

MY DHAKA

Adopt love, reject cruelty: THE MODERN PET LIFE

RBR

The flow of life is punctuated with ups and downs, and amid this unpredictability, we make friends for a lifetime. We fall in love; we volunteer even to adopt love.

I adopted love in the form of three furry ruffians: my beloved pets, my Boo, who is the lamest dog on earth, Bubbles, my drama queen and the alpha of the pack, and their litter, the cuddly, forever greedy Patches.

I lost Patches a year ago, and recently, Bubbles joined her on the other side of the rainbow. The day I was grieving her passing away, mayhem broke loose in Japan Garden City.

I couldn't wrap my head around such atrocious behaviour and hatred towards these animals, who only lack the power of speech.

Their soulful eyes communicate and share an emotional bond with their humans and others. They speak a thousand words only with their love-filled eyes, cheerful barking, and their slobbering kisses. They only have unselfish love to give. Then why do we harbour such unexplained rage against these helpless beings?

I don't know which doctrine preaches abhorrence towards Almighty's creation in this heinous manner. The pictures showing the dead bodies of the mongrels and puppies were no less a genocide scene in my eyes.

"How is it possible to plan such

wicked acts of poisoning free meals; food they thought you gave out of love for them? How did you miss the gratefulness in their eyes when they took the first bite and how could you not see the hurt in those woeful eyes when they were dying in pain? Did your child witness this act of cruelty? What kind of love are you teaching your children?" -- These questions plagued my mind.

Life for the strays is a question of survival of the fittest, centred around scavenging for food. I know pet mommas who would feed their leftovers to street



PHOTOS: DU ANIMAL WELFARE TEAM



animals. When they buy their food, they make it a point not to throw away the innards of the poultry or the fish oil. These are fed to strays in the bazaars. Every butcher shop and roadside tea stalls have a pet who thrives on scraps and snacks that people give them.

So, the city folks show kindness too.

However, for many of us in this city, strays are a nuisance.

They are unkempt, infested with fleas and ticks, and maybe rabid in some instances. It is understandable that not all among us would share the same kind of love for strays or pets, but that should not lead to such a complex deep-rooted need to kill.

This desire to target the weak

only exposes their mental inabilities. The impulsiveness of aggression gratifies their ego alone, showing their barbarous side in every social aspect of their life, be it in the case of domestic violence or cruelty to animals.

There is no love lost in loving animals -- even religions of all kinds preach it. Religion does not endorse aggression toward animals.

I decided I would not elaborate on this untoward incident, instead focusing on the fact that Dhaka people are now embracing pets in their lives.

Whether local and fancy breeds, many households in this city have cats and dogs as their companions.

In my lane alone in Uttara Sector-5, there are two pet shops, and a veterinary clinic, which were almost nil 13 years ago when I adopted Boo. It is now difficult to get a vet's appointment without getting a prior serial number. Local breed of cats and dogs are now the most opted choice for adoption.

Free shelters, free medical support, and free CNVR (catch-neuter-vaccinate-return) programmes have long been advocated and carried out by animal-friendly groups. Vet clinics now have an in-patient department, X-ray, pathology, isolation for infectious diseases, and options for house calls as well.

With Dhaka boasting such standard animal care centres, and active groups who are engaged in culling violence against animals; I choose to see hope.

1 killed, 9 hurt in clash over new mosque committee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A man was killed and nine others were injured in a clash between two groups over the formation of a mosque committee in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha.

The incident occurred yesterday after Jumma prayers in Maladhor village of the upazila's Fulbari union.

The deceased, Shahidul Islam, 45, was a resident of Maladhor Uttarapara village.

Police have detained three people for their suspected involvement in the murder.

Locals and police said there was disagreement between two groups regarding the formation of a new management committee at Maladhor Jame Mosque.

A new mosque management committee was formed on November 23.

Yesterday, the new committee was rejected by the old committee, and following the Jumma prayers, a clash broke out between the old and new committee members.

Bulbul Islam, officer-in-charge of the Gobindaganj Police Station, said, "During the clash, Shahidul Islam was critically injured. He was taken to the Gobindaganj Upazila Health Complex, where he died undergoing treatment."

75 more Bangladeshis released from UAE prison

UNB, Dhaka

Seventy-five Bangladeshi expatriates jailed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were released on Wednesday, with plans to return to Bangladesh within a week.

Their release is part of a broader effort following the intervention of the interim government led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The arrests were made during protests against the then Sheikh Hasina regime. As student movement erupted in Bangladesh, protesting government repression, Bangladeshis living in the UAE expressed solidarity by organising demonstrations.

The UAE authorities detained several protesters, and the Abu Dhabi Federal Court sentenced them to prison terms ranging from 10 years to life.

High-risk job, low pay

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The others have remained in the fire department as they have become too old to be eligible any more. The low level of interest is apparent from the fact that only 25 had joined the fire department out of the 79 that the Public Service Commission had nominated.

As none from any other BCS showed interest to join the fire service, the Public Service Commission has to arrange special tests to recruit officials to the FSCD in Grade 12, the officer said.

A deputy assistant director—10th grade officer—leads the fire department in a district while for 22 other departments, the head of a district is an officer between grades four and seven.

A senior station officer (11th grade) and station officer (12th grade) head operations at the sub-district level, while 19 other departments' heads are officers between grades six and

nine.

"Our officers experience an inferiority complex, hesitating to speak up or even share what might turn out to be vital input at coordination meetings with officials from other departments. This could disrupt coordination and operations during emergencies," said another officer.

He said the department's 268 warehouse inspectors remain in the same pay grade as senior station officers even after 25 years.

In March 2021, the FSCD forwarded a UNDP report to the home ministry to develop the fire department in line with the growing need and raise the size of the workforce to 31,169.

After the exchange of several letters between the ministry and FSCD and detailed scrutiny, the home ministry finally agreed to create an additional 9,693 posts in October

2023 and forwarded the proposal to the public administration ministry for further processing.

If the government finally approves the new organogram, the FSCD will have 949 first-class posts.

The former head of the fire department, Brigadier General Md Main Uddin, wrote to the home ministry last year, advocating for upgrades in FSCD ranks. He noted that while other heads of institutions within the Security Services Division, were officers of grades two or one, the fire department head was a grade three officer.

The DG's letter outlined these disparities and proposed that district-level FSCD officer posts be upgraded to deputy director in Grade 6.

The letter also suggested promoting senior station officers and warehouse inspectors to first-class posts in Grade 9.

Nepal PM to make official visit to China

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's premier will visit China next month, the foreign ministry said yesterday, a departure from the usual practice by the Himalayan republic's leaders of making India their first official destination.

Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, who returned to power in July, departs for a four-day trip on Tuesday and is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and hold talks with Premier Li Qiang.

Oli, serving as prime minister for a third time this year, previously trod a fine balance between Nepal's two powerful neighbours but favoured Beijing in a bid to decrease his country's historical dependence on New Delhi.

Russia waging sabotage campaign in Europe Says UK spy chief

AFP, Paris

Russia is leading an extraordinarily intense campaign of "sabotage" in Europe as President Vladimir Putin pursues his war against Ukraine, Britain's spy chief said yesterday.

"We have recently uncovered a staggeringly reckless campaign of Russian sabotage in Europe even as Putin and his acolytes resort to

nuclear sabre-rattling to sow fear about the consequences of aiding Ukraine," Richard Moore said in a speech in Paris.

Moore also warned that he did not expect Putin to abandon any further expansionary aims should he succeed in turning Ukraine into a client state.

"If Putin is allowed to succeed in reducing Ukraine to a vassal state he will not stop there," Moore said.

Three more held

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No case had been filed for the murder as of late last night.

"The family is grief stricken," he said when asked about the delay, adding that the family members were on their way to the city from their

village in Lohagara upazila to file a case.

Police on Wednesday filed three cases accusing 79 named and 1,400 unnamed people of assault, vandalism, and attack on police.

Ratan: The haunting shadow over Sunamganj wetlands

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Ratan's men were involved in destroying the ecology and biodiversity of haor and riverine areas through encroachment and illegal lifting of sands and stones, with the help of the local administration.

District administration officials declined to comment on the allegations against Ratan, saying they have been recently transferred to the area. Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ilias Mia stated that he would look into all the allegations against Ratan.

Ratan, his family members, and followers did not even feel the need for secrecy in carrying out their misdeeds during the one and a half decades of Awami League rule.

In 2023, Ratan brazenly instructed his men at a public meeting in Dharmapasha to vandalise eight shops on the land of a local temple, as he wished to build a school named after his father there.

Ratan has been on the run since the AL was ousted on August 5. Attempts to contact him over the phone have failed.

GRAND MANSION

Ratan faces numerous allegations of land grabbing, including a piece to build a grand mansion, Haor Bangla, in his village Naodhar in Dharmapasha upazila. He allegedly built the house by grabbing 62 decimals of land belonging to two other individuals.

Locals allege that he constructed boundary walls encircling the land to include it in his property. Although a sign on the gate of the building reads that it was constructed in 2006, locals claim Ratan built this spectacular

house only after becoming an MP. The affidavit he submitted to the Election Commission before the 2008 polls supports the locals' claim, as there was no mention of this house in the affidavit.

Altu Miah, a resident of the area, said he owned 32 decimals of the land on which Haor Bangla was built. "After grabbing the land worth Tk 75 lakh, he [Ratan] forced me to complete registration of the land and gave me Tk 3 lakh only," the 60-year-old told The Daily Star. He also alleged that Ratan's men grabbed over 300 decimals of his farmland worth crores of taka.

Altu said he was running four cases to get his land back. "Ratan's men are still in possession of all my land even after the Awami League government's fall, while I cannot return to my village Gachhtola out of fear," he added.

Bikash Ranjan Sarkar, who locals said lost 30 decimals of land to Ratan for Haor Bangla, could not be contacted for comments.

Backed by Ratan, his brothers and men allegedly grabbed acres of government land in Madhyanagar Upazila town and constructed several buildings. Locals also alleged that Ratan's men built a residential area named Bashundhara on government land.

Ratan, a consulting businessman in 2008, became a shareholder in five companies, including garments and power, but claimed in affidavits submitted to the Election Commission that his income decreased. In 2008, he showed the value of his movable property at Tk 1.14 crore, which increased to Tk

3.51 crore in 2024. The value of his immovable property increased from Tk 73.4 lakh to Tk 3.21 crore, even after he sold land worth Tk 1.12 crore.

MONEY LAUNDERING

Ratan also faces allegations of money laundering and acquiring illegal assets beyond his known sources of income since winning the Sunamganj-1 seat, comprising Dharmapasha, Tahirpur, Madhyanagar, and Jamalganj upazilas, in 2008.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has been investigating the former Awami League MP since 2019 after his close relations with expelled Jubo League leader GK Shamim came to light. Shamim was arrested during the anti-casino operations in 2019 on charges of extortion and tender manipulation. He was later sentenced to life in prison for possession of illegal arms and 10 years for laundering Tk 195 crore to Singapore and Malaysia.

The ACC issued a travel ban for Ratan in October 2019 after finding evidence of money laundering. In 2020, it sought the bank information of Ratan and his wife Mahmuda Hossain Lata over allegations of embezzling government funds, laundering money, and amassing property beyond known sources of income. Ratan also faced ACC interrogation in February 2020.

A Dhaka court in June 2021 imposed a travel ban on Ratan and five others during an investigation into their alleged illegal wealth.

RESENTMENT IN AWAMI LEAGUE

Even local Awami League leaders were unhappy with Ratan's activities. Dharmapasha Upazila Awami League Joint General Secretary

Shamim Ahmed Murad, who was later elected as the Upazila chairman, had previously alleged that Ratan grabbed pieces of public and private land. Sanjib Talukdar, chairman of Madhyanagar Sadar Union, had earlier described Ratan as the "godfather of extortion in Sunamganj".

Murad and Sanjib could not be contacted since they were on the run after their party's fall.

Ratan lost the AL's ticket to freshly nominated candidate Ranjit Chandra Sarker in the 2024 polls. He also lost the election to Ranjit after running as an independent. Still, Ratan remained loyal to the Awami League to save his property amassed through alleged crimes.

On September 2, a case was filed against Ratan and 98 others in connection with an attack on protesters in Sunamganj on August 2, three days before the Awami League's fall. Another case was filed against Ratan, his brothers, and his men on September 8 for assaulting two persons during the last upazila parishad polls.

Ratan and Rokon drew flak from AL leaders after the two brothers' portraits were attached to murals of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in Dharmapasha by changing the original plan. The High Court in January last year expressed annoyance over the installation of their portraits, calling it serious misconduct and ordering the local administration to remove the portraits from the murals.