

Cow fattening out of control

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sacrifice cattle.

Visiting different villages in Bera, Santhia and Ataikula upazilas of Pabna, and Shahjadpur and Baghabari areas in Sirajganj, these correspondents found that almost every household was using steroids, antibiotics and other chemicals for months in blatant violation of law. Everyone -- from cattle farm owners to landless farmers -- wanted to take full advantage of this.

These cattle-fattening drugs are also widely used in Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Nilphamari, Barisal, Faridpur, Manikganj and some other districts.

Consumption of meat of these animals poses serious health risks for humans, according to experts.

Pabna and Sirajganj are known for dairy farming and cattle-fattening practices for decades, thanks to vast grazing fields in the Chalan Beel and char areas. There are 13,480 dairy farms in Sirajganj alone.

Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) officials prescribe a mixture of straw, molasses, urea fertiliser and lentils as a safe fattening diet for cattle.
 "This year, a total of 99,876 cows are

being fattened in Sirajganj. The number was around 1.25 lakh last year," said Mazharul Islam Akand, district livestock officer.

Save for a "negligible number", all these animals are being fattened in natural ways, he claimed.

But the reality is completely different. Cattle-fattening drugs and chemicals are widely available in drugstores there at cheap prices.

Steroids of Dexamethasone group such as Decason, Dexamet, Paradexa, Oradexason and Predexanol; intravenous drugs of Butaphosphan group like Catophos and Catosol; digestion and appetite enhancers such as Digimax and Potash; and other vitamin additives are sold at these shops.

These drugs, mostly smuggled from India, are sold openly in the absence of monitoring by government agencies.

Though law prohibits advertisement of medicines, numerous posters of the so-called cattle-fattening chemicals were found at the shops.

Md Abdullah, owner of a small medicine shop at Baghabari, said he sells 10 to 12 packets of steroid tablets every day.

Another drugstore owner from Kashinathpur said that this season he

already sold around 200 kilograms of Indian vitamin additive "Super Growth" that fattens cattle very fast.

Visiting some shops, these correspondents found that the shop owners not only sold the drugs, but also suggested doses of those.

At a number of cattle farms, many empty bottles and wrappings of fattening chemicals were found lying around.

Shahidur Rahman, manager of a farm at TR-Bandh village in Shahjadpur, admitted that they were using the drugs, but claimed none of those were harmful.

"We sold three bulls fattened with these drugs for Tk 2.5 lakh last week. We do not use any toxic chemical," he claimed.

Cattle trader Khan Asaduzzaman Bipu came to Shahjadpur from Barisal to buy some healthy cattle. But he was struggling to find those fattened naturally.

Asked how he could differentiate between the two, Bipu said cattle fattened with chemicals would look healthy but would be very slow in movement. "For example, if you poke a cow fattened through steroids, its response will not be as quick as the one

fattened naturally."

A study published in Bangladesh Animal Journal in 2012 shows 63.7 percent farmers in the country use cattle-fattening tablets.

The Animal Feed Act 2010 prohibits the use of antibiotics, growth hormones, steroids or other harmful chemicals in animal feed. For violating this law, a person might face up to one year's imprisonment or up to Tk 50,000 in fine or both.

When these correspondents conveyed the findings to the district livestock officer, he ruled out the fact that cattle-fattening chemicals were widely used.

"People have become aware of the harmful effects of these drugs. They don't take the risk of using them," he claimed.

But the fact is that farmers often opt for the relatively fast but extremely hazardous way to fatten cattle, as it takes around six months to fatten those naturally. Steroids cause accumulation of fluid in cattle body, making them look fatter, say experts.

"We ask farmers not to use harmful drugs. But some farmers want to fatten their animals faster," said Dr Humayun Kabir, scientific officer at

the BLRI in Shahjadpur.

Experts say steroid variants like Decason, Oradexon, Prednisolon, Betnenal, Cortan, Steron and Adam-33 are usually used as life-saving drugs for critical patients. But when fed to cattle, these drugs damage their heart, kidney and liver, and eventually cause death.
 As cattle farmers often use higher doses of antibiotics and steroids, meat of these animals contain remnants of the chemicals.

"If someone consumes the meat of cattle fattened with such drugs, it will surely have negative impact on his health. It may even cause cancer and kidney failure," said Abdus Samad, professor at Bangladesh Agricultural University.

No specific research on this has been conducted in Bangladesh, but the adverse effects of these chemicals on humans are well-known. The impacts would not be visible in an adult as early as in a child or an elderly person for consuming meat of cattle fattened with drugs, he added.

In the wake of public health concern, member states of the European Union banned imports of steroid-treated meat in 2010.

It's now viral

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getting up to 35,000 requests per hour as a result of a viral surge in the past week.

Ello appears to have caught on with its simple message which seems to take aim at frustrations of Facebook users.

"Ello doesn't sell ads. Nor do we sell data about you to third parties," the company says.

Its "manifesto" states: "We believe a social network can be a tool for empowerment. Not a tool to deceive, coerce, and manipulate -- but a place to connect, create, and celebrate life. You are not a product."

Ello's policy states that the practice of collecting and selling personal data and mapping your social connections for profit "is both creepy and unethical."

"Under the guise of offering a 'free' service, users pay a high price in intrusive advertising and lack of privacy."

Based in Vermont, Ello was launched by a group of artists and programmers led by Paul Budnitz, whose previous experience include designing bicycles and robots.

Victim of lie, victim of law

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zealots, who left some 50 houses looted and vandalised, and 15 more torched in the area on that fateful night.

The rampage continued the following day leaving five Buddhist temples burned and two Hindu temples wrecked in Ukhia. Some 11 houses were destroyed at a Buddhist village in Teknaf.

The fanatics also beat up Uttam's wife Rita Barua.

Uttam's father Sudipta Barua works in Chittagong city and earns Tk 3,500 monthly. He hardly visits the family in Ramu or discloses where he works in Chittagong, fearing further trouble.

Rita along with their five-year-old son took shelter in her father's house in Merungloya around five months ago.

With the child, she has been passing days in "untold miseries", Prayananda Bhikkhu of Central Sima Bihar said. "None stands by them because they are Uttam's wife and son."

The family doesn't know Uttam's whereabouts.

An investigation by The Daily Star found that somebody or a group had taken a screenshot of Uttam Kumar Barua's Facebook profile page, cut out the address of an anti-Islam website and pasted it on the address bar visible in the image.

Once the fabrication was done, it looked like the page has shared the

anti-Islam image with Uttam and 26 others.

This newspaper also exposed inaction of the local administration and failures on the part of intelligence officials and law enforcement agencies.

A day after the incident, police detained Uttam's mother Madhabi Barua and aunt Aadi Barua. The two were later released on a High Court order.

On December 31 last year, police submitted the charge sheet accusing Uttam and seven others in a case filed under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act immediately after the incident.

This is one of the 19 cases filed in connection with the September 29-30 events.

The persons The Daily Star investigation found responsible for the attack were also made accused in the case. They include Tofayel Ahmed, a local Jamaat leader and suspended chairman of Naikhangchhari upazila.

AKM Manjur Alam, investigation officer of the case and officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Detective Branch of police, said they found Uttam's involvement after investigation. He, however, said everything would become clear once Uttam is traced.

When our correspondent, with the help of a Buddhist community leader,

visited Rita in Merungloya on Saturday, she first declined to talk, saying, "What is the use of writing all this?"

Then she said, "Police framed my innocent husband.

"I have to hide my identity to move on... we have been ostracised after police submitted charge sheet implicating him. Many people look upon us with sheer hatred."

Choking back emotion, she said, "I am a heart patient. My driver father is now in his death bed, but we cannot afford his treatment ... I have sold out kitchen utensils to buy food for my son."

On August 12 last year, Rita wrote to the prime minister seeking her intervention in finding her husband, but to no avail. She tried but failed to meet the PM when the latter visited Ramu to inaugurate the renovated temples on September 3 last year.

"In the last two years, I didn't get any assistance either from the government or any non-government organisation or any individual."

The story doesn't end here.

The family is yet to know that senior judicial magistrate of Cox's Bazar on June 5 this year ordered confiscating the moveable properties of Uttam and another accused, Abul Kashem, "as they remain absconding". Process is on for this, said Ramu police.

Punish culprits

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trade to ensure quality meat," said the minister.

He said medical teams from the Department of Livestock will be deployed to single out wrongfully fattened cows or bulls in most of the cattle markets in the capital as well as in different districts and upazilas.

Warning livestock officials of punitive actions in the event of their slack monitoring, Saydul said they are in deep slumber and he will awake them when necessary.

He said the demand of meat in the country is currently 6.73 million metric tons which will rise to 7.30 million MT in 2020-2021 fiscal year.

The minister urged all traders to adopt the scientific method of fattening cattle to meet the rising demand of the country.

Campaigners of safe food have said on many occasions traders use excessive amounts of urea in fodder and inject cattle with anabolic steroids and anti-histamine drugs, which are highly detrimental to the health of consumers, especially affecting their kidneys and livers.

Nahid questions DU

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acceptable."

His comments came hot on the heels of widespread criticisms after only two students qualified to be enrolled in the university's English department for the 2014-15 session.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, however, disagreed with the minister saying, "The admission system is completely transparent".

He also said the minister could give proof, if any, to back his claim that the admission test was faulty.

This year, 40,565 students took the 'Kha' unit test, seeking admission to the departments under arts and social sciences faculties. Of them, 1,364 took Elective English, a section mandatory for candidates aspiring to enrol in the English department, but only two crossed the hurdle.

Commenting on the incident, the minister said there is no need for entrance exams. Students achieve a certain level of competence after completing the SSC and the HSC exams and, therefore, they can be admitted to universities on the basis of their results, he argued.

Admission tests help coaching centres make money. The size of this business is worth Tk 32,000 crore, he said, adding that aspirants also know which coaching centres can get them admitted to universities through the back door.

Irregularities all the way

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"Twenty-minute is not enough to check these 21 issues. So, it can be understood the examinations and surveys in most of the cases are not done properly."

Taking advantage of the "loop-holes" in the government monitoring, many faulty and unfit vessels are hitting the rivers, Mir Tareque Ali, professor of Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering of BUET, told The Daily Star.

"The number of accidents in the river can be reduced, if the faults in design approvals and fitness surveys can be checked," he said.

The surveyors in many cases issue illegal 45-day temporary fitness certificates (token) to vessels after the annual fitness certificates expire.

Such violation of the rule has become a common practice, the probe report said, adding such things must be restricted for passenger safety.

The surveyor of Pinak-6, which had a major flaw in its engine, had

allowed the vessel to travel with temporary fitness certificate thrice—the first and third for 45 days each and the second one for 30 days, the report said.

The Department of Shipping on Sunday suspended the surveyor, Mirza Saifur Rahman, for his illegally issuing the operating permit.

The probe report also highlighted different irregularities regarding issuance of registration and fitness certificate to Pinak-6.

The ill-fated launch was first registered with the DoS in 1991 with the name ML Bismillah-2.

But no document regarding the vessel's annual fitness survey could be found for 11 years from 1992. In 2003, the then ship surveyor of Barisal port gave new registration documents to the vessel.

The vessel's name was changed as ML Ruposhi-2 in 2006 after its owner changed and it obtained a fitness certificate for that year later.

In 2007, the name of the launch

was changed again. This time it was named ML 'Pinak-6'. But, no document regarding its annual fitness survey could be found for the next three years from 2007.

Although, the vessel completed its annual fitness surveys from 2011 to 2013, its fitness certificate expired on April 30 this year.

Later, the then ship surveyor of Dhaka port Mirza Saifur Rahman illegally issued temporary permissions to the vessel thrice in between April 28 to July 23 this year.

Department of Shipping (DoS) Director General Commodore M Zakiur Rahman admitted "some limitations" in the surveys and registration processes "due to lack of manpower."

He said, currently, there are only four ship surveyors to check around 10,000 vessels operating in the inland waterways.

"We are trying to increase the number of our ship surveyors and inspectors," he said.

Sajeda loses cool

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Motor Driver League that interrupted Sajeda who was addressing another rally by Awami Sweschasebak League in the same spot.

The leaders were speaking as chief guests at two separate programmes in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Building on Dhanmondi Road 32. Both programmes were organised to mark the 68th birth anniversary of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"I've never seen that someone [Hasan] is delivering his speech challenging another programme of the Awami League. I hope I will never see this again in future," said a despondent Sajeda.

Terming the confrontational programmes "Jamaat-styled", Sajeda urged the party men to remain alert against those who publicise themselves in the name of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"I will tell Hasan Mahmud to show restraint until I finish my speech. I will not tolerate this misbehaviour," she

said, adding that this kind of counter-speech delivering never took place in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban.

She said as a member of the AL she'd leave the judgment to the party men present at the programmes.

"New leaders are making statements in new styles these days. I will tell him [Hasan] that as a newcomer in the party he should learn," she added.

However, Hasan who was praising Hasina discontinued his speech as soon as a team of Awami Sweschasebak League made him aware of Sajeda's address to the other programme.

When contacted, Hasan told The Daily Star that it was a misunderstanding.

"Neither of the organisers informed me that Sajeda Chowdhury was there," he said.

Hasan said every year several programmes take place at a time on this occasion and also on August 15.

He also said he paid Sajeda a visit to explain his position.

Delhi may help Dhaka

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relationship between India and Bangladesh is such that we could never have said no to such a request which was humanitarian in nature," the transcript read.

According to Modi's official website, the Indian prime minister assured Hasina that India would be willing to assist in any specific infrastructure projects required for transit of food grains.

The website also said the Teesta waters issue and the land boundary agreement came up for discussion during the meeting. The Indian PM said the matter of the Land Boundary Agreement was already with a Parliamentary committee. Regarding Teesta, he said an effort was being made to evolve a consensus.

Hartal won't stop

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In this connection, Hasina said vested quarters were trying to foil the trial through various means. "This trial can't be resisted by enforcing one or two hartals ... the people of the country won't respond to that," she stated.

In an oblique reference, the prime minister criticised the US government as two Awami League men were killed on the roads by criminals in the USA.

She said if one person is killed in a country like Bangladesh, the US turns very vocal about it. "What's the irony, we've got two of our activists killed on the roads here [USA]" she told her audience.

Nazmul Islam, an Awami League living in the US, was strangled to death in New York in July.

Hasina also mentioned another name, Belal, who was killed by criminals in Connecticut in 2012.

Responding to the demand of Bangladesh expatriates living in the USA for resumption of the Dhaka-New York Biman flights, the prime minister said the matter was pending due to some unresolved issues.
 She said her government was very

much sincere about the demand. "We've already procured four new aircraft; another four aircraft are in the pipeline. We had tried to resume the flights by taking aircraft on lease, but it couldn't be done."

In this connection, the prime minister said Biman needs to be upgraded more to resume the flights.

Describing various achievements of her government, she said they have taken a plan to produce 24,000MW of power by 2021.

PM's son and her ICT adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy while talking at the programme said it was rare in the world that a country developed so fast this way.

He also said no conspiracy would be able to remove the Awami League from its aim to develop the country.

Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain and State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam, among others, spoke on the occasion.

None of 19 cases goes to trial in two years

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Teknaf and the sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar on September 29 and 30 in 2012 following a fake Facebook post demeaning the Quran.

An investigation by The Daily Star exposed the forged Facebook profile that was used to instigate the hate crimes as well as the inaction of the local administration, intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Following the attacks, the police filed 13 cases, while the victims lodged six other cases accusing over 15,000 people.

Law enforcers submitted charge sheets in the cases between September last year and this January accusing 948 people of the violence raged through the region that was known for its communal harmony for centuries until the night of September 29 2012.

Some 78 people were shown as fugitives in the charge sheets while most other accused were released on bail. The police could not say how many were now detained in jail.
 Though charge sheets in 17 cases

were accepted by the courts, their trials are yet to begin since charges were not framed in any of the cases. Charge sheets in two other cases were sent back for further investigation.

Cox's Bazar Court's Inspector Mezbah Uddin Ahmed yesterday said some legal proceedings had to be completed before the trial.

Besides, there are additional procedures to be followed for holding the trial of the accused in absentia, he added.

According to the existing legal system, a court upon taking a charge sheet into cognisance holds the hearing on the charges before the charge framing.

In case of the trial of those in absentia, a court after accepting the charge sheet issues arrest warrants on the accused. Once the police report to the court that they are absconding, the court directs the authorities concerned to publish advertisements asking them to appear before the judges within a specific timeframe.

If the accused do not comply with

the order, the court decides to hold the trial in their absence.

However, regarding the cases linked with the 2012 violence, the police are blamed for not taking proper action.

Tarun Barua, general secretary of the Central Sima Bihar Managing Committee, said, "The police kept us in the dark.

"Many real culprits are roaming freely while innocent people have been made accused," he said, adding that he himself had given a list of 15 people involved in the attacks during the cases' investigation to the then Cox's Bazar superintendent of police Mohammad Amzad Mia but none of them were named in the charge sheets.

Azad, now special superintendent of police (student and labour), Special Branch, Dhaka, said the names had not been included in the charge sheet because no evidence supporting the accusations had been given to the police.

"What the police are doing regarding the cases is nothing but a game,"

said Swapan Barua, president of the Ramu unit of Bangladesh Bouddha Samity.

The entire Buddhist community is frustrated at the delay in the trial of the cases, he said.

State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan said last night, "Our duty ended with the submission of the charge sheets. The rest is the task of the law ministry."

About the allegations that many real culprits were spared in the charge sheets, he said he was unaware of the matter.

Even after several attempts, the law minister and the law secretary could not be reached by phone for comments.

The delay is an ominous sign, said eminent columnist Syed Abul Maksud who had visited the affected area.

The government is dillydallying over holding the trial, as activists of both the ruling party and the then opposition parties were reportedly involved in the attacks, he added.