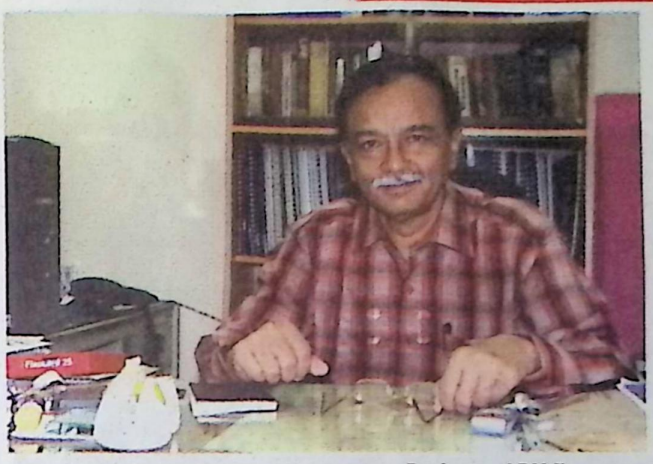


Professor Abed Hossain Mollah.



Professor ABM Faroque.

organisations such as Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), Save the Environment Movement (SEM), Bangladesh Neonatal and Forum.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Professor Muzaffer Ahmad says, "Government is playing a suspicious role. It should have taken bold action. To me the current government's stand on melamine scandal is nothing but a step for interest of the multinational business companies and definitely against the public interest."

Interestingly instead of explaining the cause of adding toxic chemical in milk the government agency BSTI scientists briefed the press on the acceptable intake of melamine in milk.

According to Azmal Hossain, director general of BSTI, the presence of up to .001mg (milligram) of melamine per gram of milk consumed is considered 'safe' for children, and .0025mg per gram of milk for adults. But, the DG could not confirm any source of the acceptable daily intake of melamine in the human body. "We have found that on the Internet," he explains when asked for the source of this information.

"Melamine is not a part of milk, nor a preserving agent, nor a testing agent not even a flavouring agent," says Professor Nilufar Nahar. "It is rather an artificial indigent, which is usually used for making plastics in the industry. Then what is its connection with natural food milk?" she demands.

Rejecting the DG's comment Professor Nahar says, "Let alone toxic chemical melamine except 22 essential proteins, the natural proteins are also harmful for health. So there cannot be any minimum acceptable rate of melamine in milk products."

Professor Nahar further says, "Even in the era of globalisation so far we have not heard of any such study on acceptable daily intake for melamine published in any recognised journal."

According to Professor Nahar, melamine, which is full of nitrogen molecules is added in milk, gives the false impression that the products contain high protein content as it is the nitrogen level that indicates the presence of protein (which is high in nitrogen). "The number of nitrogen is six in melamine, which is very high. Multiplying the number of nitrogen by 6.25, the protein rate is detected. Adding toxic melamine with milk they want their milk to (look like) it contains high protein," she says.

"Melamine as a soluble amorphous powder form in milk is blamed for causing several renal problems and kidney stones," says Professor ABM Faroque, a teacher of the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, "as it tends to deposit itself in the kidney, which cannot be removed from the system with urine. But, acceptable intake of insoluble 'Melamine Formaldehyde' resin used for industrial use passes through stool."

Professor Faroque blames the multinational companies for confusing people regarding the acceptable intake of melamine in the human body. According to him, rich countries fix these types of minimum levels for the interest of their business. In fact, developed countries disclose such studies to sell their substandard products in poor countries.

"I can remember after the Chernobyl disaster of the nuclear reactor", says Faroque, "an acceptable daily intake was set for radiation as 0.1 bacqerel per litre of milk."

"But the reality is that the radiated milk was sold only in the poor countries at cheaper rates. More than that, it's really difficult to follow the acceptable daily intake level," he adds. The biggest hurdle in getting to the real facts regarding such contamination is the fact that there is not enough data available about things like the long term effects of consuming these substances and how much of it can cause damage to health. "It takes at least a couple of years for an acceptable toxicological study. Melamine in milk is a very recent issue, then how can we get a logical acceptable daily intake of melamine in the human body?"

Meanwhile local agents of the multinational powder