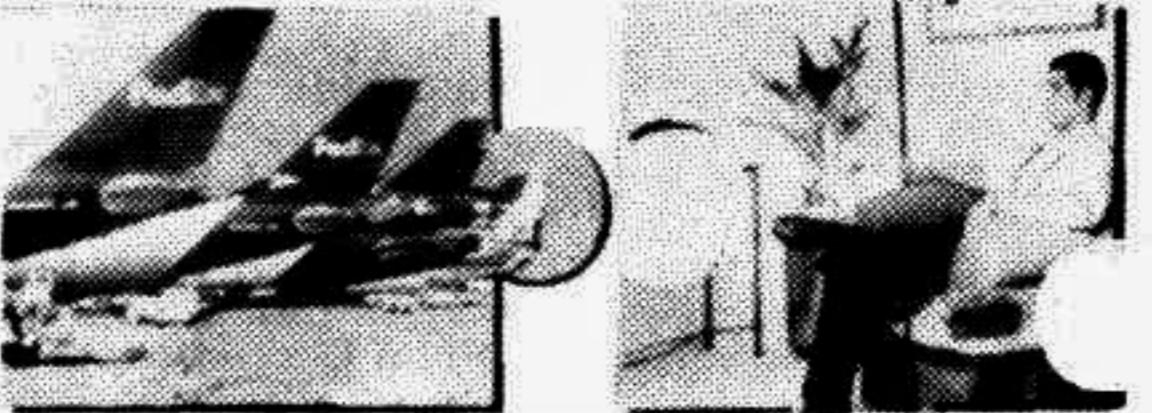
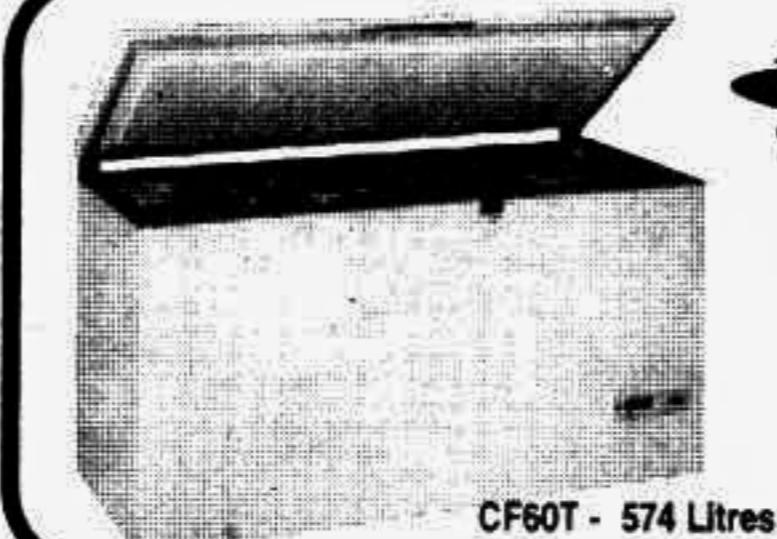


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# Down to Earth

## New Hazards from Questionable Edibles

By A S M Nurunnabi

Adulteration practices are now ubiquitous in the city, as elsewhere. Such practices affect not only foodstuffs and medicines but also every conceivable area of consumption.

The widespread nature of the menace has become a cause for serious alarm among people. The adulteration techniques are also found to be novel all the time and the ingenuity of such methods always keeps changing to avoid detection and effective deterring actions.

Some of the adulteration practices are well-known, such as those adopted for the foodstuffs like milk, edible oil, flour, sugar, etc. There are also instances of cut fruits sold by vendors on city pavements which are treated with colour and saccharine to make them attractive and sweet.

To many, the Zinaria area of Dhaka is considered to be the home of fake and adulterated foodstuffs, besides many other consumer items. It is known, by and large, that there are factories in that area making large-scale production of adulterated vegetable ghee, butter oil and soyabean oil which are all marketed by well-known brand names. There are also small centres for production of adulterated stuffs. Lately there have been some attempts to discourage adulteration by using pilfer-proof containers particularly for edible oils and butter oil.

The main problem seems to be that most of the adulterated products are sold in outlying areas beyond urban limits where it is easy to deceive simple rural people. Another source of adulterated foods is the large number of minor hotels and restaurants serving dubious quality foods to customers under poor sanitary conditions which pose a serious threat to public health.

Lately there was an uproar in India over consumption of adulterated mustard oil which was proved to cause dropsy disease. The agitation against the use of mustard oil adulterated with "Argemone" seeds looking like mustard seeds was so widespread for the serious adverse effects in causing dropsy disease that the government of that country came down hard on the producers of adulterated mustard oil by banning it altogether.

There is apprehension in some quarters that unless similar deterrent action is taken in respect of mustard oil in use in this country, the banned item from India might find its way into our country through surreptitious channels.

The latest factor in this awesome scenario is the reported use of tallow by some confectionery makers in producing shemai, chanachur, patties, biscuits and other goodies, in place of palm oil.

According to those who know, the raw material for tallow is hard fat and is used in the manufacture of candles, grease and washing soap. The deplorable thing is that for the unscrupulous food trader, who couldn't care less for public health, tallow may give him a competitive edge over those who sell lachi shemai fried in butter oil or vanaspati. Because cheap tallow serves just as well in processing flour-based edibles for the masses, and that is precisely what they are reportedly doing in confectionery-making.

This applies not only in the case of use of tallow in food items but also in cases of adulterating practices in respect of other food items including medicines. There should be no illusion about the fact that dangerous health hazards are literally lurking everywhere from the manufacture of adulterated food items to the sale of standard medicines.

Thus we seem to be living with a social scenario with elements ranging from ubiquitous presence of adulteration in many food stuffs and medicines to the high level of air pollution in our city life.

tions and diseases in the human body. This is certainly a serious matter and should be dealt with effectively, that is, measures taken against such adulteration should be punitive enough to deter others from doing the same, as felt by observers.

But the important thing is felt to be the urgent need for consumers to wake up to the serious hazard posed by such malpractice and organise an effective campaign against it which should also cover those who do not have the means to reject substandard edibles.

In this month of Ramandan, specially, food traders may be intent on doing extra brisk business — particularly those who have no scruples in this respect. They use all kinds of colour and condiments, and ingredients to make iftar items attractive but nobody seems to worry about their bonafides.

The driver of a Niva four-wheel-drive car tried to beat the train to a rail crossing in spite of flashing lights signalling the train's imminent arrival, police and railway inspectors said. The train was not derailed, but all seven occupants of the car were killed.

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### Rodrigo takes over as SAARC Secy General today

KATHMANDU, Jan 1: Nihal Rodrigo, a Sri Lankan diplomat, will take over as chief of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) diplomats said today, reports Reuters.

Naem U Hasan, the outgoing secretary general of the seven-nation regional forum, said Rodrigo's three-year mandate as the association's executive head started on January 1. "He will be arriving tomorrow," Hasan said.

SAARC — which groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — was launched in 1985 to promote the economic development of member states.

The secretary-general, based in Kathmandu, rotates alphabetically among members every three years.

### 7 killed as car crashes into train in Russia

MOSCOW, Jan 1: Seven people were killed in central Russia when their car crashed into a speeding train, the Interfax news agency reported today.

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Thus we seem to be living with a social scenario with elements ranging from ubiquitous presence of adulteration in many food stuffs and medicines to the high level of air pollution in our city life.

### Nuisance

From Page 1  
sures, a young girl was assaulted by some unruly youths in front of Gulshan-2 market. Police rescued the girl by spraying ice-cold water from water canister.

Police arrested at least 171 people from different parts of the city on charge of creating nuisance. Of the total, Gulshan police alone arrested 160 from different parts of the posh area and produced them before court.

Jubilant young men in cars, microbuses, jeeps and trucks roared on city streets, playing high-pitched horns and driving their vehicles somewhat roughly. Some vehicles were also damaged by youths. They danced on the roofs of vehicles and chanted "happy New Year". Many youths were seen travelling by rickshaw vans, yelling at others.

The opposition leader reiterated her call for all national and Islamic forces to wage a united movement under the leadership of BNP.

BNP senior vice-chairman Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said an all-out movement would have to be launched to get


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### Multiple use of milled rice, its byproducts

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Bangkok

paddy from farmers throughout the country.

PRG undertakes a variety of activities centring its core business of producing packaged rice for general consumption. Over 90 per cent of it rice is sold in domestic market and the rest in overseas markets.

In Thailand, PRG stands for

a glaring example of how the potential of a rice milling company can be maximised through multipurpose activities extracting profit out of every by-product.

PRG or Patum Rice Mill and

Granary Public Company Limited,

the biggest milling company

in the rice-rich Thailand,

demonstrated well the multi-

faceted use of milled rice and its by-products.

Talking to a team of visiting

journalists from other Asian

countries recently, Managing

Director of PRG Rut Subniran

said the state-run rice mill

bought about one sixth of the

country's paddy output of 20

million tonnes in 1997 and

earned 175 million baht.

Ideally located by the river

Chao Phraya in Patumthani

province, PRG has a daily rice

milling capacity of 1,000

tonnes and bran and it extracts

100

tonnes of bran per day. It has a

storage capacity of 60,000

tonnes of paddy.

Subniran said PRG bought

paddy from brokers who have

their cooperatives to procure

### 20 shops gutted in 2 incidents of fire at Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 1: At least 20 shops were gutted in two incidents of fire in the town last night.

Police and witnesses said, members of two rival groups allegedly torched the shops in Kauina area of the town.

The first incident occurred at 12-15 am following assault of one Rafique by his rivals at about 8 pm. People of his group then set ablaze about 12 shops.

Later, at about 2:45 am the opponents of Rafique set fire to eight other shops in the same area.

Both the groups exploded several bombs during the incidents.

Two people — Shamsul Haq, 45, and Rafiq, 25, were arrested today in connection with the incidents.

Police have been deployed in the area to avert further clash between the two groups.

### Businessmen enforce hartal at Gaibandha

From Page 1

choosing probable candidates for the crucial job. The law ministry is expected to suggest a few names to the Prime Minister, sources said.

The law ministry is already working to list probable candidates. "We are considering some persons who previously held some constitutional posts," the law official said without giving details.

The government took the initiative to create the office of the Ombudsman more than a year ago.

According to the Bangladesh Gazette, "The role of Ombudsman is to exercise such powers and perform such function as parliament may, by law, determine, including the power to investigate any action taken by a Ministry, a public officer of a statutory public authority."

The Ombudsman shall prepare an annual report concerning the discharge of his functions and such report shall be laid before parliament."

rid of the misrule of the present "autocratic" regime.

Party secretary general Abdul Mannan Huq said they won't protest any more or demand release of Sohel and Pintu — "they will be freed through movement."

Begum Zia also asked the leaders of the student front to start movement for freeing its detained president and general secretary as well as other activists.

The opposition leader reiterated her call for all national and Islamic forces to wage a united movement under the leadership of BNP.

Friends and relatives exchanged New Year greetings and many organised gatherings to mark the occasion. People thronged flower shops to buy flowers for their nearest ones.

The New Year brought cheers to many, but thousands of poor people were in shivering cold, sleeping on footpaths, road islands and road dividers without warm cloths.

UNB adds: Three youths were bomb-injured at Banani during the celebration.

He called upon all to remain united forgetting all sorts of past misunderstanding.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed said people wanted a change and were prepared to launch movement against the misrule of the Awami League government.

Munirul Huq Chowdhury questioned who advised the Jatiya Party to support Awami League in forming government.

The JP, he said, launched movement with the demand for caretaker government and resigned from Parliament at the directive of Ershad.

He said Jatiya Party's remarks about red building, Ershad said if the party fails to march forward with its own politics and characteristics, then its entity will be at stake.

Referring to the Prime Minister's remarks about red building, Ershad said: "Jatiya Party is neither pro-Awami League nor pro-BNP.... Jatiya Party is Jatiya Party and it will have to go ahead with its principles and ideology. If the party fails to march forward with its own politics and characteristics, then its entity will be at stake."

Friends and relatives exchanged New Year greetings and many organised gatherings to mark the occasion. People thronged flower shops to buy flowers for their nearest ones.

The clash erupted when a BNP procession, brought out as part of its nationwide demonstration programme, came face to face with an Awami League procession, opposing the programme.

They also arranged mini-concerts to welcome the New Year 1999.

At Rajshahi University, male and female students came out of their halls and celebrated the New Year with much enthusiasm. As the clock struck 12 midnight, they started fire works and dancing to welcome the New Year.

Youths took out a procession in Faridpur town after midnight and played drums and musical instruments to celebrate the New Year.

They also arranged mini-concerts to welcome the New Year 1999.

On the state of economy, 51.3 per cent think the standard of living has gone down, around 68.1 per cent think trade and business activities have decreased while 94.3 per cent say prices have gone up. Besides 59.3 per cent say the real income has gone down and 28.4 per cent think it is the same as before.

About law and order, 70.2 per cent say incidents of rape have increased. Around 59.5 per cent think police are involved in many of the crimes, 47.9 per cent say killings in the city increased, 53.6 per cent, 61.8 per cent, and 78.2 per cent respectively say abuse of women, road accidents and traffic jam have increased in the city.

Some 40.6 per cent of the respondents said terrorism increased and 39 per cent believed it declined.

Asked to name three important but less addressed issues in the year, 65.1 per cent referred to power supply, 41.8 per cent mentioned terrorism in educational institutions and 31.2 per cent unemployment.

For Ainun Nishat and Dr AK Enamul Haque supervised the opinion poll.

As regards the five worst