An estimated Rs60bn would be spent on purchasing 4m goats (with an average price of Rs15,000 per animal) and Rs12bn will be spent on purchasing 800,000 sheep.

Over 30,000 camels worth Rs2.1bn, with each animal costing an average of Rs70,000, are expected to be sacrificed.

"In Karachi alone, around 125,000 cows have marked their entry so far at Asia's biggest cattle market situated at Super Highway, followed by arrival of 40,000 goats and 1,500 camels," Naveed Baig, spokesperson for Sohrab Goth Maweshi Mandi, said.

There are four to five small cattle markets in Karachi and many roadside sale points where sacrificial animals can be purchased, he added.

The 1,000-acre Sohrab Goth Mandi for cows has five VIP blocks and 21 ordinary blocks, while goats are being sold at another 2,000-acre area.

With an increase in the price of red meat, prices of animals have increased, too. Consumers too now realise they are buying lighter weight animals every year but paying higher prices.

A major reason for the price hike of sacrificial animals in the past few years is the influx of small and big investors who are in for quick profits.

Cows lead

Sacrificing cows appears more popular in Karachi while goats are preferred in other parts of the country.

According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-16, goat production increased to 77.8m in 2015-16 from 68.4m in 2014-15 and

66.6m in 2013-14.

Cattle production rose to 42.8m in 2015-16 from 41.2m in 2013-14 and 39.7m in 2013-14, followed by 36.6m buffalo production in 2015-16 as compared to 35.6m in 2014-15 and 34.6m in 2013-14.

Despite increasing cattle production trend, profiteers have forced beef and goat meat prices up by Rs20-50 per kilogram every year.

When questioned, traders gave the rhetorical response of increasing prices due to meat exports and smuggling of live animals resulting in shortage of animals.

Beef production hit 2.02m tonnes in 2015-16 from 1.95m tonnes in 2014-15 and 1.89m tonnes in 2013-14.

Mutton production went up to

686,000 tonnes in 2015-16 as compared to 671,000 tonnes in 2014-15 and 657,000 tonnes in 2013-14.

Export of meat and its products stood at 76,448 tonnes fetching \$269m in 2015-16 as compared to 74,758 tonnes (\$243m) in 2014-15 and 73,664 tonnes (\$229m) in 2013-14, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Hides and skins

Tanners expect a sharp fall in the prices of raw hides and skin due to declining price trend of these items in the international markets and a slump in leather goods demand.

Last year, tanners estimated

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total value of *qurbani* hides and skins at Rs6bn to Rs7bn. But this year they anticipate Rs3bn to Rs4bn only.

PTA Chairman Gulzar Feroz said that a total of 7.3m hides and skins were collected last year. "This year the volume of hides and skin collection may remain same as of last year. However, unlike last year, when the maximum price of cow/buffalo hide was Rs2,000 each, this year it may range between Rs1,000-1,200 per hide," he added.

Similarly, the price of goat skin is expected to hover between Rs100-125

per skin as compared to Rs175-225. Sheep skin price may range between Rs70-90 per skin this year as compared to Rs125-175 per skin last year.

He said that due to poor purchasing and improper curing, a large number of hides and skins get damaged every year.

Mr Feroz said that globally raw material prices are very low and demand is thin. In UK, sheep skin was available at four pounds last year as compared to one pound this year, he added.

Synthetic material is taking over leather due to price difference. Jackets made of synthetic material are

priced at \$20 per jacket as compared to \$50 for leather jacket.

The PTA chief said that overall there is a 30 per cent decline in demand for skin and hides while demand for leather-related items is facing a 20pc slump this year in world markets.

According to PBS data, Pakistan's leather exports started off with a bad note in the current fiscal — only \$40m in July 2016 — as compared to \$50m in July 2015.

In 2015-16, leather exports fell to \$526m as compared to \$597m in 2014-15.