all products of Rid Pharmaceuticals and recommended exemplary punishment for the culprits who had caused so many deaths of children.

"At least this time the government has taken some immediate steps that has decreased the possibility of more causalites", says Professor M Hanif of the department of Pediatric Nephrology of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, who again discovered the existence of the toxic chemical in paracetamol. He adds: "After being doubtful I voluntarily tested the paracetamol syrup that I received from a patient's parent at a private laboratory and found the presence of 'diethylene glycol."

"I suspected the presence of diethylene glycol since it was a common form of adulteration in 1980s. Those days we used to face very unusual renal failure in the children, but it took almost a decade to identify the cause. But this time we have addressed the problem immediately and sent a report on it to the Directorate General of Health Services that later directed the hospital authorities to carry out further investigation. It was a sensible decision by the government that they acted so promptly."

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.

"Usually financially sick medicine producers do such adulteration to exist in the market competing with well reputed companies", observes Professor M Hanif. Like many other pharmaceutical experts he blames the failure of the Drug Administration as a regulatory authority for the repetition of this tragedy.

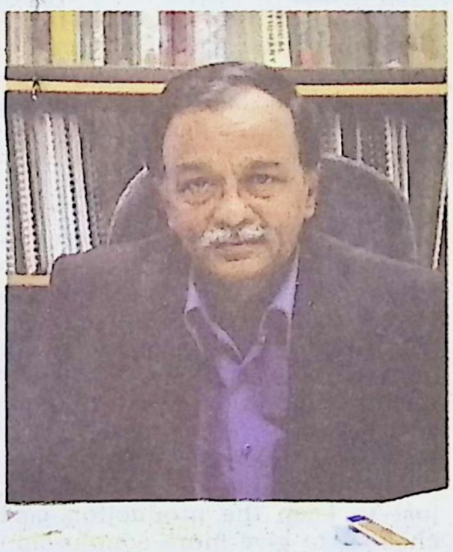
On the other hand, the government agency responsible for giving license and monitoring the standard of medicine in the country has repeatedly given the excuse of lack of manpower behind its inefficiency. Drug Administration director Brigadier General Ismail Hossain, however, told the press about its quick actions against the accused company. The director also suggested the government amend the existing laws to take stern action against the unscrupulous individuals involved in the tampering.

In fact, the incident has raised several questions regarding the monitoring system of the medicine manufacturing companies in the country as well as the ongoing practice of adulteration, fraud and violation of the existing rules by many medicine manufacturers.

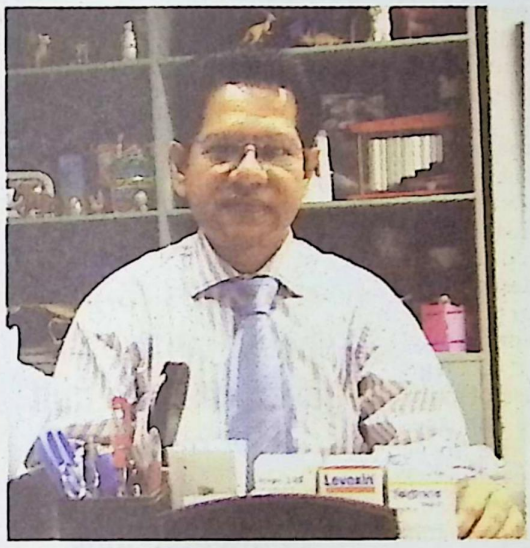
Professor Faroque of the department of pharmaceutical technology, Dhaka University is actually very critical about the performance of the Drug Administration. Referring to the recent paracetamol fiasco, he says, "I admit that due to lack of facilities the drug administration may not identify immediately the adulteration of the solvent, but is it possible that the drug superintendents did not know that a company authorised to manufacture paracetamol suspension is producing syrup? I can't believe it, as it does not need any laboratory test."

In fact, the government agency has completely failed to ensure good manufacturing practice (GMP), a WHO set standard guideline, says Faroque, "Only the well reputed companies follow the guideline considering their image."

"When the drug administration cannot properly monitor because of lack of manpower why does the government agency give permission to so many companies to produce medicine?" asks Professor ABM



Professor ABM Faroque



Professor M Hanif

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