

Airline safeguards staff against SARS

Singapore Airlines (SIA) has imposed strict measures in its Dhaka offices to protect employees against the dreaded disease



While many airport staff don masks, SIA have imposed much stricter measures on its workers.

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Simply hearing the word "SARS" (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) is enough to give you a

chill these days. Though there is a fair possibility for Bangladesh to become SARS-infected through its air and land ports, it has not had to confront the calamity as yet.

However, the Asian virus has

erely affected the working environment of some of the city's workers. They are the employees of Singapore Airlines (SIA) in Dhaka. The airline has taken the toughest measures of all in its

offices around the world, and Bangladesh is no exception. SIA's head offices, situated on the seventh and twelfth floors of "Gulshan Tower," as well as its airport office are the only workplaces in the city to impose such drastic measures.

Since SARS is mainly spread through droplets, produced by coughs or sneezes, and close contact with an infected person, the airlines has posed strict restrictions on staff. They are classified into four groups: Red, Yellow, Blue and Green, worn on identity cards. The members of one group are not permitted to meet others. Even the *peons* of the seventh floor are not allowed to meet *peons* working on the twelfth floor.

"More than fifteen days has passed since we met our colleagues upstairs," complained one of the staff on the seventh floor. They are communicating through telephone and e-mail, headed.

Not only the mixing of groups is prohibited -- the exchange of goods between different departments is also forbidden. Masks have been brought to the office and ready for use when needed. Each staff is also given a thermometer. It is mandatory for them to check their body temperature before entering and leaving the office, and to record it

in a personal logbook. Even the office microbus is being washed with germicide after each ride.

However, Singapore Airlines recently noted that there was less chance of spreading SARS in the country as no new cases were found in Singapore since April 26. The Center for Disease Control in the US also withdrew their travel advisory regarding SARS in Singapore.

"Still, we are ready to confront any adverse situation," said S.M. Rezaul Haque Shiraji, Passenger Sales Executive of SIA. "We have even divided the staff of each department between two floors, so that if one group falls ill, there is always a back-up service," he added.

Singapore Airlines not only took preventive measures for itself but also wanted to create awareness among the public. The company disseminated prevention and management methods for SARS among its agents through fax, e-mail and by distributing leaflets. It also arranged a seminar in its home country with doctors from Mount Elizabeth Hospital, Singapore.

Despite the strict measures, the airline says the message they want to spread is that with proper management and control, there is no need to panic

Working women left out

Young, single women face discrimination from landlords who refuse to rent houses to them

CITY CORRESPONDENT

It was her first day at the new job but Rani wasn't feeling excited. As a matter of fact the 24-year-old was far from it as a cloud of uncertainty hovered over her.

"I had received a notice from the authorities at the Bangladesh-Kuwait Motree Hall to vacate my seat immediately as I had already completed my Masters. So, amidst the thrill of starting a career, I couldn't help but get worried because I suddenly realised that I didn't have a place to spend the night," said Rani.

As she began a frantic search for a house or suitable accommodation, Rani, who didn't have relatives or friends in Dhaka with whom she could stay, gained first hand experience of the plight women like her have to endure in the city.

Landlords just weren't prepared or willing to rent their houses to a single woman and although there were thousands of mess houses for the males, Rani couldn't find a single such facility for females.

Finally, she managed to arrange staying as a sub-tenant at a house.

Sometime later, she came to know from a colleague about some vacant seats at the government-run women's hostel in Nilkhet.

"It usually takes 5-6 months to have a seat allotted at the hostel. But I managed to get one within a month as an 'influential' person lobbied on my behalf. Hundreds of others are not as lucky," admitted Rani.

The hostel follows some strict rules. Boarders must be working-women and aged between 18-56. A boarder can stay at the hostel for four years at a stretch. The hostel currently accommodates 482 women.

Conditions inside the hostel leaves a lot to be desired but the boarders have to settle for that because of the lack of alternatives and financial constraints.

"It's terrible. Toilets are always clogged with waste, the bathrooms are dirty and the food is also not good. To make matters worse, the water is not clean. We also do not have any entertainment facilities,

there's no cable connection even.

"We stay here only because we have nowhere else to go. There are many private hostels for women in Dhaka but those are much too expensive," said a boarder requesting anonymity.

The lack of minimum independence also bugs the women.

"There are too many harsh rules. To stay in this hostel we have to sacrifice our freedom. A boarder must return to the hostel by 9pm unless otherwise permitted because there's a roll call at 9 everyday.

"We are not allowed to bring any personal device like televisions, VCR/VCPs, cassette players, electric irons etc," said another boarder.

In an apparent change of heart, the authorities recently arranged a general meeting with the boarders. They assured the women that effective steps would be taken to solve various problems of they were facing. It remains to be seen if that was a serious pledge.

Catering for the kitchen market customer

CITY CORRESPONDENT

It is a popular saying that, while others eat to live, Bengalis live to eat. If you are a woman in Bangladesh, then the business of eating is probably your concern. But in many homes, the business of *bazar* is left to the men. While many basic kitchen groceries can be bought from hawkers that go door to door in your neighbourhood, for the real thing you have to brave the

city's kitchen markets and this is not always easy or convenient for women.

According to Dhaka City Corporation, there are only 14 legal kitchen markets in Dhaka, while the number of illegal kitchen markets is simply unknown.

A government kitchen market named Banalata Kitchen Market in New Market is a popular one in its field. "It was built in 1986," said the president of Banalata Kitchen Mar-

ket Union, Md. Liakat Khan. "There are 693 shops, but about 100 shops are closed. The situation of this market is not good now. There are so many problems here such as pollution, illegal shops on the roadside. In spite of telling the municipality these problems, they could not take any effective step to solve our problems."

Though there are some problems in Banalata, the products are of good quality. "You get fresh vegetables, fish

and meat here which you don't always get in other markets. And if you want to buy 1000 chickens together you can depend on this market," said a buyer named Ms. Hosnara Begum.

"In particular, the environment of this market is more suitable for women than other kitchen markets. We are always coming to New Market," she added.

Some people point out that the price is comparatively higher in New Market.

Iskandar Mia, also of Banalata Kitchen Market, said, "It's true that the price is high. But if you want to get fresh and organic foods then you should consider that you have to pay a little bit more."

In Palashi Kitchen Market, there are about 50 shops. The prices are generally lower in Palashi than in New Market.

"Usually I come here for kitchen foods because it is close for me," said Ms. Mustafa, a buyer at Palashi. "But I don't always get fresh food in Palashi."

Other kitchen markets in Dhaka include Hatirpul, Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur, Mohakhali, Tati Bazar. But one of the main problems is there is very little organisation in these markets.



Chickens await their fate in one of the cities many kitchen markets.

Children helping children

We wanted to do something for war-affected Iraqi infants. We came to know their situation through the media and we felt like taking some action. We urge all kinds of people to participate.



One of the many images which has prompted the Stretch Your Arms movement.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The worst tragedy of war is the suffering of children. But horrified as we were when confronted with images of wounded children during the Iraq war, many of us felt powerless to help.

In fact it was a group of Bangladeshi children who themselves decided to help the children of Iraq. The children are young journalists who came together recently to organise a movement called 'Stretch Your Arms'.

"We wanted to do something for war-affected Iraqi infants," said Umama Nauruj Ittela, one of

the coordinators of the movement. "We came to know their situation through the media and we felt like taking some action. We urge all kinds of people to participate."

Without any government in post-war Iraq, many Iraqi children have died from a lack of medical facilities.

Stretch Your Arms has therefore opened an account (Sonali Bank, Green Road Branch, Account No. 1028300) for anyone to contribute. "We also opened a website, www.stretchyourarms.com," said Ittela.

"We want mass participation.

If every person in Bangladesh gives just one taka we would have a total of Taka 14 crores!"

A senior journalist Santush Gupta said, "We should appreciate the initiative of these young people. It is our responsibility to help them."

Another coordinator Fahmida Chaiti explained, "First, we decided to help the Iraqi children through our breakfast money. But we felt that it was impossible to really help with just this money. So, we communicated with a non-government organization, Theatre Centre for Social Development (TCSD). They assured us their support."

Stretch Your Arms' aim is to collect funds and then send the money to Iraq with the help of the prime minister.

"We will collect funds from students of schools and colleges across the country. But we request all people to be involved. We will continue the movement in the future to help the children of our country," said Chaiti.

Everyone knows that the third world country's children need help. But some young and enterprising journalists proved that this idea can be turned around. They also want to give something to others.

crisis telephone numbers, cabs & train timing

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart
National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD),
- 9130800, 9122560-59

Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital
Burn Unit-8626812-6

Cancer
National Cancer Institute-
80149148826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University-8612550-4,
861455-9

Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,
8616641-50

Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital- 9119119,
8116061-62
Azimpur Mother & Child Health
Training Institute- 8624827,
8624980

Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794,
9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,
8114807

Dental

Dental College 9002035

Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangu)
Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-6
Holy Family Hospital-
83111731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital-
8612550
-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College &
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,
Shamara Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800,
9122560-69
Saimullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDRB)- 8811751-60
Infection Disease (ID) Hospital
602429, 601835,
T.B. Hospital 608031-34,
600211-5,
Azimpur Maternity Hospital
503329,
Sromojibi Hospital 240066-69,
Monowra Hospital 8319802,
8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulance Service-

Fire Service & Civil Defence
Ambulance 9555555, 9556666-7,
9567734, Fire Services Siddique

Bazar (HQ) 9556667,
Mohammadpur 9112078, Tejgaon
605272, Khilgaon 7218329,
Lalbagh 505778, Mirpur 9001055,
Cantonment 605168, Tongi
9801070, Palassey 509670,
Demra 7400111, Postagola
7410771, Narayanganj 9715644,
Sadarghat 7119759,
Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269,
9001055, Mirpur TVG Complex
9001189, Narayanganj Port
9715365,
Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531,
Mondalpara (N. Ganj River)
9712015, N. Gan Bander 9712095,
Dhaka EPZ (Savar)
7701444, Markajul Al Islami
9127867, Anjuman e-Mafidul
Islam 324067, 239808, 248166,
Holy Family Hospital 8311721-5.

Ambulances For

Dead Body
Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,
324069.

UTILITY

Electricity

Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-5,
9560170-9
Electricity Complex (DESA)- 8616737-
43, 8617626
DESCO- 8123138-40
Complaints (Rural Electrification
Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8

Gas

Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)-
9563667-8
Kawrnabazar-8112135-42
Mirpur- 8014132-3
Mohammadpur- 9117215, 9113903
Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922,
8824993
Motijheel-9667612

WASA

WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31
Mirpur- 9000519
Mohammadpur- 8120192
Fakirapool-9115343
Asad Gate- 8917492
Uttara- 9559142,
Segunbagicha- 7316348
Pagla- 8113900-39

Fire Services

Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667
Mohammadpur- 9112078
Khilgaon- 7218329
Mirpur- 9001055
Tongi- 9801070
Demra-7400111
Postagola- 7410771
Sadarghat- 7119759
Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055
Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Comfort 881710-4
Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477,
0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and
8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and

Capital

9352847
Orion 8130485
Kooli 0171540074
Black Cab
Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364575
Sajan 018226036
Anudip -- 8125285 and
8127611

Cab One

7113282-3
Palki 0171052500
Cab I 7113282
Jatri 0171540074
Nipun 9572277
R-Cab 8914782
Star Cab 9571919
Shihab 018202477 &
018228675
KGN 8620011

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm

Mahanagar Prabhati

Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

Mahanagar Godhuli

Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

Turna

Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am

Parabat Express

Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm

Joyantika Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm

Upaban Express

Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

Tista Express

Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

Ekata Express

Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am

Upakul Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 9-11 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am

Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm

Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm

Reaches Bahadurabad at 6-40 am

Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm

Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-55

Reaches Noakhali at 1-35 pm

Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

DO YOU KNOW
Fire services provide cheap, fast and efficient ambulance service too?