

Stringent rules planned to stop adulteration

Pure Food Ordinance 1959 to be upgraded

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The health ministry has taken an initiative to upgrade the Pure Food Ordinance 1959 to the Pure Food Act likely to be passed in parliament by December to cope with increasing adulteration.

"The ordinance doesn't cover a slew of new products such as bottled water and junk food developed since 1959. The products remain beyond the ordinance-based definition of food and adulteration," a health ministry official said.

He described ripening fruits and seasoning vegetables with

chemicals as a burning problem facing consumers.

A committee headed by the health ministry in association with local government, agriculture, commerce, industries, home and environment and forest ministries will form a national food safety council to monitor the law, quality of food, nutrition, technical quality of products and manpower development.

The authorities also plan to enhance the power of the Food Court that cannot deal with many cases because of limited definition of food and adulteration, another health ministry official said.

The fine and punishment -- suggested by the 1959 ordinance -- are likely to increase to Tk 50,000 from Tk 200-800 or six months to one year in jail from three to six months or both for the first timers.

The authorities proposed a fine of up to Tk 2 lakh or a three-year jail sentence and attaching everything of the accused for a repeat of crime -- the punishment likely to apply to low-quality food producers and sellers as well.

A Tk 10,000 to Tk 50,000 fine or six months to one year in jail has been proposed for crimes like selling meat of sick or dead animals, unhygienic foods,

unregistered business and fake labelling, advertising and warranty.

An inter-ministerial meeting on January 14 decided that the ministries should send their feedback on the proposed revision of the ordinance by February 14. But only one ministry has so far sent feedback, an official said.

"The work for people's interest rarely gets going. We have long been trying to have the Consumer Protection Bill passed in parliament, but the government doesn't seem interested in it," said Quazi Faruque of the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh.



A moment of conversation...

Silver-tongued shopkeepers

SILVERINE SHRIKANTHAN

"Madam, ada aluth bonchi theyenawa" -- a voice sounded with a partly familiar, partly strange accent as I entered the Gulshan 1 kitchen market as is locally called. The vendor was trying to tell someone that fresh beans were for sale.

I looked around wondering if there was any Sri Lankan greengrocer in the marketplace. No-one familiar. The man from the stall was addressing me. His guess caught me by surprise and more so when he spoke to me in Sinhala, the language of the majority Sinhalese.

How do you know the language? I queried. "I have had so many Sri Lankan customers over the years. I picked up a few words at every given chance," Siraj smiled.

Is Sinhala the only other language you speak apart from Bangla? "Oh no, I can speak and understand some other languages too. Korean, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Japanese and Filipino, he listed with enthusiasm as someone was finally interested in his language skills. "And English, of course," he did

not fail to add.

"I can count in these languages too." He attends to all I wanted and made the calculations and said, "Taka Panseya Vissai" (meaning Tk 520).

It did not surprise me when Soyung, a Korean woman, walked up to the next vegetable stall and asked for *pechu* (Chinese cabbage). Akbar, the stall owner, asked the woman smilingly if she was preparing *kimchee* (a Korean delicacy made of seasoned and preserved Chinese cabbage). He did not hesitate to ask her if she did not need *yangpa* (onions).

A walk around the marketplace will tell how many others like Siraj can speak many languages, so can fish sellers. You would be amazed. They know the names of different types of fish in different languages.

What made you learn all these languages, I asked another vendor, Khaled. "It was fun to pick up pieces here and there. And with constant overhearing of conversations of foreigners, I was able to put sentences together and get into a dialogue with my customers," he said.

Most foreigners who come to the market are surprised to hear locals

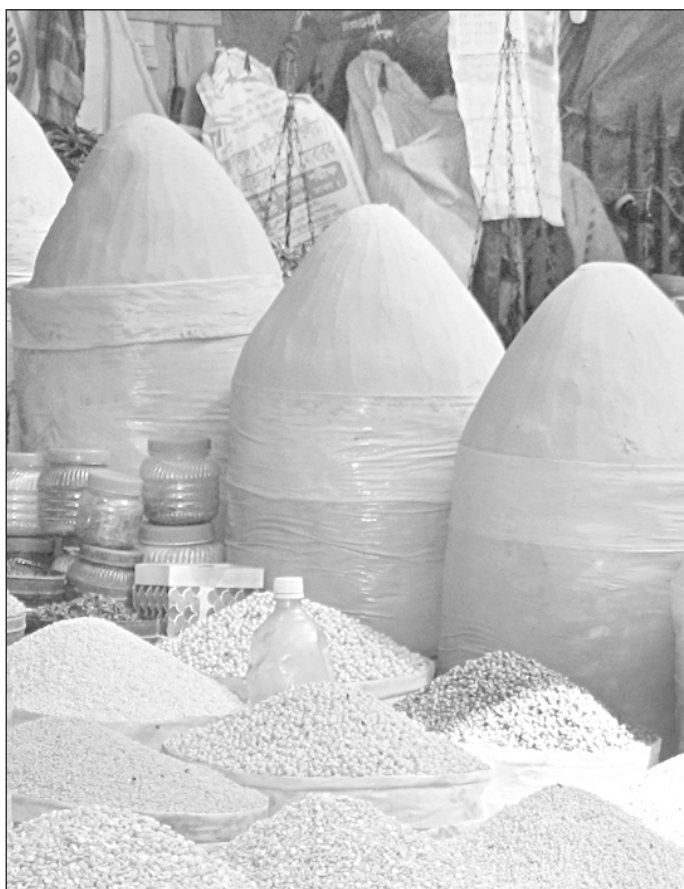
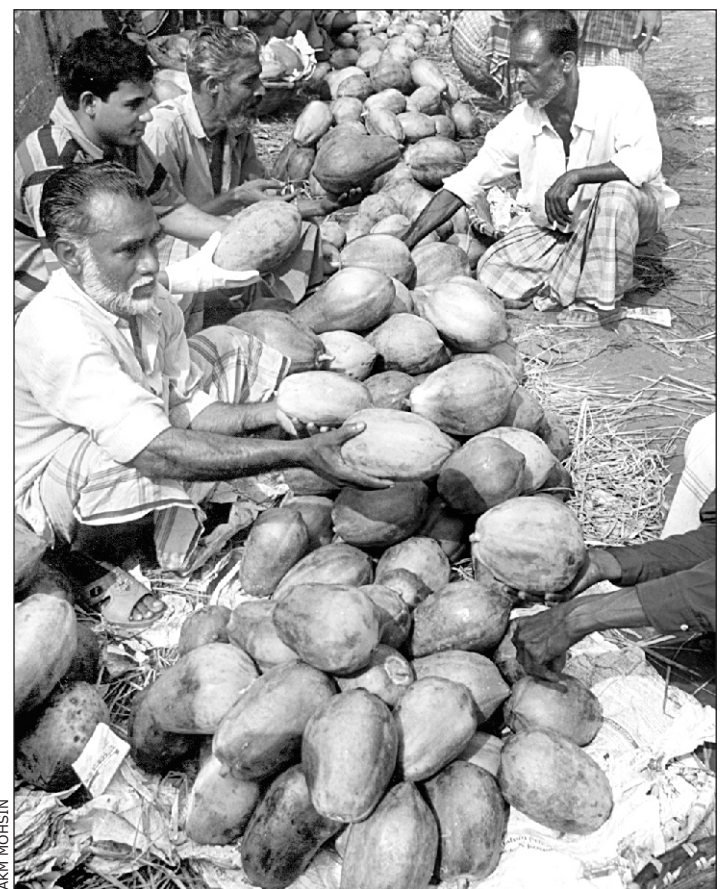
speak their tongue. In a way, says Khaled, it is helpful to newcomers to Bangladesh as most foreigners find it rather difficult to cope with Bangla immediately after they arrive.

I asked a Filipino in English how she felt about the Bangalees speaking her language. She did not understand what I said. Into the conversation stepped Siraj and translated my question in Filipino. As a newcomer to Bangladesh, the woman felt good that she faced no difficulty communicating with the sellers, she replied.

The 1952 Language Movement is a milestone in the history of Bangladesh. We salute the martyrs and those involved in the successful movement. The world has acclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

By the same token, should we not also acknowledge these proud Bangalee speakers who have had no formal education, yet taken the time and made the effort to learn to speak some other languages close to accuracy?

They are great themselves -- they possess one mother tongue but speak many languages.



From fruits to spices, nothing is safe in the hands of dishonest traders

Women becoming more vulnerable to HIV: Experts

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Women are more vulnerable to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection than their male counterparts, speakers told a discussion on AIDS risks.

Although only 51 cases (14.20 per cent) among 363 of HIV infection detected in Bangladesh up to December 2003 were female while 308 cases (85.79 per cent) male, Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of virology

department of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said women are at increasing risk.

"The study showed low numbers because infected women from remote areas were not included in the report," he explained in his presentation on "Risk of AIDS in Bangladesh: Women's Health Perspective" organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in Dhaka last week.

Women get infected by men three to ten times more than

the other way round, the presentation says.

Prof Islam said biological and social factors pose more risk of infection to women. Women are particularly vulnerable to heterosexual transmission of HIV due to substantial exposure of mucus to seminal fluids as surface area of the vagina is larger.

This biological fact amplifies the risk of HIV transmission when coupled with the high prevalence of non-consensual sex, sex without condom use,

and the high-risk behaviours of their partners.

He said in most cases men who have sexual intercourse with prostitutes, promote the infection by transmitting the virus to their social partners or wives.

"At least 1 lakh female sex workers exist in the country each of whom on an average has physical contact with five men a day," Prof Islam said. "So, in a way 5 lakh women are exposed to the risk of HIV," he added.

The speakers mentioned some of the social factors that leave women exposed to the infection. They termed economic dependence of women on men as a main reason for HIV infection as a woman cannot make her own decisions.

"Even if a woman knows her husband is infected, she cannot refuse sexual intercourse with her husband," said Dr Rownak Zahan of Columbia University. The speakers also added that women are brought up in such a way that they become psy-

chologically impaired to fight such situation.

Women are ignorant of the virus, and illiteracy exacerbates this lack of information. Many have no jobs and are impoverished, and many are simply superstitious. Overall health quality, such as malnutrition, affects vulnerability.

The speakers said HIV experts still term Bangladesh as having "low prevalence but a high risk factor" as a very high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and respiratory

tract infections, indicate the country's increased susceptibility to HIV/AIDS. Women trafficked to HIV high prevalent countries like India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Middle East and Gulf countries contract the virus as most of them are forced to become commercial sex workers.

Apart from sexual intercourse, blood transfusion, dentistry, repeated use of syringes and other unsterilised medical equipment can transfer the virus, the speakers said.

However, Prof. Islam said in 70 to 85 per cent cases, HIV spreads through sexual intercourse. They mentioned the use of condoms and proper treatment of sexually transmitted diseases will help to ease the plague.

Dr Hamida Akter Begum, Dr Halida Hanum Khandaker, Dr Laila Arzomand Banu, Ayesha Khanam and Hena Das also took part in the discussion.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

Dolphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundaran Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751
World Runner Express Ltd. 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

LIBRARY & INFO-

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drak Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

OUTING

Museum and Zoo
National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday 3 pm - 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am - 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am - 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoil	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahala
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard - Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan