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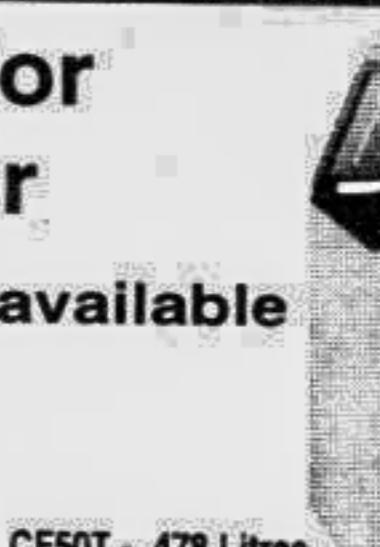
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Down to Earth

Risks from sub-standard sweetmeats & ice creams

By A S M Nurunnabi

In our social ethos, sweetmeats occupy an important place. For any joyous occasion, such as marriage, preliminary formalities before marriage, courtesy visits to intimate relatives, good results in examination, in short, for observance of any auspicious occasion, distribution of sweetmeats forms an essential part of the ethos, so much so that it is constitutes as an integral component of Bengali culture. The important role that it plays in our social relationships is reflected in the large number of sweetmeat shops spread all over the city and beyond.

The question that has lately come to the fore in connection with our overwhelming preference for sweetmeats is: are they really free from any kind of adulteration? The real state of affairs in this context is said to be far from the truth. It is widely felt that the various kinds of sweetmeats bearing charming and exotic names sold through numerous chains of retail outlets have questionable qualities. Take for instance, some popular items like sweet curds and 'rosomalai'. Except for a couple of shops where these items are said to be genuine, all other retailing outlets, are widely believed to be subject to some kind of adulteration in these items. Moreover, most people are fond of sweets made in some well-known places outside the city. Another example may be cited: What is popularly favoured as 'chum chum' of Porabari is not actually made in Tangail. It is locally made and passed off as Porabari's 'chum chum'.

The threat of adulteration of sweets arises from another source. Inferior quality of powdered milk smuggled from outside is said to be the main element of adulteration. Those who are aware of the inside story allege that, besides such sub-standard milk powder,

other ingredients for making various kinds of sweets, such as flour, sugar, saccharine, potato, daida, some kind of chemical powder undergo adulteration of some kind or other.

It is alleged that a greater degree of deception is practiced with regard to sweet curd. Sweet curds from Bogra are hot favourites with many. But it is said that what is passed off as Bogra's sweet curd is actually made in Dinajpur locally.

According to an experienced doctor of a medical college, these adulterated milk products pose serious health hazards for the consumers, particularly if such products are made with milk whose quality period has already expired. They may cause serious ailments in the digestive system including diarrhoea.

It is the duty of the health authority in the Dhaka City Corporation to carry out regular checks on the quality of the sweetmeats sold at the numerous sweetmeat shops. But so far, we have little evidence of monitoring activity of the concerned authority in this behalf.

Similar is the case with ice-cream. A large number of factories are said to be producing a huge quantity of ice-cream. Except for a few well-known brands, it is alleged that they are not complying with the hygienic standards nor are they using quality ingredients for producing ice cream. Harmful substances like non-food grade dyes are allegedly added to the ice cream consumed mostly by children.

The issue can hardly be dismissed lightly because adulteration and production of such-standard foodstuff is now a major health concern in this country.

The dishonest elements are innovative enough to find new ways of cutting costs through adulterating various types of foods. Production of low-quality



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placing wreath at the mazar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara yesterday.

—PID photo

7 Maoists killed in clash with police in Nepal

KATHMANDU, July 2: At least seven Maoist insurgents were killed in two separate clashes with police. Arms and ammunition left by the fleeing insurgents also were seized, police said today. reports AFP.

Six insurgents hiding in the jungle were killed on the spot when they clashed with police in Kukustara in Jajarkot district, 390 kilometres (244 miles) northwest of Kathmandu, Tuesday. Superintendent Sahabir Thapa said.

Four Maoist insurgents were injured by bullets and fled, a home ministry source said.

A Maoist insurgent was also killed late Wednesday in Kavrepalanchowk district, 60 kilometres (36 miles) east of Kathmandu, when police opened fire on 150 Maoists attempting to burn down the police post, the sources said.

A 60-member strong police squad left for the remote village Thursday for investigation.

The Maoist rebels have been seeking for the past three years to overturn the constitutional monarchy and replace it with a people's republic. Clashes with police have left more than 800 people dead.

Planned launch strike suspended

Bangladesh Passenger Launch Owners' Unity Council yesterday suspended its indefinite strike programme, scheduled to begin tomorrow, after fruitful talks with Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria in the evening, a press release of the council said here last night.

MQM activist shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, July 2: Unidentified gunmen today shot dead a political activist from an influential ethnic party in Pakistan's port city of Karachi, police said, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old Waqar Ahmed, who belonged to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), was found dead in the city's southern Delhi Colony neighbourhood, city police chief Farooq Amin Qureshi said.

He said the victim was wanted for questioning over several criminal cases including murders.

Qureshi said an investigation was under way but he added that he could have been killed over a political row.

An MQM leader, Waseem Akhter, said his party suspected Ahmed was killed by police.

Akhter said 10 MQM workers had been killed in police custody since the imposition of direct federal rule in October last year in southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

Agril loans

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crore and the bank's recovery position has already crossed Tk 1000 crore, the source claimed.

When attention was drawn to the letter sent by the cabinet division, one high official of BKB said that the division probably was not aware about the actual situation in the banking sector.

The loan recovery position of the BKB would be disclosed at a press conference very soon, the official told the Daily Star.

Following the devastating flood in the country last year, the government fixed a target of Tk 2370 crore of agricultural loans during fiscal '98-99.

The target for disbursement of agri-loans for other banks and financial agencies this year are: Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank-Tk 300 crore; Janata Bank-Tk 250 crore; Agrani Bank-Tk 300 crore; Rupali Bank-Tk 23 crore; Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB)-Tk 495 crore and Bangladesh Shamoboy (Cooperative) Bank Limited-Tk 15 crore.

Murder of hotel boy: One held

By Staff Correspondent

One person was arrested yesterday in connection with the murder of 12-year-old hotel boy Amir Hossain in the city's Merul Badda area on Thursdays.

Local people caught the man named Mannan and handed him over to Badda police.

Meanwhile, the body of Amir was handed over to his family members after autopsy at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Policemen said yesterday the boy was killed in firing by members of a gang-Rohice group. They started firing when they failed to find members of a rival gang-Jainal group-near the hotel where Amir worked. The hotel belongs to a relative of Jainal.

Armed members of the two gangs have been engaged in various criminal activities like drug trading and extortion and clashed with each other, creating panic in the area, local people said.

The Maoist rebels have been seeking for the past three years to overturn the constitutional monarchy and replace it with a people's republic. Clashes with police have left more than 800 people dead.

Prisoner

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Some policemen of thana informed this correspondent that the accused was mercilessly tortured by the IO Wednesday night. Deep marks of injuries were also found in his head, neck and hands during autopsy today.

A first class magistrate has prepared an inquest report in which there is no mention of suicide by the prisoner.

The FIR lodged by OC on April 25 stated that Rabeya was gangraped and then killed in the house of Abdul Malek, a truck driver. Police arrested Malek, his wife Jahamina and daughter Jesmin on April 26, but Matin escaped.

Lawyers who pleaded for and against the accused during remand prayer alleged that Matin was tortured to death. But the AC (north) and OC of Daulatpur thana have flatly denied the charge terming it a suicide.

Khaleda

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Complaints against inclusion of fake voters and manipulating ID cards are coming in to us from various wards of Dhaka City Corporation and other places of the country," she said.

Khaleda was addressing its front organisations from Bagherhat at her 29 Mintu Road official residence.

Stressing the importance of strengthening the organisation for both movement and elections, the BNP chief asked her party activists to make the party strong across the country at the grassroots level, sinking differences.

The opposition leader said it was necessary to work out the strategy for elections alongside strengthening the organisational base.

"Techniques have to be evolved so that Awami League cannot capture polling centres, commit 'vote da'coity' and change election results," she said.

The former Prime Minister also instructed her partymen to ensure security in polling centres to enable the voters to exercise their right to franchise freely.

Besides, she said, after vote counting copies of result sheet of each polling centre, signed and sealed by respective presiding officer, should be preserved by party activists.

BCL leader

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Khulna Medical College Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, the hospital authorities today decided to shift him to Dhaka. He died on his way.

Police said Chhoton's family tried to bury the body without informing the police. But they recovered the body today and sent it to hospital for autopsy.

Local people said that Chhoton's family did not inform the police as the miscreants threatened to kill them. No case was filed in this regard till this evening.

Ehud, Arafat agree to meet soon

JERUSALEM, July 2: Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak telephoned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat today, their first talk since just after Barak was elected six weeks ago, said officials from both sides, reports AP.

Nabil Aburdeineh, a top adviser to Arafat, told The Associated Press that the two leaders agreed to meet soon after Barak's government takes office next week. He said they agreed to continue contacts "to move the peace process forward."

David Ziso, Barak's spokesman, confirmed that the two talked on the telephone but did not characterize the conversation in any way.

The two had not talked since Arafat called Barak six weeks ago to congratulate him on his May 17 election win. In the meantime, Barak has been criticized by Palestinians for not making contact with Arafat again.

Barak aides said it would be inappropriate for him to have

Flood

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Kumarkhal thanas. Our Jamalpur Correspondent reports: Flood situation in the district took a serious turn as Jamuna and Brahmaputra swelled further.

A large portion of Tarakandi-Bhupur flood protection embankment has been washed away by flood waters. Road communication between Tarakandi and Jamuna Fertiliser Factory has been snapped.

Incessant rain and onrush of waters from hills across the border have also inundated the low-lying areas in other parts of the district.

UNB adds: Flood situation in the district deteriorated further yesterday inundating low-lying areas and leaving some local people marooned.

Water levels in the rivers Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dhara and Dukdum are rising, although they are still flowing below danger marks.

Low-lying areas in Sadar, Mithapukur, Gangachara, Kauhna, Pirkanj, Badarganj and Pircgacha thanas have been flooded due to the incessant rain.

Tanbazar

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Babul, who was arrested Thursday in connection with the murder, was placed on a three-day remand today.

Talking to this correspondent in the brothel today, the sex workers demanded security and called for an end to violence against them.

"Why are they killing us and looting whatever we have?" asked a sex worker.

"Stop atrocity against us. We are living a wretched life here, cursed by the society," said another sex worker said reacting to the threat of their eviction from the brothel.

Earlier, Mohammad Nasim laid the foundation stones of the proposed Khulna Police Hospital and a six-storey police barracks at Khulna Police Lines.

KU teachers

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fuelled their agitation.

Students of the university are not in favour of naming the hall after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina or her mother, as desired by the Vice Chancellor and the honorary treasurer.

The VC was barred from entering his office on Wednesday and Thursday as the agitating students took "control of the campus" in presence of BDR and riot police, the sources said.

The VC could not be contacted today for his comment.

Breakthrough

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the hope that India would realize the serious consequences of a wider conflict and avoid this perilous course in the interest of peace and stability in the region," the DCC statement.

It said Pakistan did not want war, "but if war was imposed, Pakistan was fully capable of defending every inch of its territory".

Outlaws

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geared up to eliminate the terrorists," he said.

The government has already constituted a committee to rehabilitate those who have surrendered so far after the examination of cases and allegations against them, Nasim said.

The extremists who surrendered today included those from Khulna and Bagerhat districts including Khulna metropolitan area.

Earlier, Mohammad Nasim laid the foundation stones of the proposed Khulna Police Hospital and a six-storey police barracks at Khulna Police Lines.

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