

SPOTLIGHT

We know that Eid-ul-Adha is the ultimate festival of sacrifice and gratitude for Muslims. Who doesn't remember roaming the crowded cattle market in search of the perfect cow or goat or camel or (add your cattle of choice here). The days of sweating it out in cattle markets are gone, but a new dawn is on the horizon for modern, technologically equipped Bangladeshis, who still persist on celebrating this festival in the loudest, grandest fashion.

Rise of the Self-driven, independent cows

Every family owns one or more, what we would call, "survival experts." Their work is complicated. Go to the *haat* (market), choose the cow, fix the price, pay the money and walk it back home.

Walking back home with the cattle in tow - this is the catch. And although, generally, this task is assigned to the strongest member of the family, here technique is more important than strength. While making sure the cow follows every road rule and walks carefully without breaking any side view mirrors or such, they also have to diligently answer to how much the cow costs and respond to the quick analysis people make on the price compared to the size. If both the cow and the owner are lucky, they get to travel in a vehicle.

Once they are home, the 'experts' have beautifully crafted stories, of struggle and valour.

But, with the emergence of online cow *haats*, the survival experts have become obsolete, and so have their stories. The online sites bring you exciting offers and peace of mind with an all-decked-up cow at your doorstep. Just like any other online market, the virtual cow *haat* offers you exclusive deals - home delivery, post-

delivery payment, pre-order, cash on delivery, buy one get one free - basically, anything your heart desires.

So this year, the day before Qurbani (sacrifice), when the doorbell rings impatiently, you know who it is. Get ready to welcome your cow with a big, wide smile plastered on her face, sunglasses on her eyes, garlands around her neck and a suitcase full of cattle stock.

Driverless cows are not a farfetched dream for us. Not anymore.

The Narcissism in Us and Our Cows

The 'my-cow-is-prettier-than-yours' game has gone one step further, as people have started exhibiting a phenomenon known as 'cowfie'. There is contest based on cowfies. There are rewards if your cow and you display the best onscreen chemistry.

Honestly, the number of selfies hounding my newsfeed hurts my eyes. It is that time of the year when you go around the city, and all you see and smell is cow. Standing-walking-screaming-sitting-chewing: cows are everywhere.

Then when you go to your Facebook and discover more pictures of cows standing still while the owner holds herself close to him like an oversized doll, it is so not a pleasant sight-- cows looking at you straight in the eye, cows tilting their heads, exhibiting the mess inside their nasal passage with their owner somewhere trying to fit into the screen.

I know people failing terribly to convince their cows to pose for a joyful image. I have heard of cows goring their screen with their horns.

But nothing keeps them from taking a selfie with their cow - for the sake of the contests and the prizes that they promise.

And this year, I can already see people going live on Facebook with commentaries on how pretty the eyes of their cattle are.

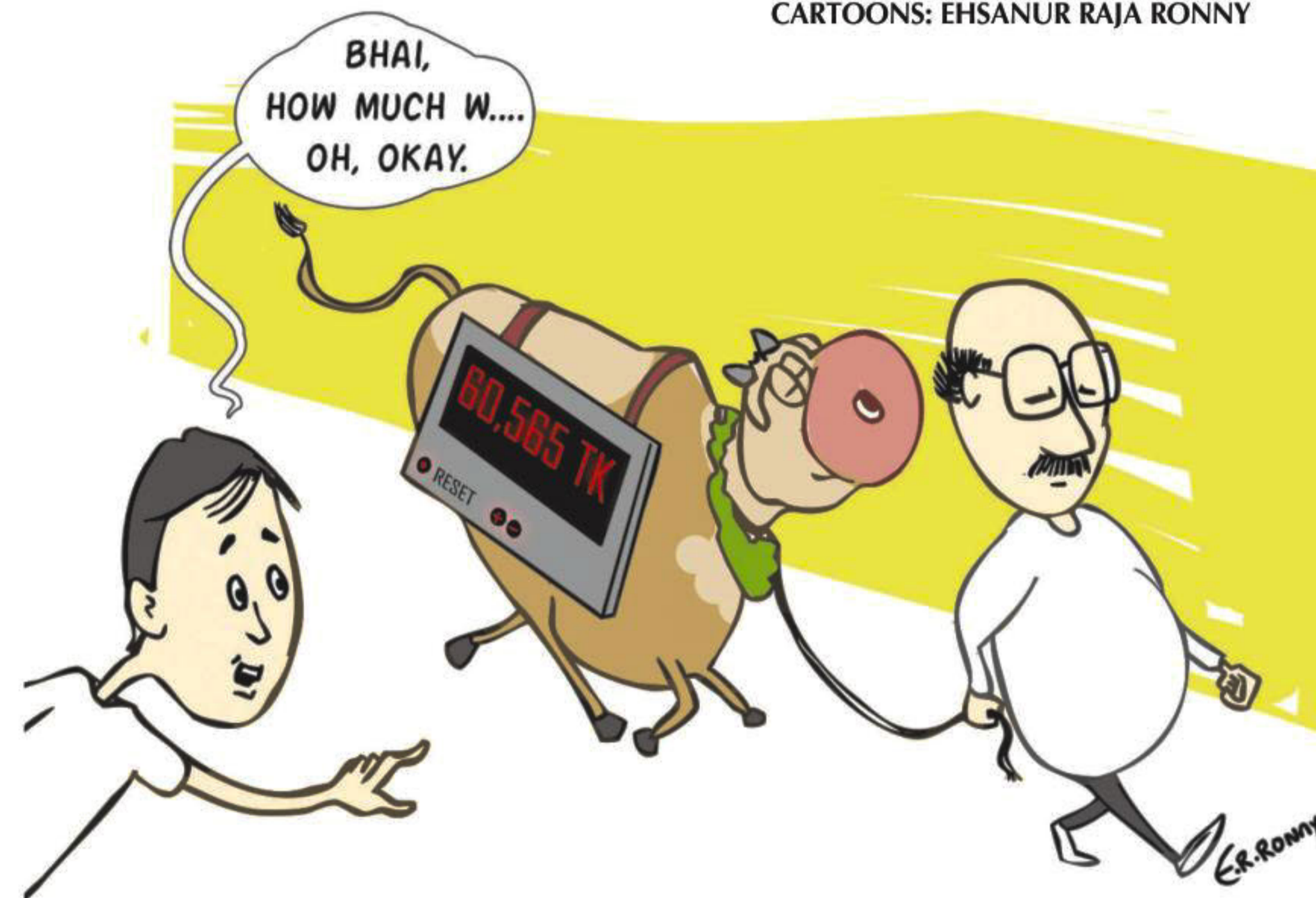
If you are planning on going 'live' during Qurbani or on taking a cowfie, please have mercy on us and just...don't.



THE NEW WAVE IN QURBANI

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

CARTOONS: EHSANUR RAJA RONNY



Butcher Beefing up their Knowledge

On the day of the Qurbani, I prefer staying away from the sight of gore and blood. Just knowing that a hundred feet away from my bedroom window, a defenseless cow is being chopped into pieces, is enough for me. I usually don't come out until the slaughter is done and over with.

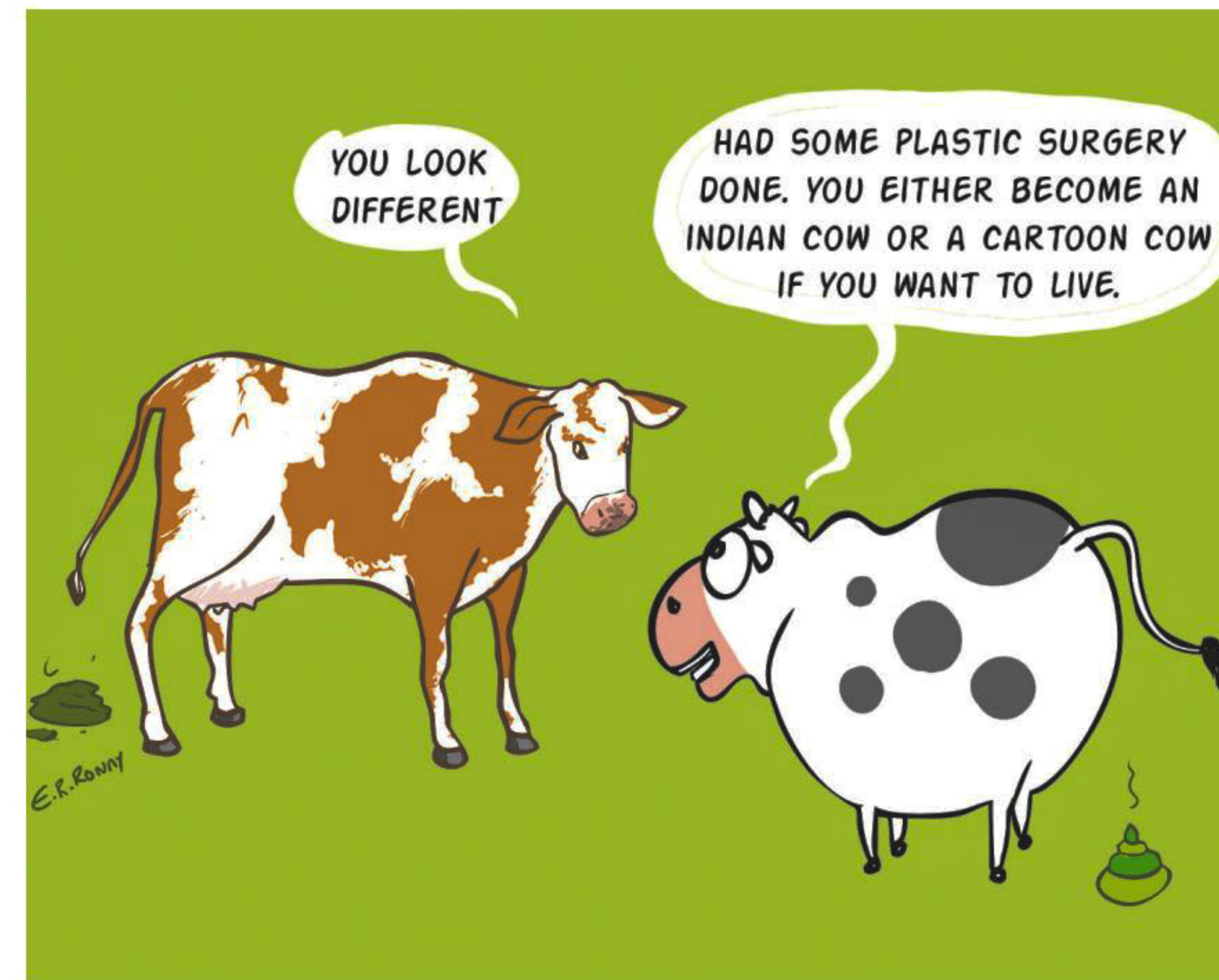
After the slaughter, I remember the sound of butchers cutting the meat into pieces; every year it's the same. The beats always come at a set of three steady thumps per second. Thump-Thump-Thump. The butcher and his gang, with their white panjabis on, with splatters of blood all over them, would chop the meat

real fast, and leave for another house. For them, every minute is money.

Too many cows, too few butchers. But last year, I decided to come out with a picture that I downloaded from the internet. It was a picture of a cow's body indicating different steak parts. I showed my butcher the picture and wanted a few clean, solid looking cuts. I gave him a few small details, "I don't want the meat to feel loose, and the fat should be hard and white."

The butcher squinted and looked at me with annoyance. Then he ignored all my instructions and carried on with what he was doing. Chopping the cow into pieces. At three steady thumps per second.

My experience was not good. But I



have learned that this year things are going to change.

Rib eye, sirloin, t-bone, flank, hanger - the gangs of butchers around the country are beefing up their knowledge with all these terms.

New Visa Ruling for Indian Cows

Indian cows and *deshi* cows. They speak the same language and look 'almost' the same. But in this case for a change, *deshi* cows are held in higher regard than their Indian counterparts. We make this race-based choice not because we are overcome with this extreme sense of patriotism. We like our *deshi* cows, because their meat tastes better. Also, I have seen people taking extra pride in mentioning to others that they have bought *deshi* cows, with an emphasis on the word *deshi*.

Newsflash. This year, with a ban on the influx of Indian cattle, every cow will be a *deshi* cow. At least most of them, given that there will still be some brave souls coming through the border, without caring much about the legal directions imposed upon them.

We cut, you pay

We used to hear from our fathers that the hominin of earlier epochs would stay attached to every step of the Qurbani. Starting from rearing the cow themselves through slaughtering-cutting, to distributing - they would be found actively taking part in every step to make their sacrifice more worthwhile. They would do it with love, and would customarily reward themselves with the best piece of meat or an extra spoon of brain *masala* later.

But the scene has changed for modern Muslims. We have services that would measure precisely how much effort is required for the whole custom and to what degree their service would be able to ease the toil.

This service is especially for people who want to utilise their five days of Eid vacation by going on a holiday but at the same time, don't want to miss the *kala bhuna* and *nehari*.

You choose the cow. And they will slaughter, process, package and distribute the meat to you while you enjoy your sunbath. In case you want to have your selfie taken with your own cattle, send them your selfie that has enough space to fit a cow's head, pay some extra and they will photoshop your head beside your cow.

There. Done.