

DOWN TO EARTH

The lure of street foods

By A S M Nurunnabi

Street foods have become an inseparable part of our city life. They are typical not only of Dhaka alone. In several cities of South East Asia, their presence is also noticeable, but in a more varied and organized manner.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has defined street foods as "ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers, especially in the streets and similar public places."

Here, as elsewhere, socio-economic factors play an important role in their growing importance. Due to urbanization and industrialization, people are becoming more and more busy with their jobs which leave them very little time to prepare food at home. Many of the customers of street foods are migrants from rural areas who have settled down under extremely poor conditions in urban "slums" or squatter settlements where basic services are non-existent or very limited at best. The lack of water and electricity, lack of facilities to prepare food at home, the distance between home and work place, and time constraint and above all their cheapness and convenience—all these factors contribute to the growing popularity of street foods.

One comes across different kinds of street foods in this capital city. The fare mainly consists of rice, curry, dal and roti and different kinds of snacks and beverages. The locations of this business can be found mainly in the streets of Motijheel, Dilkusha, Sadarghat, Tejgaon and many other busy places like bus stops, railway stations, launch ghats, etc. Maintenance of hygiene and sanitary condition in matters of food preparation and handling is lacking in most cases. There is also no agency for regular check-up of the stan-

dard of foods offered for sale. The raw materials used for the preparation of these foods are mostly sub-standard to make them cheaper. In many cases they are sold near sewers, drainage lines and footpaths where dust, flies and dirt get easy access.

No data are available even about the approximate number of vendors or hawkers of street foods in this city. According to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) rules and regulations, vending of foods on the streets is not legal. A DCC official, however, admitted that their manpower was not enough to control street food vending or to ensure hygienic standard.

Bangladesh is experiencing one of the highest urban growth rates in the region and its urban population is expected to increase to 26 per cent by the end of the century. Commensurate with this trend, the urban people's dependence on street foods has been marking a significant growth.

On the question whether street foods of Dhaka are safe for health, people seldom differ. Everybody would agree that our street foods are not adequately hygienic. The street food vendors are mostly lacking in knowledge of hygiene, nutrition and sanitation. The lack of control by the authorities and the vendors's lack of knowledge about safe food handling practices often pose potential health risk to consumers.

FAO's interest in street foods extends to quality and safety concerns as well as consideration of their valuable food and nutrition aspects. One FAO expert termed the street foods as "a problem, a challenge and an opportunity for development." The problem lies in the control of the quality and safety of foods offered

for sale. The opportunity is the strengthening of traditional and local food habits, the development of small industries and cooperative marketing structure. And lastly, the challenge is to provide government and municipal authorities with the means to assure the safety and quality of street foods.

Street foods in Dhaka, though lacking in proper standard and thus posing a health hazard, have come to stay. Keeping this in view and considering their necessity and importance in the day-to-day life of certain socio-economic strata, there may be no point in discouraging them in terms of municipal law. On the other hand, as FAO recognised, the street foods are an important economic activity in the context of the modern urban life.

The ramifications of street foods constitute a vast industry and one that involves large amounts of capital and thousands of people. It is an industry that provides employment to a large segment of population who might otherwise remain unemployed including women and city migrants who have relatively low or no educational and professional backgrounds.

But the ways this business is conducted in most cases at present need to be changed with a firm guidance. It seems urgently necessary to stop unadvised sale of unhygienic and sub-standard items of food. With a view to raising them to a healthy standard, the health authorities should initiate action including, among others, strict food quality control measures, provision of clean environment, supply of clean water and use of safe raw materials for preparation of such foods. In this manner, it may be possible to convert the attending problems into opportunities for developing dependable food retailing outlets.



Solo painting exhibition of Ranjit Das opened at La Galerie, Banani in city yesterday. — Star photo

Indo-Pak clash overshadows NAM human rights' debate

NUSA DUA (Indonesia), May 15: Pakistan and India accused each other of human rights violations in a bitter exchange on the final day of the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers conference in Indonesia's resort island of Bali today, reports BSS.

"The situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir has now reached alarming proportions," Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Siddique Khan Kanju, told a session convened to discuss the Middle East, South Africa and human rights.

Kanju charged the Indian government, which rules two-thirds of disputed Kashmir, with trying to conceal alleged human rights violations in putting down a secessionist movement that flared there two years ago. Pakistan rules the other one-third of Kashmir.

Indian Minister of State of External Affairs, Eduardo Faleiro, saying he regretted

the raising of a bilateral issue at the conference, accused Pakistan of human rights violations in its territories of Sind and Baluchistan.

"Respect for human rights, like charity, must begin at home," Faleiro said. He accused Pakistan of giving aid to Kashmiri secessionists, a charge Islamabad denies.

India has urged the conference to support its stand that human rights values vary from country to country according to local cultural, social and economic conditions and should not be imposed from outside.

The clash overshadowed a debate among the Foreign Ministers on human rights during which several countries, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka, insisted donor countries should not set conditions for giving aid.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abdullah Badawi told

delegates that donor countries should not tie aid to the recipient country's human rights record, a view shared by neighbouring Indonesia.

Jakarta refused to accept aid further from its former Dutch colonial rulers after the Netherlands threatened to stop aid in protest against an army massacre of mourners at a cemetery in the East Timor capital Dili last November.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Harold Herat said the issue had become a major concern of the 103-member movement for the first time because more of its smaller members had become dependent on aid from the industrialised world. Herat said the third world feared the West was using the human rights issue to channel its aid away from them and to the newly independent countries of the former East bloc.

"But what pressure can we put on someone giving us aid?" he asked.

The Midnight File

Constitutional talks face deadlock in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, May 15: White and black negotiators traded angry accusations Friday after failing to agree on terms for a constitution that would put blacks in power for the first time. The government and the African National Congress accused each other of being power hungry and flouting democracy after failing to agree on several key points on approving a new constitution, reports AP.

Anti-govt riots leave 7 dead in Nigeria

LAGOS, May 15: Anti-government riots that engulfed several Nigerian cities left seven people killed, the military government said Friday, while other sources put the toll as high as 15 dead. A police statement said 692 people had been arrested across the country. 250 of them in the capital of Lagos, where the worst violence took place Wednesday and Thursday, reports AP.

AL confce

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Members of the Preparatory Committee are: Syeda Zohra Tazuddin, Abdus Samad Azad, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Dr Kamal Hossain, Salahuddin Yusuf, Mohammad Karuzzaman, Matur Rahman, Prof Pulin Dey, Dr Alauddin, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Mohammad Abdul Jalil, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Syed Fazlul Haq, Begum Mannan Sulfan, Begum Matia Chowdhury, Shamsur Rahman Khan, Shaiful Aziz Mukul, Masruul Islam Khan Kamal, Begum Aivi Rahman, Ataur Rahman Khan Kasir, Strajul Islam, Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohtuddin, Kh. H. Jahangir, Mamta Hossain, Abdul Kader Siddiqui, Rafique Uddin Bhuyyan, Gazul Momin, Dewan Farid Gazi, Yunus Ali, Mohammad Rawshan Ali, Azizur Rahman, S M Nurunnabi, Shudhangshu Shekhar Haidar, Gazi Azhar Uddin, Abdul Wazed Chowdhury, M A Mannan, Siddique Hossain, Zahurul Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Khan, Harnath Bain, A B M Taleb Ali, Matur Rahman Talukdar, Abdur Rob, Mohammad Imanif, Raziuddin Razu, Mohammad Omar Ali, Abdur Rouf Chowdhury, Mohammad Obaidul Kader, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and M A Aziz.

Convenors of Sub-Committees are: Reception-Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Finance-party chief Sheikh Hasina, Publicity and Publications-Abdul Mannan, Amendment to the constitution and manifesto-party chief Sheikh Hasina, Office and coordination-Syed Fazlul Haque, Cultural-Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan, Dias-Amir Hossain Amu, Food-City Awami League and drafting of General Secretary's report-Syed Fazlul Haque BSC.

Election tribunal-Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan.

Task Force

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the frontier areas, sea ports and airports first, he added. High duty to import thread and raw colour makes the price difference giving the smugglers the chance to flood Indian sarees in the local markets, he went on to say.

About the readymade garments and shoes bearing foreign seals and available in the local markets, the Chairman said that, these were mostly Bangladesh-made. As stickers for readymade garments, soles and upper parts of shoes were separately importable items as per country's law, these were assembled here and sold as foreign made goods, he commented.

The Chairman also said that smuggling would not be checked unless the government took severe measures against the responsible persons.

Shantibahini

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Jini decided to sever her relationship with the present leadership as her repeated attempts to sink differences in the party's rank and file failed. A leader of PCJSS, who has recently surrendered to the security forces in Khagrachhari, told UNB that Pankajini wanted to lead the organisation after the assassination of her husband Manobendra Narayan Larma on November 10, 1983.

Most party leaders supported the proposal but she could not take over the leadership in the face of threat from Santu Larma, he said.

"Although Pankajini now seems to be weak but her party may emerge as a stronger one due to the autocratic and undemocratic attitude of Shantu", said the surrendered PCJSS leader on condition of anonymity.

The 'master plan' of the insurgency and some important documents are lying with Pankajini, he said adding that Shantu took several attempts to grab those but failed.

"The PCJSS has been losing the confidence of common man due to the conflict and this has prompted me to return to normal life," he said.

Thai trawler seized : 20 held

CHITTAGONG, May 15

The Bangladesh navy ship Ali Haider during its routine patrol yesterday apprehended a Thai fishing trawler from near the St. Martin's Island and arrested all its 20 crew members on board, reports BSS.

The trawler was nabbed while she was engaged in catching fish illegally inside the territorial waters of Bangladesh and about 1000 kilograms of mixed variety of white fish was also recovered from the vessel.

DUTA

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She sought all-out cooperation of the teachers to make the government measures in eliminating terrorism and violence from the campus successful.

The DUTA delegation led by its President SMA Faiz urged the government to take effective measures for curbing terrorism in the educational arena.

The DUTA president said the teachers of Dhaka University played a historic role during the anti-autocratic movement. He also praised the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for her uncompromising leadership during the movement and for not taking part in the 1986 farcical elections.

Begum Khaleda Zia gave patient hearing to the teachers and assured her all possible cooperation for solving their problems.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Khondker Mosharraf Hossain, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mian and DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman were present on the occasion and took part in the discussion.

The meeting was attended by DUTA Vice President Prof Shahadat Ali, General Secretary Prof Syedur Rahman, Joint Secretary Dr Syed Rashedul Hasan, Treasurer Prof Shamsul Haq, and members Prof KM Mohsin, Prof Monirul Haq, Prof Moutazuddin Ahmed, Prof Abdul Momin Chowdhury, Prof AKM Nazrul Islam, Prof Mohammad Shamsuddoha, Prof Amimul Islam, Prof Shafigur Rahman and Dr Jamaluddin Ahmed.

Khaleda

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sised on peace and discipline in the industrial belt so that investors are encouraged to set up more factories and help resolve unemployment problem.

She urged the women and youths to create self-employment by taking to poultry, farming and handicraft. The government will extend all facilities for such ventures, the Prime Minister assured.

"We don't want to remain poor and dependent on others... we have to be self-reliant in all sectors," Begum Zia said.

She said villages are the focal points of the government's development efforts and sought people's support to implement the programmes undertaken to change the lot of the commonman.

Presided over by local BNP leader Manzurul Islam, the rally was addressed among others by LORD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, State Minister for Textile Maj (Retd) M A Mannan, Ziaul Haq, MP, and Begum Shamsunnahar Ahsanullah, MP.

Other MPs of greater Noakhali district—Halima Khatoon, Barkatullah Bulu, Zainul Abedeen Faruk, Saaluddin Kamran, Mohammed Shahjahan and Advocate Khairul Anam were present.

Begum Zia said her government is striving to meet basic needs of the people—food, clothing, shelter, health and education—and mentioned the programmes undertaken towards that end.

She said about Tk 823 crore will be spent for development of communication which is essential for overall development of the country.

Amidst thunderous claps and slogans the Prime Minister announced nationalisation of the local girls' high school.

Tremor rocks Uzbekistan

Landslides, rain kill 200 in Tajikistan

TASHKENT (Uzbekistan), May 15: At least 200 people were killed in three days of landslides and torrential rain in the central Asian republic of Tajikistan, Itar-Tass news agency said today, reports Reuter.

And in neighbouring Uzbekistan, where leaders of the commonwealth of former Soviet republics were meeting, an earthquake rocked high-rise buildings.

Seismologists said the quake measured six to seven on the 12-point Soviet scale at its epicentre, south-east of Tashkent. Seven is officially labelled 'very strong', but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

In Tajikistan dozens of villages in the foothills of the Pamir mountains were buried in mudslides or submerged by floods. Thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed.

Tass said the first landslides had taken place on Wednesday, but they were still continuing on Friday.

The fatal landslides occurred in the south-east of the mountainous republic, bordering Afghanistan and China.

Hussain Achilov, chairman of Tajikistan's state emergency committee, told Itar-Tass that at least 200 people had been killed by the slides, which began on Wednesday.

"These are the approximate figures," he said. Roads and communications were cut, businesses damaged and irreparable damage done to the cotton industry, gardens and orchards, he said.

Achilov appealed for aid from the rest of the former Soviet Union and the world. Tass said two plane-loads of emergency aid from the United States were expected to arrive in the Tajik capital Dushanbe today.

Tajikistan, which borders on Afghanistan and China, has spent the past few weeks gripped by political crisis between ex-Communist president Rakhmon Nabiyev and an opposition alliance of liberals and Islamic radicals.

The day-long ceremony from dawn to evening includes congregation of devotees in the monasteries, Buddha punja, prayers, offering of food to Bhikkhu Sangha, religious meetings and illumination in the evening.

The day has been declared a public holiday.

In the capital, the day-long festival will be celebrated today at the Dharmarajika Vihar at Kamalapur under the auspices of Bangladesh Bouddha Krishi Prachar Sangha, the international monastery at Merul Badda by the Bangladesh Buddhist Federation and Sakya-muni Vihara at Mirpur under the auspices of the Parbatya-Bouddha Sangha.

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Published by S. M. Ali on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 28/1, Toyneeb Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: PABX-246023-4, 245061-2. Advertisement: 245063 & Ext. 20. Fax No. 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257. GRAM: DAILY STAR, DHAKA.

Rohingyas

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halt for at least five hours. Also on Friday thousands of refugees paraded the highway in groups shouting "We won't go back until Burmese (Myanmarese) military is punished for its crime."

No fresh violence was reported in the rugged hilly region which houses the refugees in 12-clusters of flimsy bamboo huts and makeshift tents.

The Muslim refugees have arrived from Myanmar's western province of Arakan and say they have escaped massacres, rapes, murders and conscription for forced labour.

Facing an international pressure Myanmar last month agreed to take back the refugees, but rejected a proposal to involve the UNHCR in the process.

The refugees demand that the UNHCR be involved into their repatriation to monitor their resettlement at home.

Bangladesh Environment and Forests Minister Abdullah Al-Noman toured the refugees on Friday and later asked officials to "behave humanly with the refugees."

"We want the refugees to go back home. But that does not mean we will push them back by force," he said.

Officials from Bangladesh and Myanmar will meet at the frontier town of Teknaf on Sunday to decide when to start the repatriation.

Officials said they have decided to persuade the refugees to return home.

"We believe the situation inside Myanmar has become congenial for their return. Our policy is to persuade the refugees to return voluntarily," said one official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The UNHCR and several international human rights groups have expressed reservations against the repatriation plan.

"We don't know how Myanmar will treat the returnees since we don't have any access to that country," said a UNHCR official at Cox's Bazar.

1 killed, 6 hurt in road mishap

By DMCH Correspondent. At least one person was killed and another six including two minors were seriously injured in a road accident at Tejgaon in the city Friday morning.

The accident took place near the Ninth Division crossing at Tejgaon at about 6 am when a truck (Dhaka Da-5960) crushed an auto-rickshaw (Dhaka-Metro-Ta-3591).

The injured were immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where fatally injured Shaheed, 35, succumbed to his injuries at noon.



Jamaat-I-Islami Dhaka city unit brought out a procession after the juma prayer yesterday demanding trial of the killers of its leader Abul Kashem. — Star photo

Hasina : better ties

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The opposition leader referred to co-existence of four great religions — Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity — and said this constituted the religious roots of humanist tradition of Bangladesh.

Hasina said the Awami League government had adopted secularism as one of the state principles in pursuance of "our long tradition of mutual religious tolerance and the shared national history," and in full conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"Unfortunately, Bangladesh had gone through a process of communalism under the direct initiatives and patronages of post-75 regimes," she regretted.

Hasina recalled the assassination of country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family, and said an Indemnity Ordinance prohibited trial of the self-confessed murderers.

She described the killing of this nature "a murderous act — a criminality against humanity and an utter violation of human rights and the rule of law." And, she added, "certainly this kind of act can never be indemnified."

Underlining the importance of peace in South Asia, the opposition leader called for co-operation among the states of this region in all spheres of socio-economic activities.

"Today all countries are interdependent. I'm confident that this sub-continent can set an example of regional cooperation," she said.

Mostafiz

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Movement. He expressed his government's sincere desire to work in close co-operation with Bangladesh in the Non-Aligned Movement as both the countries are doing in the UN and other international fora.

Mostafizur Rahman said that the NAM would be immensely benefitted from the experience of China. He said Bangladesh greatly valued China's friendship to forge closer ties in every fields. He also lauded China's help and assistance in economic development of Bangladesh.

Rahman apprised the Chinese Minister of the latest development on the Rohingya Muslim refugee problems highlighting the recent agreements on the repatriation of the refugees to Myanmar.

The Chinese Minister conveyed his Foreign Minister's greetings to Bangladesh Foreign Minister and extended an invitation to him to visit China.

Pakistan Minister for Foreign Affairs Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju called on Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman today. They exchanged views on bilateral, regional and international issues.

The Foreign Minister conveyed his gratitude to the Pakistan government for its support and understanding on the Rohingya refugee issue.

The Pakistan Minister expressed his government's happiness on the signing of the agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar and expressed his hope for early and safe repatriation to their homeland.

Retrial of Milon's killing demanded

The Convenor of Chikitsak Forum Dr. A F M Kalimur Rahman and Member-Secretary Dr. Md. Khalilullah yesterday called for judicial investigation and re-trial of the killing of Dr. Milon immediately, reports BSS.

In a joint statement to the press, the forum leaders expressed their concern at, what they said, failure to detect the real killers of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon.