

Spending a day with the mobile court

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Screaming policemen ready to step onboard a vehicle and the final meeting of the magistrate with the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI) authorities opens the screen to the scene before every mobile court drive.

Once the group, comprising of a magistrate, BSTI official, police officials and journalists are ready, they set out on their mission to curb the ongoing crimes of food adulteration and products of other basic needs.

This correspondent accompanied two mobile court teams during one of the recent drives last week.

Magistrate Rokon-Ud-Doula led a team to seize Shamsul Haque's illegal production of adulterated fertiliser alleged by some farmers from Kotechandpur in 322, West Jurain of the city on April 25.

Naturally Shamsul Haque looked very surprised to see the inspection team especially since very few are aware of such raids before they take place.

Haque was running a factory in a tin shed called M S Chemical Company, with two rooms producing five types of adulterated fertiliser, which, upon application, causes plants to die and diminish soil fertility.

When quizzed by the team, Haque immediately said that the owner was not present and he knows nothing about the adulteration. But after going through the papers, the mobile team found that he was the owner of the factory.

The workers were seen putting packets of fertilisers into boxes to

be shipped in various parts of the country.

Haque admitted that he does not have any academic qualifications relating to chemicals or fertiliser manufacturing.

The mobile court took samples of fertilisers to test whether they are

illegally, and if unable to pay the fine it would cost him six months of prison time.

All products were confiscated, and if more adulteration were found on testing, a new case will be filed against Haque, said Rokon-Ud-Doula.

The mobile court took samples of fertilisers to test whether they are

workers were preparing bakery items without gloves. When asked by the mobile team why they were working in bare hands, the workers could not give any answer.

At the same time, it also found plenty of sauce packets with no BSTI seal on them. The court

in January. This was also the third raid in the factory since July last year.

The sacks of glucose were stone hard. In addition, 15 bags of colourful chewing gum to be used in ice cream had no labels stating the country of origin or expiry date.

The mango pulp stored in tin cans had only a month left for expiry, but factory workers said the ice-cream made from this pulp would be falsely labelled an expiry date of one whole year.

When asked why such bulk quantities of raw materials were stored, the factory manager said they were going to destroy them any day.

Meanwhile other ice-cream products stored in jumbo mango ice-cream cups had no address on their labels.

The journalists accompanying the team found the amount Tk 70,000 fined for expired items and holding unidentified raw materials very surprising, since the same mobile court's BSTI official fined the previous organisation more for preparing food items without wearing gloves.

As these mobile courts were going about their mission, a number of enthusiastic spectators raised important concerns.

Despite the mobile court frenzy in town as well as the brow-raising amount of fines, the fact that adulterated products are still being produced is bizarre indeed.

Are these drives really helping curb crime against food adulteration? People wonder!



PHOTO STAR

Fresh raids by mobile court have again begun to haunt the scrupulous traders in the city.

adulterated or not. Meanwhile, BSTI officials found that one of his products called 'New Fish Grow' is a BSTI tested product although the officials had no clue about it. When Haque was asked for showing relevant documents, he couldn't.

Shamsul Haque was fined Tk 20,000, for using the BSTI seal

On April 27 another mobile court drive led by magistrate Tapan Kumar Biswas took place at Fu-Wang Foods in Tejgaon-Gulshan link road. This was the third raid at the factory since the drive began in July 2005.

The court found the same unhygienic atmosphere where

slapped the Fu-Wang factory production manager a fine of Tk one lakh.

The same mobile court then moved to the Polar ice-cream factory in the same area and fined production manager Jasimuddin Ahmed Tk 70,000 for stocking glucose monohydrate, that expired

Zoo plans a new phase in wildlife education

IMRUL HASAN

Dhaka Zoo plans to open an education centre on its premises with the view to educate and entertain children, and create an awareness of wildlife conservation among the visitors.

"Zoos can play an important role in creating awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation that is required for ecology," said the Zoo's Veterinary Surgeon Selim Iqbal.

"Visitors will be able to learn more about animals, realize their importance and grow to love them," he said.

Iqbal also said that 'conservation, education, research and recreation' are key characteristics of a zoo, and their educational role will be socially, environmentally and culturally relevant.

The authorities have submitted a proposal to the finance ministry seeking budget allocation for the centre.

"We hope that the proposal will be approved in the next fiscal year. After the centre is established, we will ask foreign donors to help in upgrading the centre," said Narayan Chandra Banik, deputy curator of the zoo.

According to the zoo authority, several programmes like 'weekly

observation on crocodile feeding', 'painting competitions', 'distributing posters, leaflets' and 'animal talk shows' will be organised to enhance creativity among school going children.

"The programme will take the shape of international programmes, which have been successfully implemented in developed countries," Banik said adding that they will invite teachers of schools, colleges and universities to take part in the education club.

They hope to publish a monthly wildlife magazine, he added.

Many students and researchers from the department of veterinary and the animal husbandry of the Bangladesh Agricultural University, department of the zoology of Dhaka University (DU) and other universities and veterinary colleges visit the zoo during the internship periods.

"I am very curious about wildlife. If the centre offers a provision for internship, I will get enrolled for the course," said Rafiq Hasan, a DU student from Mirpur 2.

The authorities do not intend appointing any specialists for the education programme, but use existing human resources.

"This will be our additional duty as we have no plans as yet to

appoint any experts or teachers for the job," said Shahzaman Khan Tuhin, nutrition officer of the zoo.

"The programme will not be restricted to students only, but it will include all visitors," said Tuhin. "They will learn how to protect endangered species and behave positively towards wildlife," he added.

There will be special sessions for specific schools every week where children will be taught on wildlife.

Visitors are showing keen interest in such a centre.

"This kind of educational effort will certainly enhance children's knowledge on wildlife and biodiversity," said Maimuna Islam, a visitor from Mirpur 10.

"I observed such efforts in the western countries I had visited. Western people encourage their children to go to such type of centres," said Sirajul Islam, a government employee and himself a regular visitor to the zoo.

This centre would be a new concept for everyone the zookeepers, visitors and wildlife lovers," said the authorities.

If the programme becomes successful at the Dhaka Zoo, the biggest of the zoos in Bangladesh visited by 30 lakh people a year, it will be replicated in other zoos, said a Dhaka Zoo official.

12x3

10x3

10x2