

Alarming use of Yaba

are getting into it.

He added that after the recent seizures many students are coming to them to describe how the drug has been playing havoc with their fellows.

"We now fear maybe well over 20 percent of the students are taking Yaba regularly," observed Belayet adding that not only those from affluent families but also the ones from higher middle class and middle class are turning to Yaba.

He said they would be able to have solid information in this regard after an extensive survey that they are planning to launch across the educational institutions in the city next month.

Most of the pushers themselves are in the dangerous trade mainly to bear the whopping cost of their daily druggeds.

According to the Narcotics Control Act, if the quantity of amphetamine does not exceed five grams, imprisonment for a term shall not be less than six months and shall not exceed three years. But if the quantity is more than six grams, the term shall not be less than five years and shall not exceed 15 years.

Acting deputy director of DNC Mukul Jyoti Chakma said Yaba began to roll on to the local scene at the turn of the millennium. Its use took a sharp upward turn in 2005.

Initially, a pill would sell at Tk 800 to Tk 1,000. But with supply becoming plentiful over the last few years the price has come down to Tk 200-500 depending on quality, said sources close to the trade.

Although one of the key functions of the DNC is to gather information on drug use and trafficking routes, none of its officials could give an estimate of how many might be in Yaba trade.

A user who this correspondent had managed to talk to said, "I know over 20 people alone in Dhanmondi area who sell Yaba. Now you do the math how many are there in the city."

TRAFFICKING ROUTE

During the late 90s, Yaba would be smuggled in from Thailand in small amount. Since 2000, it began to enter the country in large numbers from Myanmar through Teknaf border.

Now there is a vast cartel operating on either side of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

An investigation by The Daily Star reveals that dealers in the source area never go out of their localities. They employ mules for the tablets to reach the capital. Some dealers from Dhaka would prefer ferrying the pills themselves from Teknaf and Cox's Bazar since there had been little risk of being busted on the way.

A youth who along with a friend was involved in the trade shared with this correspondent a detailed account of how they operated. He said they got into the business after a friend from a rich family convinced them how they could make some fast buck out of it.

They were smart enough to hit the right spot in Teknaf. They did not have to go anywhere; their Teknaf connection arranged it all. All they had to do was carrying the pills to Dhaka which was anything but risky then.

Like many others in the business, they would wear specially tailored shirts to carry the drug. The shirts are made in a way that whenever one raises his/her arms the hidden pockets move out of the area to be searched. Unless the law enforcers did a strip-search it was hard for them to find the tablets.

Most of the time the two would carry around 500 pills and take passenger buses. Around a year ago they would buy a pill usually at Tk 100 and sell that to dealers in Dhaka for Tk 200-220. The end users would have to count Tk 350-Tk 500.

Initially, it was tough to win the confidence of the dealers in Dhaka as they suspected the two might be planted by police or Rab.

Asked for some names of those who are active in the capital, he said he knew only two major dealers—one in his late thirties would operate from a Chinese restaurant in Maghbazar and the other from his house located between Sri Kabir crossing and Abahani Club in Dhanmondi area.

Meanwhile, a police official said they suspect that besides smuggling, the sellers depend on clandestine laboratories as well to produce the pills.

Thursday's arrest of Amin Huda and his associates with a huge cache of Yaba tablets has only firmed up the apprehension.

MODUS OPERANDI

The traders first target one or two students to be their mules. They pick usually those who are already on some kind of drugs since they are easier to be pushed into taking the pills. At the beginning, they supply Yaba for free but once the youths get dependent, they begin charging them. Eventually they make them peddle the tablets among fellow students for the money needed to meet their own daily doses.

Besides being able to feed their addiction, the pushers make a hefty amount out of the business.

TYPES, USAGE METHOD AND EFFECTS

Of several types of pills smuggled into Bangladesh, 'Golapjam' or 'Golapi' or 'Golap' (pink pill) is the most widely used for its longer duration of action and potency. Then come 'Laal Kutta' (red dog), green, mango, orange and others.

These tablets are usually about the size of the end of a drinking straw. They come in different flavours.

According to the US Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) fact sheets on Yaba, effects of its usage include addiction, psychotic behaviour, and brain damage. Chronic use can cause violent behaviour, anxiety, confusion, insomnia, auditory hallucinations, mood disturbances, delusions, and paranoia.

A former seller in Dhaka said fake Yaba tablets that come mainly from the Mitford hospital area pose an even more risk since a mix-up over maintaining the proportion of ingredients could mean a disaster for the users.

Yaba can be consumed in various ways. It can be smoked, snorted, injected or orally ingested. The most preferred way is having it like heroin. In this method, users place the tablet on aluminium foil and heat it from below. They smoke the vapours that rise after the pills are melted.

Though it increases the addiction potential and more adverse health consequences, the technique is popular because in that way it reaches the brain cells faster, leading to stronger kicks.

Shah A Hannan

FROM PAGE 1

There was an Awami League government until 1975 and there was another Awami League government in 1996, under which I worked as a secretary and I was even close to the administration. But they never thought of trying war criminals. Another major party BNP was in power during the rule of Ziaur Rahman and later came to power through, and at no point did they try to hold trials of the war criminals.

Since no one is making any claim and there are no cases filed with the court—Bangladesh government is the entity that can file a case and has never filed a case against anyone—I will continue to say there are no war criminals in this country until the government files a case against anyone.

CIVIL WAR, NOT LIBERATION WAR

I frankly think it was a liberation war but it was also a civil war not only in the sense that it was between West and East Pakistan but also because it was a fight between political forces supporting a united Pakistan and an independent Bangladesh.

If they can prove that these things [war crimes] were done in 1971, let them take it to court. The constitution mentions that Bangladesh was created through a liberation war—yes, it is true. But plenty of people say it was a civil war.

I know this much that in 1971 there was a civil war... Fine, it was also a Muktiuddha... From what I have read in foreign newspapers and encyclopaedia, it was a civil war and most people did not call it a "struggle for freedom". But there is no doubt that it was a genuine freedom fight by the people of Bangladesh. It was an exciting time and the population was also more or less divided. So, those who thought at that time that it was not right to break up Pakistan with the help of India held the view that they should stay on the side of the then Pakistan administration politically, not for violence. The other side thought they should unite with India to gain independence. There were a lot of excesses back then—not only members of one community died—Hindus died, Muslims died, Biharies died, Bangladeshis died, wives died, children died, women died, men died... And the number, I do not know anything about three million deaths. There was no survey in 1972, not in 1974, and never. That is why these numbers are allowed to be mentioned. I urge the current government to conduct a survey so this problem is solved. It is not right to ask this to the caretaker government, ask this to the next elected government.

Bangalees were on both the sides, involved in the events before December 16, 1971. You have to judge in that political context. I think those who were against the idea of Bangladesh have shifted from that position. A lot of them are my good friends—they are patriotic, they defend Bangladesh, they are in a struggle to build Bangladesh and protect it from the attacks of other countries.

REACTION TO NIZAMI'S 1971 REMARKS

Genocide is a matter of definition. Not everything is genocide. The United Nations has not called this genocide. We can call this genocide or whatever. Nizami could clarify his own quotes.

Police are yet to unearth the reason behind the murder.

Businessman

FROM PAGE 16

Babu with the help of a number of locals rushed Shahajada to a local clinic and later took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead at around 8:30pm.

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