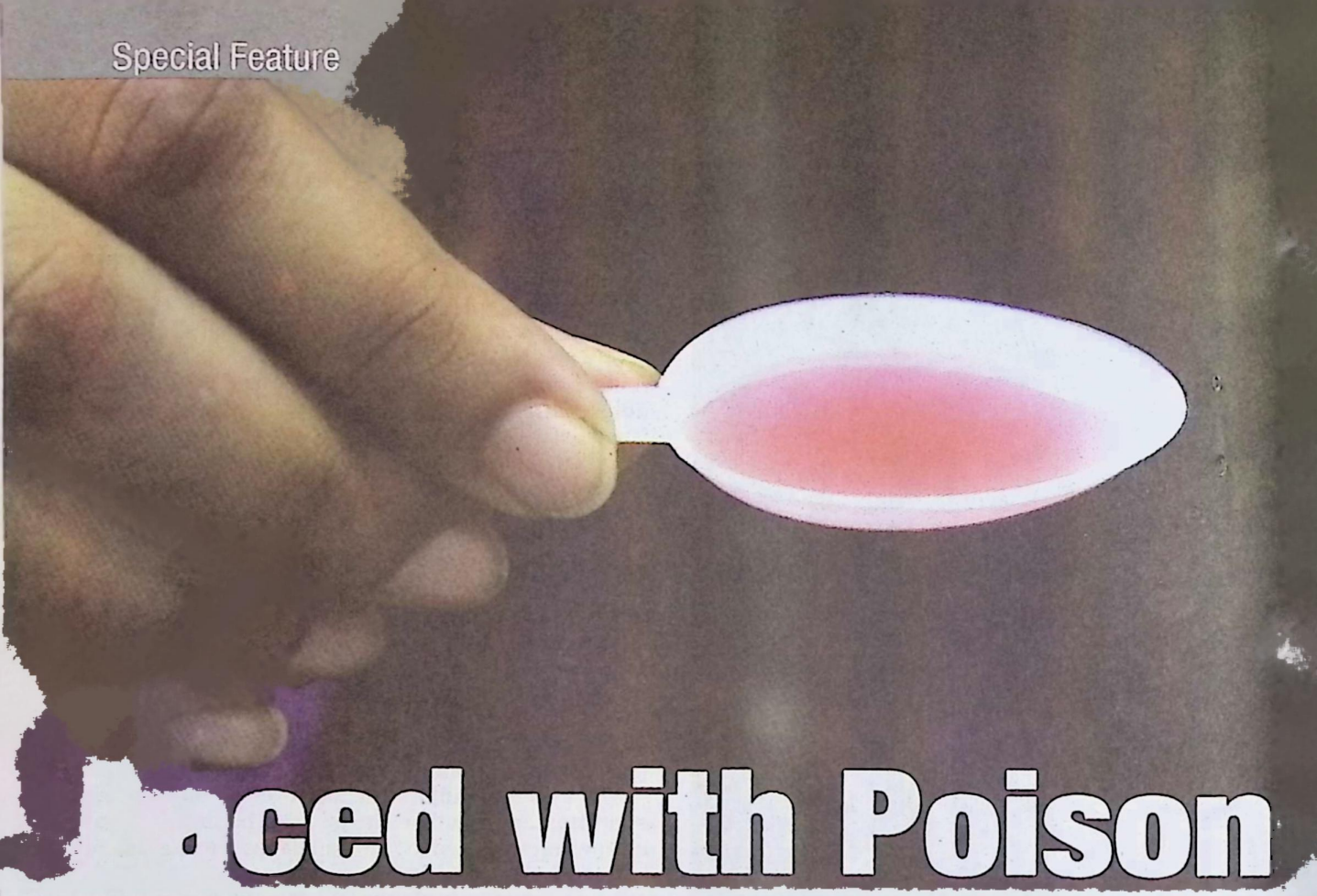


·ced with Poison

ERSHAD KAMOL

In the 1980s to early 1990s thousands of infants died of renal failure after being given contaminated paracetamol syrup. The cause was detected in November 1992. At Dhaka Shishu Hospital 339 babies died from 1990 to 1992 taking diethylene glycol-laced paracetamol syrup. At that time the government stopped production of the five accused pharmaceutical companies. However, lack of monitoring of the government agency Drug Administration resulted in history repeating itself last month. This time taking the same toxic tainted paracetamol syrup, produced by Rid Pharmaceutical Company of Brahmanbaria BSCIC area, 25 children between one and five died. Briefing the probe report after suspecting foul play, Health Minister Professor AFM Ruhal Haque on July 28 told the press that tests have confirmed the presence of the toxic chemical, diethylene glycol Rid paracetamol syrup.

On the reason behind such adulteration Professor Hanif says that since the diethylene is less expensive and can be bought only at Tk 200 per litre, the unscrupulous businessmen use it instead of authorised solvent 'propylene glycon' at Tk 1,100 per litre.

Diethylene glycol solvent, usually used in plastic, rubber, textile and leather dying industries, was used in the preparation of the paracetamol syrup as a cheap but deadly substitute for propylene glycol, the authorised solvent for any syrup forms. The company had no license to manufacture paracetamol syrup, rather had permission to prepare paracetamol suspension. However, the product was described as a suspension on the package, but it contained syrup. The health minister at the press conference informed that of the 28 domestic companies that are manufacturing paraetamol, only five companies have clearance to manufacture syrup. Drug Administration stopped marketing of