



From quacks to qualified vets, Dhaka's evolving pet care scene

RBR

People are becoming increasingly aware of animal welfare, leading to an increase in pet ownership and a push for better care for strays.

Fourteen years ago, when we first adopted Boo (our spitz breed of canine), the city had few real veterinarians, and only a handful of assistants who later became de facto "vets", daring to even do surgeries. Taking care of Boo's geriatric ailments at his advanced age, I realised how far the pet care industry has evolved and flourished in Dhaka over the years.

Farzana Alam, Director, Pranicool Animal Wellness Clinic, reiterates, "The demand for good veterinary services and emergency care has grown, making it clear that there's a lot more support for our furry friends in the city now."

Dr Mir Nishat Tasnim Tania, who is a registered small animal practitioner (Medicine and Surgery), says, "Inside Dhaka, there are now more than 50 shelters and hundreds of veterinary care-giving places, and the demand for these facilities is rising with the new trend of pet ownership. We now have proper diagnostic facilities like

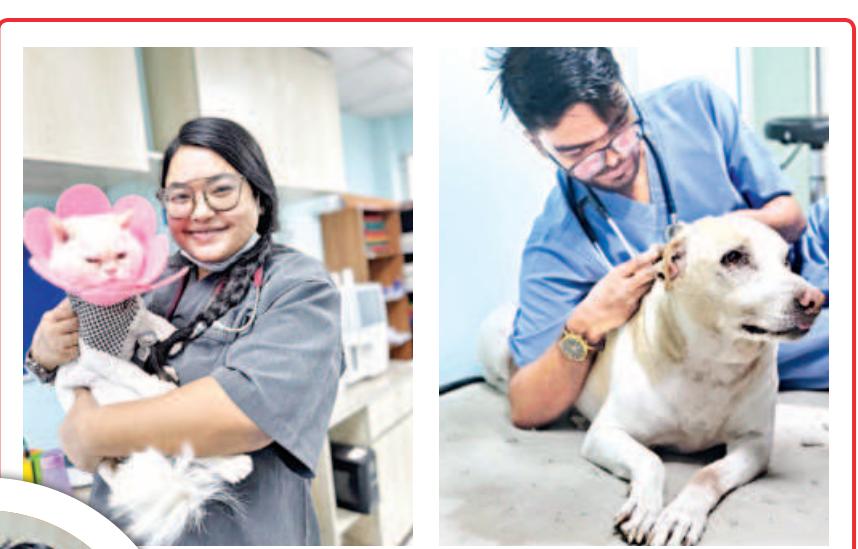
X-ray, ultrasonography, blood test, CBC, biochemical tests, different hormone tests, and other microscopic examinations."

But Dr Tania feels the industry still has miles to go.

"Veterinary infrastructure and the focus



PHOTO: MIR NISHAT TASnim TANIA



on veterinary education and services still prioritise livestock over companion and stray animals. Besides the lack of training and development in the community, the inadequate

support for research, and the widespread use of unqualified quackery undermine the profession, creating a significant gap in care."

Dr Nusrat Jahan, a Senior Veterinarian and Pet practitioner (Medicine and Surgery), believes veterinary is an amazing profession. She goes on to say, "In many ways, vets still face stiff challenges to treat critical diseases as we have not developed a pet-specific pharmaceutical yet."

Hopefully, with time, these gaps will also be filled.

As a pet owner of an old dog, I am

grateful for the expansion of the pet industry and for qualified, registered veterinarians. The amount of patience and care veterinarians are required to give and show to cure these sick animals is unimaginable. They tirelessly treat patients who are unable to communicate their suffering with them.

Despite my initial zoophobia, attending a furry friend for 14 long years has taught me that having a companion animal is a lifetime commitment. If you are not ready to be a pet parent, I suggest you give the idea a rest. Ill-kempt, malnourished, abandoned in bathrooms or kennels, or subjected to inhuman torture and cruelties is no way to keep a pet. If you truly want to adopt a cat or a dog, then treat them with care and love as you would a family member. And believe me, now there are people around, with professional expertise, to help you in that process.

EU grills Apple, Snapchat, YouTube over risks to children

AFP, Brussels

The EU Friday demanded digital giants including Snapchat and YouTube explain how they are protecting children from online harm, as all but two member states signalled openness to restricting social media access for minors.

The European Union has stringent rules regulating the digital space, including what children should be able to see, but there is increasing concern that more needs doing.

Inspired by Australia's social media ban for under-16s, Brussels is analysing whether to set bloc-wide limits on minors' access to platforms -- with 25 of 27 EU countries coming out Friday in support of at least studying such a measure.

Europe's biggest weapon for ensuring platforms tackle illegal content and keep children safe online is the Digital Services Act, which has sparked censorship claims from the US tech sector and retaliation threats from President Donald Trump.

Taiwan leader vows stronger air defences to counter 'enemy threats'

AFP, Taipei

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te vowed Friday to speed up construction of a multi-layered air defence system as part of efforts to counter "enemy threats".

Lai's government has been under US pressure to improve its ability to defend itself against a potential attack by China, which claims the island is part of its territory.

"We will accelerate our building of the T-Dome, establish a rigorous air defence system in Taiwan with multi-layered defence, high-level detection, and effective interception," Lai said during Taiwan's National Day celebrations.

Lai said Taiwan was determined to "maintain peace through strength" and called on China to "renounce the use of force or coercion to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait".

Lai's speech followed a bruising 17 months for the president, a staunch defender of Taiwan's sovereignty who is loathed by Beijing.

Gas supply declining

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number of completed drills was only seven, which now stands at 19.

The authorities have been able to connect only 82 mmcfd of gas from the sources to the national gas grid so far.

In January 2024, another plan to drill another 100 gas wells was announced.

Concerned officials from Petrobangla said the interim government accelerated the implementation of the projects by initiating the drilling of at least 41 wells under 15 projects.

From the second plan, which aims to ensure more than 1,300 mmcfd gas supply by 2028, the development project proposals are being readied to drill 19 wells under six separate projects, the officials said.

The ousted government went on offshore drilling in 2024 for the first time after 2012.

In March last year, Bangladesh's offshore bidding round was announced for global oil companies and the deadline for bidding was in September.

In between, the political changeover happened, and none of the participants placed bids. The interim government extended the deadline for three months but failed to attract the bidders.

"The interim government just did business-as-usual duties in the energy sector," said Badrul Imam, honorary professor of geology at the University of Dhaka.

They had a chance to go for rigorous drilling to increase local gas supply, which they failed, he said.

"We didn't find any special attention or encouragement among the officials in this regard," he said, adding that there should be a special arrangement for exploration activities amid the continuous fall in local supply.

Those who worked in favour of imports during the previous government are still in place, Alam said.

"They have turned the energy sector into an import-driven market. The decisions were dangerous, and the same trend is continuing. What the previous government did to push the energy sector into a fragile state is being continued, with pricing mechanisms now moving further towards dependence on international markets," he added.

Petrobangla officials said they have prepared the fresh documents and sent it to the ministry for further approvals.

"But it seems that the interim government will leave it for the elected one," said an official asking not to be named.

Ceasefire takes hold in Gaza

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But Israel warned some areas were still off-limits and that Palestinians should steer clear of its forces while they were "in the midst of adjusting operational positions in the Gaza Strip".

"Thank God my house is still standing," Ismail Zayda, 40, said in the Sheikh Radwan district of Gaza City. "But the place is destroyed, my neighbours' houses are destroyed, entire districts have gone."

In the south, people picked their way through the dusty moonscape that was once Gaza's second largest city Khan Younis, which Israeli forces razed earlier this year. Most walked in silence.

A middle-aged man, Ahmed Al-Brim, was pushing a bicycle with bundles of scrap timber tied to the front and back; his family would need the firewood to cook. It was all they had been able to recover from the ruins of their home.

"We went to our area. It was exterminated. We don't know where we will go after that," he said. "We couldn't get the furniture, or clothes, or anything, not even winter clothes.

The accord, if fully implemented, would bring the two sides closer than any previous effort to halt the war.

Much could still go wrong. The sides have yet to publish the list of Palestinian prisoners to be released in exchange for Israeli hostages. Hamas

Nothing is left."

In a televised address, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli forces were staying in Gaza to ensure Hamas was disarmed: "If this is achieved the easy way then that will be good, and if not then it will be achieved the hard way."

Israel's government ratified the ceasefire with Hamas in the early yesterday. Once Israeli troops have pulled back, Hamas has 72 hours to release the 20 living Israeli hostages it is still holding. Israel will free 250 Palestinians serving long terms in its prisons and 1,700 detainees captured during the war. Hundreds of trucks per day are expected to surge into Gaza carrying food and medical aid.

The exiled Gaza chief of Hamas, Khalil Al Hayya, said he had received guarantees from the United States and other mediators that the war was over.

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is seeking freedom for some of the most prominent Palestinian convicts held in Israeli jails.

Further steps in Trump's 20-point plan have yet to be agreed. Those include how the demolished Gaza Strip is to be ruled when fighting ends, and the ultimate fate of Hamas, which has rejected Israel's demands it disarm.

Trump said the issue of Hamas surrendering its weapons would be addressed in the second phase of the peace plan.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told Qatar-based broadcaster Al Arabi the Palestinian Islamist movement rejects the transitional authority.

The Hamas-run interior ministry said it would deploy security forces in areas where the Israeli army withdrew. It was not clear whether armed militants would return to the streets in significant numbers, a move Israel would see as a provocation.

Trump said he would head to the region on Sunday, possibly to attend a signing ceremony in Egypt, and Israeli police said they were preparing for a visit by him on Monday.

Shahidul Alam freed

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diplomatic measures to secure his release.

On Thursday, Shahidul, along with more than 140 journalists, medics, and human rights activists, was taken to Israel's Ketziot Prison.

On Wednesday, the group was intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters approximately 120 nautical miles off the coast of Gaza.

As part of the FFC, Shahidul's ship, the Conscience, along with eight other smaller vessels, was sailing toward war-ravaged Gaza to challenge Israel's blockade and deliver humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

This was the second interception, after Israel last week stopped about

40 vessels and detained more than 450 activists in an aid convoy, the Global Sumud Flotilla, that was also attempting to deliver supplies to Gaza.

According to the FFC, an international network of pro-Palestinian activist groups, all nine boats in the Thousand Madleens to Gaza campaign -- Abd Elkarim Eid, Alaa Al-Najjar, Anas Al-Sharif, Gaza Sunbird, Leila Khaled, Milad, Soul of My Soul, Umm Saad and Conscience -- were intercepted.

The ships carried aid worth more than \$110,000 in medicines, respiratory equipment and nutritional supplies intended for Gaza's starving hospitals, it added on its Instagram account.

Venezuela's Machado

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recognition to our people that certainly deserve it," she said, adding: "I am just, you know, one person. I certainly do not deserve this."

Machado, who has lived in hiding for the past year, was honoured for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy," said Jorgen Watne Frydnes, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.

The committee hailed her as "one of the most extraordinary examples of civilian courage in Latin America in recent times".

"Despite serious threats against her life, she has remained in the country, a choice that has inspired millions."

Rumours have circulated on social networks that she is sheltering at the US embassy.

Venezuelan opposition figurehead Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia hailed her win as "a well deserved recognition of the long struggle of a woman and an entire people for freedom and democracy".

Machado was the opposition's presidential candidate for Venezuela's 2024 elections, but Nicolas Maduro's government blocked her candidacy.

She then backed the reluctant, little-known ex-diplomat Gonzalez Urrutia as her stand-in, accompanying him on rallies.

Always dressed in white, she was welcomed like a rock star, her supporters rushing to get a glimpse or touch her, holding up babies and children and proffering handwritten notes of support and presents of baseball caps or flowers.

An engineer by training, Caracas-born Machado entered politics in 2002 at the head of the association Sumate (Join us), pushing for a referendum to recall Maduro's mentor, the late socialist leader Hugo Chavez.

She was accused of treason over the referendum call and received death threats, prompting her to send

her two young sons and daughter to live abroad.

In 2024, Machado was awarded the European Union's human rights Sakharov Prize, and the Council of Europe's Vaclav Havel Prize.

Her latest accolade comes as the United States has increasingly carried out strikes off Venezuelan shores in international waters, claiming to act against drug smugglers.

Washington accuses Maduro of leading a drug cartel, and does not recognize him as the country's legitimate leader.

Machado and Gonzalez Urrutia have backed US military pressure on the Maduro regime as a "necessary measure" towards the "restoration of popular sovereignty in Venezuela."

Venezuela has evolved from a relatively democratic and prosperous country to a "brutal authoritarian state that is now suffering a humanitarian and economic crisis," the Nobel committee's Frydnes said.

The opposition has been systematically suppressed by means of "election rigging, legal prosecution and imprisonment."

Machado has been a "key, unifying figure in a political opposition that was once deeply divided," he said.

She was not among those mentioned as possible laureates in the run-up to Friday's announcement.

US President Donald Trump had meanwhile made no secret of his desire to win this year's Peace Prize and his office derided Friday's decision as "politics over peace".

YUNUS GREETS MACHADO

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday congratulated Machado on winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

Machado has faced oppression with steadfast resolve, never wavering in her commitment to a free and more just future for her country and her people, he said in a congratulatory message.

She has dared to imagine a better world and worked tirelessly to make it so, added Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.