

# A dog's life

## Pakistan's canine fighters forced into blood sport

FIGHTING can be a way of life in parts of Taliban-scourged Pakistan, but on the farms, it is more likely to be dogs who are in training for their own violent and bloody battles.

Officially banned by the government and condemned as cruel by animal rights groups, thousands of wealthy Pakistani farmers, landowners and businessmen use the quiet winter months to indulge a passion for bloody bulldog fights.

"I love Moti just like my kids. He's a source of pride," crowed a jubilant Malik Tassaduq Hussain after his dog won a fight in Tangdhe Sayedan, a village in Punjab province, 110 kilometres east of Islamabad.

To the din of drum beats and flutes, men hoisted Moti onto their shoulders, danced through the crowds and showered the animal with banknotes after thousands watched him bite and tear his way to victory on a secluded plateau.

In villages such as these, fights between bulldogs,

**“ We organise these festivals because we love dog fights. Every organiser chooses his own or associates' land in the village to stage these fights. It's a hobby of the powerful**

**ABDUL GHAFFAR**  
DOG-FIGHTING ORGANISER

known as “booly” in Punjabi, provide one of the few forms of entertainment while crops grow.

The rules are brutally simple: the dogs fight until one bleeds to death, runs off, or until the owner takes pity and withdraws the animal from battle, handing the opponent victory.

Winning owners can get small prizes such as trophies, mobile phones, or televisions while some or-

ganizers give prize money ranging from 5,000 rupees (RM168.8) to 100,000 rupees, depending on what the organisers can afford.

“We organise these festivals because we love dog fights. Every organiser chooses his own or associates' land in the village to stage these fights. It's a hobby of the powerful,” said Abdul Ghaffar, a local organiser.

As with bans on terror groups that allow organisations to rename themselves and carry on largely unchecked, Pakistan does little to enforce the prohibition on dog fights and the industry they attract.

Police say they do raid fights and arrest culprits but Punjab police spokeswoman Nabeela Ghazanfar concedes that most get bail.

The maximum penalty — six months in jail and a fine equivalent to US\$11 — is hardly prohibitive and activists want the government to do more to outlaw dog fights, which they say are “wrong” and “cruel”. — AFP



**BOOLY:** Fighting dogs lunge at each other as a handler looks on during a dog fighting match in Tangdhe Sayedan — AFPpic