

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 whipping cost of their daily drugneeds.

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 sharpturn 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 Yabatrade.

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

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.

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 Star Kebab crossing and Abanabi Club in Dhammendi 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 tables 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, USE 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.

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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.

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