Dewan Khaja Murli Dhar was the "Dewan-e-Buitan" or Home Minister of Subedar Shaesta Khan. Khaja was his title. The place he lived was named after him and that is now known as "Khaj-e-Dewan to the city people".

# Adulterated food, toxic colours







Do you know what is in the juicy fruits or tempting street iftar you are eating every day?

## Iftar delicacies and most fruits available in the market are no longer safe. They contain carbide and colours that may cause serious health hazards

### SOHEL ISLAM

Iftar delicacies are no longer healthfriendly, as adulterated food has flooded city markets because of legal laxity.

"We try all out to check the sale of adulterated items. But the Pure Food Act framed in 1959 is too lax to prevent traders from selling these products," said an official of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Health Department, responsible for legal action against the adulterated food sellers

The penalty of a violator by the DCC court can be at best a fine of Tk 400. "Most offenders can get away by paying only the fines. If we do not update the law, we won't be able to check adulteration," he said.

With the beginning of Ramadan, the sale of carbide-ripened fruits and coloured iftar specials has become rampant.

Colours, often toxic, are mixed in popular iftar items like beguni and ilepi and carbide is used to ripen green fruits like banana, papaya and wood apple.

"None of the colours used in iftar items is approved by the World Health Organisation. They are mostly used in fabrics and may cause serious health hazards," said Prof Keramat Ali of Dhaka

"A few months back, we filed 22 cases against violators who mixed carbide powder with fruits. But they all escaped, paying the fines," the DCC official said.

Although this is not a season of mango, carbide-ripened mangoes are up for sale. "Fruit vendors are also ripening wood apples and selling them," he said.

"We have almost stopped filing cases

against food adulterators. Now we are trying to motivate people not to buy adulterated food. If the law is not amended, it won't be possible for us to stop adulteration," the official despaired of anti-adulteration

The artificially ripened fruits have a deceptive look. "The fruits matured with carbide are more attractive than natural ones," he said.

"Each year, we raise our voice against adulteration. We hold meetings with the government, but nothing substantial has been done," said Quazi Salamatullah, director of Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of Dhaka University.

The food containing carbide and colours causes serious health hazards. "Now we have to listen to too many cases of cancer as adulteration is rife," Salamatullah said

Activists of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at an October 31 rally protested the sale of adulterated and contaminated food items in roadside outlets

They demanded immediate intervention of the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), Dhaka City Corporation and Department of Health to put an end to adulteration and use of toxic elements in

"Of the authorities, neither is ensuring public right of safe food," said Maidul Huq

## Dilly-dallying may Eid shoppers warming up delay primary textbooks

Thousands of primary students in the city may not get textbooks by January next year, as the authorities did not wake up in time to printing and distribution of the books.

Although the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the body in charge of textbook distribution, claims to finish the job by January, publishers would be able to print a negligent number of books by that time, sources close to the industry said.

The education ministry gave the work order five weeks late on October 24, making uncertain whether the students will get their books before the start of next academic year. Some 200 printers have been tasked with bringing out primary books and 39 printers were given the job to print madrassah books

The sources blamed the education ministry for ignoring its responsibility to ensure timely distribution

But State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque assured that the textbooks would reach the market in time despite the delayed work order. "The work is in progress and we are optimistic about bringing out the books by January next year," he

According to the NCTB, it will bring out 6.68 crore textbooks for primary students and 2.89 crore books for madrassah students this year, which requires at least three months to print. But none of NCTB officials agreed to comment on the

"We have now only two months to publish and distribute the books. We have a few steps more to go before we hand over all books, which is hardly possible by January," said an official of the publishers' associa-

"Power cuts are also hampering

the work that may turn as another cause of delayed distribution," he

Even if the publishers can afford to complete the printing of textbooks hv Ianuary, the binders have yet to agree to do their job within the period, sources said.

It is grossly alleged that the bidding committee did not give the tender to the lowest hidder in line with the law and it happened under the pressure of the education minis-

Habibur Rahman, NTCB production controller, felt able to distribute

books by December but admitted that the work order came later than expected which might delay the

The city is home to 24 governmental schools and more than 100 private schools, with about one lakh students studying in them. Not only the students, but also their parents and teachers worry whether they will

get books in time.

The uncertainty over availability of books adds to the anxiety of parents who are battling for enrolment of their children in schools of good repute.



Will these children get their primary schoolbooks on time in the coming year?

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Ramadan may be the month of showing restraint and selfcontrol, but it also fills the air with the buzz of the fast approaching

The plush shopping centres of the city are already adorned with colorful lighting and are offering various incentives for the Eid shoppers starting from awesome discounts to lucrative gifts and

Clothes of new design have thronged the fashion houses of Dhaka. Saris, shoes, jewelry, punjabi, salwar kameez, Lehenga, fatua etc. are available aplenty for every taste and size.

Among the trendy malls, Eastern Plaza is experiencing an added rush to its already busy customer base in the advent of Eid. The second floor of Eastern Plaza, that houses shops selling mostly readymade garments, can be found filled with young women looking for the latest Eid fashion.

Arna Apparels, a well-known store, has brought the 'Bazu' dress made of Picasso silk that ranges. Its price ranges from Tk 3,000 to Tk 8,000. Fatua with short divider

is another attraction at Arna Mostly made of Tasar, Picasso, and Chinon silk they cost around

Tk 8,500.

This year straight Lehenga with Zardousi work is a big hit among women despite its price, which is between Tk 2,500 to Tk 9,000.

The sari shops of the city are making brisk business as usual with the Eid in the offing. There is a variety of dazzling choices like Crush Katan, Net Antique, Georgette Benarasi, Zardousi work in crush, Chiffon, Komolika, Italian Crepe, Tie and Dye etc.

Although people are crowding the markets in the beginning of the month apparently because they have their pockets full, sales men however are still not happy.

"Most of the customers are checking out the items and their prices for the , time being and planning to buy them later," said Billal Hossain, a shop owner at Gaousia Market.

A large section of people do their Eid shopping at the end of the Ramadan when they receive their Eid bonus' said some shop



Pir Yemeni Market at Bangabandhu Avenue is decked with fairy lights as the yearly Eid shopping mania gathers speed among city dwellers.

## A crater of neglect

A rickshaw puller struggles through a large waterlogged pothole, expanded to the size of a small pond, near the Jatrabari crossing. **Characterised by heavy** traffic at all hours, this 'pond' adds to the crossing's chaos and congestion by narrowing down the highway. Nevertheless, authorities have managed to ignore this situation for the last few months.

