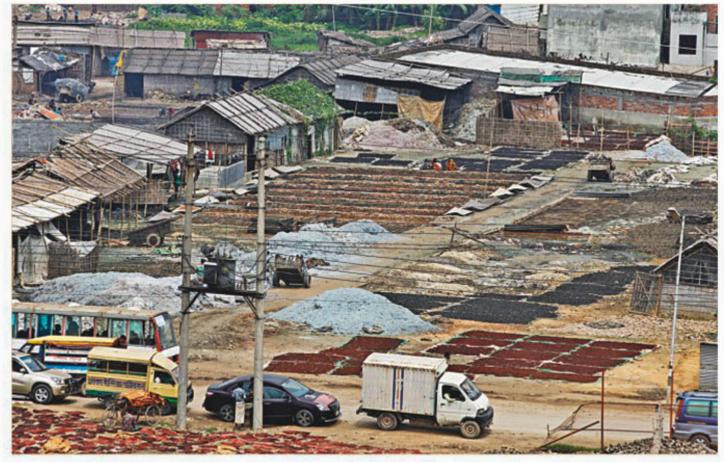


# THE HAZARIBAGH CONNECTION



The industrial area houses over 200 tannery factories, which produce tonnes of waste every day. The waste is boiled and dried for manufacturing poultry feed. The dry waste is ground and goes to poultry feed factories or farmers.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Chickens, eggs made risky

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to conduct the study.  
"The excess amount of chromium can be transported from poultry feed to the human body through the chicken leading to the carcinogenic effects on human beings like cancer, ulcer, liver cirrhosis and kidney damages, etc," they said.  
Another research conducted by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in 2012 and 2013 said about 48 percent poultry feed contains tannery waste. It also detected antibiotics in eggs and chicken far beyond the acceptable limit.  
BARC is the apex organisation of the national agricultural research system. Its main responsibility is strengthening the national agricultural research capability through planning and integration of resources.  
At farm level in Bogra and Joypurhat, antibiotics -- ciprofloxacin and sulphonamide -- were found in chickens to be up to 96.40 mg a kg. At market level, it was

up to 217.50 mg a kg, the study said.  
Chicken eggs collected from Dhaka, Chittagong, Sirajganj, Joypurhat and Munshiganj were found to have contained antibiotics -- ciprofloxacin -- from 37 mg to 460mg a kg while its permissible limit is only 30mg.  
And in 80 percent of the eggs, other antibiotics -- sulphonamide, oxy-tetracycline and enrofloxacin -- were found in a range of 30-570mg a kg though the limit is only 100-120mg per kg.  
"Antibiotics are used more at the sales points to protect chicks from disease and death. To avoid risks, traders use antibiotics several times from farm level till sale of chickens," said Dr Nathu Ram Sarker, senior scientific officer at Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute in Savar.  
If one consumes chicken and eggs having antibiotics beyond permissible level for five to six years, one will develop antibiotic resistance.  
This means if similar antibiotics

are prescribed for any disease, it will not work, and it will pose a major health risk, added the officer.  
**SOURCE OF CHROMIUM**  
Prof Hossain told this correspondent that Bangladesh used to import various proteins for mixing in poultry feed. As those are expensive, a section of feed manufacturers started using protein generated from tannery waste at Dhaka's Hazaribagh.  
Over 200 tannery factories in the area produce tonnes of solid waste every day.  
"Cowhide contains high protein. This is why feed producers target tannery waste," he added. But as industries use chromium and other chemicals in tanning hide, these remain in the feed prepared for poultry.  
Large amounts of tanned leather off-cuts and shaving dust generated from the tannery are unusable. But some traders collect such waste and boil and dry it before selling it to middlemen.  
"The middlemen then grind the

dry waste and supply it to the poultry feed mills or farmers," Hossain said, adding that chromium thus enters the food chain.  
Munir Chowdhury, former director of the environment department, who conducted mobile court drives in Hazaribagh in 2011, said the traders pack the stuff with various local and foreign labels and distribute it throughout the country.  
A tannery worker at Hazaribagh said it is a win-win business for both tannery workers and local traders. Many of the tanneries that earlier used to dump the waste into the Buriganga river now sell it to traders.  
"Many locals are engaged in the trade. The factories grinding the dry waste are small and clandestine in nature, so they can easily avoid law enforcers," he said, seeking anonymity.  
**POULTRY TRADERS DENY**  
Khandker Mohammad Mohsin, general secretary of Poultry Farm Protection National Council, said the findings don't appear true to him.

"I have visited Hazaribagh, and found no [poultry feed] factory," he said. "Protein is only 3-5 percent of total feed, and it is imported."  
He added some poultry farmers might be using antibiotics without knowing, but their number is very small.  
**WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY**  
The Department of Livestock Services, which oversees feed quality and animal health, says there is no registered feed mill in Hazaribagh.  
"However, if we have information about anyone making adulterated poultry feed, we can take action," said Dr Mozammel Hoque Siddiquee, director general of the department.  
The department filed a case against a feed factory in March this year for operating without a licence and selling feed having chromium beyond the approved limit.  
There are 58 registered feed mills mostly in Gazipur and Dhaka districts. The department checks the feed quality and mill hygiene before renew-

ing licences every year.  
Another official said antibiotic residue in chicken or eggs can be found within seven days of slaughtering or laying eggs.  
"There is no arrangement for regular tests of antibiotics due to shortage of manpower and logistics," Sharifuzzaman Sharif, general secretary of the citizens' body Nagorik Samhati, said whenever there are issues of quality food, the authorities tend to come out with excuses behind such happenings.  
"This is totally unacceptable. For the greed of a few, the whole nation cannot suffer. We want to get rid of the toxic foods. The government must act immediately," he said.  
"A person selling adulterated food in a hotel will buy chemical-tainted mangoes. The one selling such mangoes will buy chicken with chromium. Thus we are all victims."  
"So let's change ourselves in our own interest."

## Genuine or not, bribe is must

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having valid papers.  
"Importers or businesses are compelled to pay the money to avoid harassment, meaning that they become the victims of coercive corruption," the TIB said yesterday, releasing the study on export-import activities after introduction of automation at the port and the customs.  
The study, conducted between January and June this year, is based on interviews of more than 100 key informants or stakeholders, focus group discussions, direct observations and content analysis.  
A clearing and forwarding agent at the port agreed with the findings. He said they had to pay money even after having the necessary documents.  
"Otherwise, we have to face unnecessary delays," he told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.  
The TIB said irregularities are taking place in the absence of full automation at the customs house and the port, which facilitates 87 percent of the country's foreign trade worth roughly \$6,500 crore of

the \$14,000 crore economy.  
Automation at the Customs House and the port was introduced to facilitate online submission of bills of entry and bills of export, online duty valuations and duty payments to banks. The idea was to avoid paper work to speed up the export-import process and check corruption.  
The automation, implemented partially, has contributed to improved trade environment in some fields. Five years ago, there were 40 stages to complete formalities concerning duty assessments. It is now an 11-step process, the study shows.  
Still, manual signatures of officials are required at every stage at the Customs House because of partial implementation of the automation process, the TIB said.  
"The provision of officials' signatures has been kept in order to force importers pay money illegally," the study said, citing importers.  
About 60-70 people, unlawfully appointed by customs officials as their personal assistants, broker the

illegal transactions. The brokers are locally known as 'Faltu' (tout).  
TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said full automation at the port would reduce corruption by cutting scopes of direct contacts between service seekers and service providers.  
But a vested quarter prevents this from happening to make some quick bucks, he added.  
"The transaction amount is astonishing and the payment is somewhat compulsory. It affects revenue collection and the general public has to bear the burden of these illegal payments as the importers add this cost to the prices of goods."  
The global rating of the port has gradually fallen in recent years and it could have been improved by ensuring good governance, according to the TIB.  
"The so called group of 'Faltu' has made the port and the customs authorities a hostage. A section of employees are with them. We consider it necessary to free the port from their grip," said Iftekharuzzaman.

Tk 3,000 paid for duty assessment of each consignment of commercial goods  
Tk 1,200 for duty assessment of each consignment of non-commercial or bonded items imports  
Tk 500 duty assessment of each consignment of export items  
Minimum Tk 4,000 for physical examination of imported commercial goods per container



A section of businessmen, who evade duty, protect these brokers

and officials to serve their own purposes.  
During the 2007-08 caretaker government tenure, these middlemen were driven out of the port but they returned to their old business after the Awami League government took office in 2009. Most of these people, however, have no specific political affiliation.  
"It is possible to make the port free of them. But I think there is a lack of will and indifference on the part of the government," Iftekharuzzaman added.  
Contacted, Masud Sadiq, commissioner of Chittagong Customs, said the TIB figures are "exaggerated".  
"We usually take action when we get any allegation against anyone. And we will do that in future as well," he said.  
Asked about the brokers, he said these people had been in the port for long due to manpower shortages. "We are in the process of recruitment. We will free the customs of them."

## Govt slams

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Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters after the meeting.  
Bangladesh has unequivocal support for the rights of the Palestinian people and this support will continue in future, the cabinet mentioned.  
Meanwhile, the cabinet secretary said the premier will brief the media on Bangladesh's victory in the maritime boundary dispute with India soon. He, however, did not say when the briefing would take place.  
The cabinet decided to make the verdict public through a gazette notification. The verdict, delivered by the Netherlands-based Permanent Court of Arbitration, awarded Bangladesh 19,467 sqkm out of 25,602 sqkm of the continental shelf it had demanded.  
The PM urged all concerned ministries to extract resources from the new maritime areas to the fullest.  
She criticised the BNP for speaking against the verdict.  
Most of the cabinet members agreed to a proposal by a state minister that the government should honour those who were involved in the legal battle at the court of Arbitration to secure victory for Bangladesh.