

# Toxic chemicals used in foods put public health at risk

## Govt mulls setting up a single authority to monitor food and drugs

TAWFIQUE ALI

Toxic chemicals used in food items cause severe damage to vital human organs such as liver, kidney, lungs and heart, often resulting in cancer, according to food scientists.

Consumption of such chemicals used as food colour, flavour, preservative, fruit ripener and sweetener leads to liver cirrhosis, kidney disease, paralysis, diabetes, anaemia and heart disease, they said, adding that even the approved chemicals, if consumed beyond the permitted level, are also equally harmful.

"If taken regularly, any chemical agent or synthetic substance act as a slow poison, damaging liver, kidney, lung, heart and brain in the long run," said Prof Harun Yusuf of biochemistry and molecular biology department at Dhaka University.

Chemical colours such as Orange-II, Auramine, Rhodamine B, Blue VRS, Malachite green, Sudan-III and Congo red that are used to tinge food items cause liver and kidney disorders, said Prof Shams-Ud-Din, head of food technology and rural industry department at Bangladesh Agriculture University.

Malachite green causes tumour in lungs, breast, uterus, liver and skin disease, he added.

Congo red causes disease in brain, kidney and eyes while Auramine, Rhodamine B and Blue VRS are carcinogenic to humans, he said. Amaranth may also cause malignant tumour. Most of these colours are either textile or leather dyes.

These chemicals are applied to

tint sweetmeat, ice-cream, cake, biscuit, candy, soft drinks, juice, rice and some vegetables -- Lalshak, Patal, potato -- to make them attractive, said Prof Shams.

"Constant consumption of these chemical agents over the past two decades have resulted in today's wide prevalence of liver, heart and kidney diseases," said Prof ABM Faroque, chairman of pharmaceutical technology department, Dhaka University.

"Children are the worst sufferers as their immature organs are more vulnerable," he said. "All parents must think twice before offering their children any readymade food, including so-called fast food and Chinese food, confectionery and bakery items and artificial drinks."

Unscrupulous traders have been using chemicals like calcium carbide, ethylene, carbon dioxide, acetylene gas and hormone like ethrel to ripen fruits such as mango, banana, apple, papaya, pineapple, watermelon and tomato.

Benzoic acid, sodium benzoate, sulphur dioxide and calcium propionate are being used as preservatives, which increase asthma, allergy and migraine.

"If pregnant women take these chemicals, they will have deadly impact on their babies," said Prof Shams.

Formalin, a chemical used to preserve dead bodies in laboratories and museums, is applied in milk and fish, he said, adding that it is highly dangerous to human health.

"Formalin may paralyse the nerve system of a human body,"

said Prof Golam Mowlah, director of the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of Dhaka University.

Butylated hydroxyl toluene, a food preservative, is also responsible for liver and kidney damage. Liver is the foremost victim of the chemical agents in food.

Liver disorder leads to jaundice, hyperacidity and distaste, resulting in liver cirrhosis, said Prof ABM Faroque, adding that liver cirrhosis may lead to cancer.

As the excreta of human body are usually water-soluble, insoluble chemical agents destroy nephrons of the kidney, an essential filter in human body.

Foods must be free of artificial colour, he said, if used at all, it has to be natural.

According to international convention, names of colour, flavour, preservative and sweetener must be mentioned on the label of products, a rule often violated in Bangladesh.

Chemical colours like FDC Red-2 and FDC Yellow-5 have been internationally banned since 1975 as they cause cancer, but their use could not be stopped in foods in Bangladesh.

Sodium cyclamate, popularly known as Ghono Chini, is an artificial sweetener that Bangladesh banned its use in drugs in 1982 and in foods in 2003, but still it is being used in food items.

"The ban must be made effective immediately as it is carcinogenic," said Prof Faroque.

Constant and excessive consumption of tasting salt (mono

sodium glutamate), which is widely used in potato chips and Chinese and home-made food items, causes temper irritation among the children and brain disorder, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and insomnia among the adults, he said.

There are many government agencies and institutions such as BSTI, Institute of Public Health, Institute of Public Health Nutrition, city corporation and municipality, as well as food and health ministries, which are supposed to monitor the quality and standard of foods, but it appears that nobody is responsible for the job.

"We have proposed setting up a single authority to administer both drugs and foods, in the form of Food and Drug Administration of the United States, with adequate staff to punish the culprits," said Health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal.

He also said the existing law, which has already been placed at the cabinet for making it up-to-date, is inadequate to punish the culprits.

"The proposed law will define specific authority for the job and we have recommended rigorous punishment for those who adulterate foods and apply banned chemicals in food," he said.

In the United States it is the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that controls drugs, food and cosmetics.

Though once considered as safe food colours, the FDA has recently banned eight chemicals, including FDC Orange-1, FDC Red -4, FDC Red-32, FDC Yellow-1, 2, 3 and 4 and FDC Violet-1.

# Pro-opposition lawyers to observe Black Day Sept 6

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Sammilita Ainjibi Samannaya Parishad (SASP), a forum of pro-opposition lawyers, will observe Black Day across the country on September 6.

On September 6, 2003, ruling BNP backed criminals led by Sagir Ahmed had attacked the lawyers on Dhaka Bar Association premises while they were holding a human chain programme under the banner of SASP.

SASP leaders said that in the incident about 100 lawyers, including several journalists were injured. The attackers also ransacked the furniture of the association office and its auditorium.

SASP Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury yesterday said they will observe the Black Day in protest against pressure by the government on the High Court judges, who declared the 1975 military takeover and the subsequent constitutional amendment illegal, conspiracy of the government against the epoch-making judgment of the High Court, and the government's failure in investigating the incident of the serial bomb blasts.



A contemporary group art exhibition titled 'Shomokal' began at the Gallery Kaya in the city yesterday. The exhibition will remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm daily till September 15.

# AL leader Mostaque, not Zia, imposed martial law: Bhuiyan

BDNEWS, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday blamed the main opposition Awami League (AL) for distorting of history.

"BNP does not distort the history... AL is the political party which distorted the country's history," he said while inaugurating a three-day photography exhibition at the Shilpakala Academy in the city in the morning.

Bhuiyan, also the LGRD and

Cooperatives Minister, said that late president Ziaur Rahman did not impose martial law rather AL leader Mostaque Ahmed imposed it.

They (AL leaders) killed their leader Sheikh Mujib... Ziaur Rahman came to power on the perspective of sepye-people revolution in 1975," he added.

JASAS, cultural wing of the ruling party, organised the programme in observance of the 27th anniversary of the BNP.

JASAS acting president MA

Malek presided.

Abdullah Al-Noman, Amanullah Aman, Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu, Abdus Salam, were present.

About one thousand photographs of late president Ziaur Rahman portraying his life and work were displayed in the exhibition.

The exhibition will continue till Sunday and will remain open from 10:00am to 8:00pm everyday.

As part of the three-day programme to observe the 27th founding anniversary of the party, BNP will bring out a colourful procession in the city at 3:00pm today, the third-day of the celebration. BNP Senior Secretary General Tarique Rahman is expected to take part in the procession.

On September 1, 1978, late president Ziaur Rahman founded BNP with an objective to strengthen multi-party democracy, introduce the politics of production and development and bring a new dimension in country's politics.

# Ensure accountability in every sector to establish good governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for ensuring accountability in every sector to establish good governance.

The four-party alliance government has no accountability to the people who play a major role in improving the economy, said noted economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

On the other hand, the government always remains fully accountable to the donors whose contribution to the country's GDP is two or three percent, he added.

The Samajik Unnayan O Chetona Bikash Kendra organised the discussion titled 'Good governance: Social security and human rights' at the National Press Club in the city.

Sharing his experience on monitoring the recent by-election in Faridpur, Prof Muzaffer said the voters had totally failed to get an idea about income sources of the two major candidates.

The real empowerment of the people will be established when they will be able to register their protest and resist undemocratic activities of the government, he added.

The real democracy has not yet established in the said noted academic Dr Syed Anwar Hossain.

Every civilisation in the world has flourished with the direction of some creative persons, he said. "We have to find out such creative persons for moving the country ahead."

Woman leader Dr Hamida Hossain said people should judge the candidate's capability to work for the progress of the nation before casting votes in order to promote good governance.

Dr Hayat Mahmood, Dr Ajay Roy and workers' leader Mesbah Uddin Ahmed also spoke.



Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding a ban on car parking on footpaths.

# Intensify agitation to protect industries

## Trade union leaders urge workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade union leaders at a national convention yesterday urged the workers to be united to realise their various demands.

These include formation of minimum wage board, refixation of salaries and benefits in line with market price, ensuring trade union rights, reopening of closed mills and

factories, ending of privatisation and initiatives to make ailing industries profitable, they added.

The leaders said workers have fallen in the whirlpool of political chaos and thus have been deprived of their just rights.

They also called for intensifying the agitation against the government to protect the industries of the country.

The convention was organised by Shilpa-Sramik-Karmochari Rakha Samonny Parishad at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers said the BNP-led four-party alliance government is closing down local industries one after another at the recommendation of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund making thousands of workers jobless.

They said the government still remains indifferent when the religious extremists are carrying out bomb and grenade attacks creating an unstable situation in the country.

"Lack of unity among us is the main obstacle to meet out our demands and time has come to be united irrespective our internal difference," said Nurul Islam, president of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra.

"The living cost and price of essentials are increasing day by day but the salaries of the workers are not increasing," said Abdul Motin Master, president of Jatiya Sramik League.

Employers are compelling workers to work upto 14 hours a day without paying them overtime in violation of the country's labour law, said Abdul Bashar, president of Jatiya Sramik Federation while presiding over the convention.

Ray Ramesh of Jatiya Sramik Jote, Shafiqur Rahman of Jatiya Sramik Federarion, Abdul Kader of Bangladesh Sramik Jote, Shafiqur Rahman of Sramik Federation of Bangladesh, Lutfur Rahman of Pat Suta Bastra Kal Sramik Karmochari Sammonny Parishad also spoke.

The convention was attended by thousands of workers from different parts of the country.

# BSF kills one in Lalmonirhat

UNB, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi citizen was gunned down and two others were injured by the Border Security Force (BSF) of India on Patgram border on Thursday night.

The dead was identified as Nurul Islam of Jagotabur village in the upazila.

The injured--Ibrahim and Salimuddin--were admitted to Bogra Clinic in sadar upazila.

Sources said the BSF men opened fire on them at about 10:30pm as they reportedly crossed the borderline, leaving Nurul Islam dead on the spot and Ibrahim and Salimuddin wounded critically.

# 'Economic sovereignty under threat'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country is facing dollar crisis as a section of the ruling class is sending out their money abroad, said Prof Anu Mustafa at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar was organised by the Communist Party of Bangladesh at Tajul Islam Auditorium in the city.

He said World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and other imperialist agents are expanding their influence in Bangladesh in the name of various agreements.

Presenting a keynote paper Hasan Tariq Chowhury said the economic sovereignty of the country is under threat due to Status of Forces Agreement (SofA), Humanitarian Assistance Needs Assessment (HANA), and Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

CPB central leader Sheikh Farid Uddin presided.

# 70-yr-old rapes 5-yr-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A 70-year-old man has allegedly raped a five-year-old girl in Narayanganj.

Police said Pir Nur Mohammad brought the minor girl, a daughter of his neighbour, to his house on Thursday noon and raped her pointing a knife to her throat.

Nur Mohammad went into hiding after the incident that triggered a sensation in the locality.



Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a seminar on 'Caretaker Government and Electoral Reforms: Legal Framework' organised by Jatiya Ainjibi Parishad at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium in the city yesterday.

# DHAKA TODAY

**Hijab**  
In observance of International Hijab Solidarity Day, Assembly for Protection of Hijab Bangladesh organises a seminar titled 'Hijab' with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: VIP Lounge of the National Press Club. Time: 10.00am.

**Lecture**  
University of Information Technology and Sciences organises a lecture on 'Emergence of Bangladesh'. Venue: University Campus, North Gulshan. Time: 11.00am.

**Rotary Central**  
Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 1.30pm.

**Rotary North West**  
Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held. Venue: Guest House Party Lounge of Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 5.30pm.

# Int'l seminar on rural dev begins today

**BSS, Dhaka**

A three-day international seminar on 'sustainable rural development' begins here today.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will inaugurate the seminar jointly organised by LGRD and JICA.

Representatives from Cambodia, India, Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh are expected to participate in the seminar, organisers said.

As many as 20 keynote papers would be presented at different sessions by experts from home and abroad outlining the rural development strategy ranging from planning and financing.

# 4 injured as extortionists ransack house at Fatullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A gang of alleged extortionists ransacked a house at Fatullah under Narayanganj district injuring four people on Thursday night.

Police said the extortionists demanded Tk 10 lakh in toll at the house of Maksud Chowdhury at Sastapur.

But when the caretaker of the house refused to pay the toll, eight extortionists ransacked the house injuring his wife Renu Begum, and daughters Mukta, Rita and Pinki seriously.

Police arrested two extortionists named Rezaul and Jalli.

The arrestees told the police that six others including Shahin Chowdhury and Shamim Newaz managed to escape.

## WEATHER TODAY

# Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also expected at places over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sayedpur and lowest 24.4 degree Celsius at Srirangol.

**The sun sets in the capital at 6:15pm today and rises at 5:41am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

| City/Town   | Temperature in Celsius |      | Humidity in percentage |         |
|-------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
|             | Max                    | Min  | Morning                | Evening |
| Dhaka       | 34.5                   | 27.4 | 77                     | 77      |
| Chittagong  | 30.5                   | 26.7 | 83                     | 82      |
| Rajshahi    | 36.0                   | 27.6 | 80                     | 86      |
| Khulna      | 33.7                   | 27.4 | 80                     | 87      |
| Barisal     | 33.0                   | 27.0 | 84                     | 98      |
| Sylhet      | 35.6                   | 27.2 | 89                     | 77      |
| Cox's Bazar | 28.2                   | 25.0 | 96                     | 92      |