chickens provided with this drug were not affected by bird flu, whereas the chickens which were not given this experimental drug suffered from the outbreak." So they continued with their mission to find out whether this drug was able to resist bird flu in humans as well.

"Conducting scientific research at an advanced level in Bangladesh remains an extremely expensive and time consuming process, so we thought of sending this sample to the Korea National University of Transportation. At this stage, our research team got bigger, and Prof Yong Kyu Lee and a Bangladeshi PhD student Mohammad Nurunnabi also joined this venture of controlling the bird flu outbreak."

They tested the crude drug on pigs and fishes, and confirmed that this drug possesses the potential of curing any form of influenza and bird flu. But this drug surpassed Dr Rahmatullah's expectations, when Nuronnabi informed him that it has the potential to fight against the deadly pancreatic cancer.

"As Nurunnabi was already conducting his research on drugs for different cancers, he informed me that this drug can restrict the growth of the cancerous cells of pancreatic cancer," says Dr Rahmatullah positively.

"So far the results look very promising. The drug can now be applied on birds, fishes and shrimps, in order to try it on humans, we need to conduct further tests, and these are currently being conducted in Bangladesh, USA and Korea." Once the clinical test is done and it obtains approval from the US Food and Drug Administration FDA and Bangladesh Drug Administration, any company in Bangladesh can manufacture the drug with the consent of the FDA.

"I secured the international patent for the drug late last year," said the scientist. Along with Rahmatullah, Nuronnabi and Prof Yong Kyu Lee of Korea National University of Transportation also own the right to the patent.



Dr Mohammed Rahmatullah with his team.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"This is just a start, I believe that many of such information on ethnomedicinal plants by different ethnic groups s are yet to be preserved or complied in suitable form," says Prof Rahmatullah. Publicity shy, Prof Rahmutallah is not at all worried about getting recognition for this revolutionary invention. "All I care about is the proper documentation of this ethnomedicinal information. If we could get some assistance from the state, I am sure we could protect the loss of knowledge on many herbal drugs. Only then can we get the scope of inventing a new drug and show the world the magic of our country's medicinal plants," concludes Prof Rahmatullah.

Unfortunately, we as a nation believe in cutting trees, not planting. Considering the landmark invention of Prof Rahmtullah and his team, it has become of utmost importance to collect ethnomedicinal information in enlisting plants with their specific medicinal use.