



milk has reduced after circulation of the study findings. Professor Faroque has also received threats from government officials, industry owners and policy makers for his research findings. Several of his colleagues from DU's faculty of pharmacy also jointly published a statement renouncing the findings.

Through an exclusive interview with *Star Weekend*, Professor Faroque talked about the scope and significance of his studies, challenges he and other researchers have been facing in the academic arena and his future plans.

What prompted you to conduct a study of this kind on pasteurised and non-pasteurised milk sold in the kitchen markets?

For the last few years, we have been receiving news of widespread food

most important sources of nutrition for our children. Besides regular academic research, the Biomedical Research Centre under DU's faculty of pharmacy regularly analyses food products, cosmetics and other chemical products which are used on a day to day basis to detect harmful elements. One of our teams is analysing food products to detect the quantity of testing salt; another team is analysing edible oil for harmful elements.

Although this kind of analysis is quite expensive, we never received any funding from any individual or any private company. To analyse liquid milk, we applied for funding to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and ultimately, according to the ministry's arrangement, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) financially supported our study. MoE asked BANBEIS to support our research because they also felt that this research would be extremely significant for public health.

What are the implications of your findings on public health?

In the first round of our study we tested seven samples of widely sold pasteurised milk from five brands and three samples of non-pasteurised milk. We found antibiotics used for humans and detergent in those samples. Besides, we also found excessive volume of microbes—10-20 times more than the human tolerance level. When our findings were challenged by some sectors, we conducted a second round of testing because we thought maybe antibiotics and detergent were present only in the samples that were tested in the first research. So, we collected the same number of samples of the same brands from the same area for the second test. We also used the same highly sophisticated, fully automated apparatus and came up with the same result. In fact, in the first test, we found three types of antibiotics and the second time around we found four.

Our studies prove that we are on the brink of a public health catastrophe. Many consumers drink pasteurised or flavoured milk without boiling it.

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“Our studies prove that we are on the brink of a public health catastrophe”

In conversation with Professor ABM Faroque, former director, Biomedical Research Centre, Faculty of Pharmacy, Dhaka University

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

On June 25, Professor ABM Faroque, the chief investigator of a nine-member research team unveiled that a study found detergent and antibiotics for human-use in several samples of widely sold pasteurised and non-pasteurised milk. His findings were challenged by a senior official of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock who threatened that he would file a case against the researchers as they had not published their findings in a peer-reviewed journal. Professor Faroque answered this by conducting a second round of studies on samples of pasteurised and non-pasteurised milk and found antibiotics and detergent in those samples again. According to media reports, sale and consumption of liquid

adulteration. Mobile courts of the directorate of national consumer rights protection have been conducting raids against food adulterers but this malicious practice has not been stopped yet. We also noticed that most of these raids are conducted against retailers and small-scale food peddlers. But large food manufacturing companies and their products are rarely brought under scrutiny during those raids. So, we the researchers of the Biomedical Research Centre thought of analysing some popular food products marketed by prominent companies. I, along with my research team, analysed pasteurised and non-pasteurised milk. I personally wanted to conduct an analysis of milk because it's one of the

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