

Formalin fear grips city dwellers

UNB, Dhaka

Fish is no longer a favourite option for many city dwellers on their everyday menu, as the sale of formalin-laced fish has become a rampant practice in the city's kitchen markets, endangering public health.

"Next time you go to the fish market, beware of those fresh-looking fish where even the flies don't dare to get close... It could be laced with deadly chemical formalin," said Syed Rabiul Shams, assistant secretary of Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Managers of Bangladesh.

He went on saying, "There was a time when I used to take fish every day, but now fish is not a favourite option for my family, as most fishes are laced with formalin."

A typical commercial grade of formalin may contain 10-12 percent methanol in addition to metallic impurities such as aluminium (3 ppm), iron (1 ppm) and copper (1 ppm).

Dr Golam Mostofa, associate professor of Fisheries department at Dhaka University, said formalin is used for preservation of tissue. "It has no permissible limit for food preservation. It's a kind of poison. High doses of it can cause death. If formalin is used in fish, it'll act slowly in human body."

About the growing formalin fear among the city dwellers, a government physician, seeking anonymity, said: "It's a double trouble for those who are living in this nasty city. While you're taking fish, you're actually taking poison because of formalin. And when you're leaving it out of your menu, you're actually depriving yourselves from necessary protein."

He said the authorities should set up permanent enforcement units in all fish markets of the city to nab the culprits who are indulged in such illegal activities.

Even of late, the government has set up a formalin-testing unit at Karwan Bazar, the city's premium kitchen market, as part of a move to ensure formalin-free fish for the dwellers. It has so far detected 18 cases of lacing fish with formalin.

But the city dwellers said setting up of a formalin-testing centre at Karwan Bazar is not enough, as some 150 tonnes of fish are sold in kitchen markets across the city every day apart from other wholesale markets. They demanded that formalin-testing unit be set up at every kitchen market here.

Officials at the formalin-testing centre at Karwan Bazar said lack of awareness among consumers is a major impediment to the drive's success, as only 10-12 consumers come to the testing unit on average every day to have their fish tested.

They, however, said the testing unit has been able to create a positive impact on selling formalin-free fish at the fish market.

"We didn't find any formalin contaminated fish in the last few days, although 18 cases were detected within one month since its inception," said Taposh Kumar, an operator of the unit.

Karwan Bazar Fish Arot Samity President Abdur Rahim Mollah said if any formalin-contaminated fish is detected, the Bazar committee immediately withdraws the fish from the market. But they have no right to punish the formalin-laced fish sellers without proper investigation.

He said inadequate freezing facilities and ice factories and time-consuming transport force the fish sellers to resort to such malpractice, adding that most of the contaminated fish found in the market are imported from India.

He said shrimps coming from Sathkira are contaminated with formalin. "Traders at Arot (wholesale market) or retailers are not the real culprits. Formalin is being used at sources," Rahim said.

The formalin-testing unit is the result of a project taken up by five government officials as part of their professional skill development.



Two mountaineers pose for photograph at a flag off ceremony at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. The mountaineers will embark on an expedition to Cho Oyu. Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club organised the ceremony.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA.COM

2 mountaineers begin expedition to Cho Oyu this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshi mountaineers will embark on an expedition to Cho Oyu, the world's sixth highest peak (26,906 feet), which lies in the Himalayas.

The mountaineers MA Mohit and Tareq Onu will leave Dhaka for Kathmandu on September 7 en route to Zangmu at Tibet border for a 40-day expedition.

This was stated at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club (BMT) organised the press conference and the flag off ceremony.

Both the mountaineers are the members of BMT while Transcom Beverages has sponsored the expedition.

Former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, former adviser to the caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan, and Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University were the honourable guests at the ceremony.

Earlier, Bangladeshi mountaineers climbed other Himalayan peaks including Chulu West, Mera Peak, Singu Chuli and Lobje Peak.

Congratulating the mountaineers Prof Zillur said this expedition is another instance of the courage of Bangladeshis that they showed during the liberation war.

Dr Akbar Ali hoped that the Bangladeshi mountaineers will soon hoist the national flag atop Mount Everest.

GQ Chowdhury, executive director of Transcom Beverages, said his company will also sponsor the expedition to Mount Everest which might take place next year.

BMT founder Enamul Haque moderated the press conference.

Death anniversary of Birshreshtha Nur Mohammad today

BSS, Jessore

The 38th death anniversary of Birshreshtha Shaheed Nur Mohammad Sheikh will be observed at Nur Mohammad Nagar in a befitting manner today.

Birshreshtha Nur Mohammad Sheikh Trust and district administration jointly undertaken various programmes to mark the anniversary.

The programme will begin today with Qurankhwani, offering fateha and milad mahfil. A discussion on the life and works of Nur Mohammad will be held at Nur Mohammad Sheikh Memorial Museum and Library auditorium in Narail.

President of Birshreshtha Nur Mohammad Sheikh Trust and Deputy Commissioner of Narail Mohammad Anwar Hossain is expected to attend the programme as the chief guest while wife of Nur Mohammad Begum Faziletunnesa and member secretary of the trust Azizur Rahman Bhuiyan will be present as special guests.

The Liberation War veteran Nur Mohammad Sheikh was born on February 25 in 1936 at village Mohishkola (present name Nur Mohammad Nagar) under Narail upazila.

Moscow keen to strengthen ties with Dhaka

BSS, Moscow

First Deputy Minister of the Russian Federation Andrey I Denisov said here yesterday that Russia is ready to further strengthen its cooperation with Bangladesh.

He made the remarks when the newly appointed Bangladesh ambassador to Russia, Dr SM Saiful Hoque, called on him to hand over a copy of his credentials.

With the submission of the credentials, Dr Hoque becomes functional as ambassador to Russia from yesterday. The formal presentation of the credentials to President Dmitry Medvedev in the Kremlin will take place at a shorter date.

During the meeting, Ambassador Hoque recalled with gratitude the enormous contribution of the government and people of the former USSR to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 and their role in demining the Chittagong area as well as the reconstruction and development of the war-ravaged country.

Denisov recalled the historic visit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Russia in 1973. He also highly regarded the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He assured that Russia would support its efforts in all possible areas. The first deputy foreign minister particularly referred to development of energy sector in Bangladesh.

He further stated that despite global economic recession, Russian State Energy Corporation (ROSATOM) is ready to set up nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.

Denisov also informed that now there is no barrier to import wheat from Russia. He underscored the need to widen the cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the ICT and cultural areas which will facilitate cooperation in other areas.

AL leader, 4 others sued for beating forest guard

UNB, Bagerhat

A local Awami League leader and four of his cohorts have been sued for beating a forest guard of the Sundarbans.

Sirajul Islam, forester of Mora Pashur patrol outpost in Chandpai range, filed the case with Mongla Police Station yesterday.

The accused are Organising Secretary of Mongla AL Bulbul Ijaradar and his cohorts Bhagne Shaheed, Mujibur Rahman, Imamul and Zia.

The complainant said the accused had an altercation with forest guard Bazlur Rahman of Mora Pashur patrol outpost in Gupatty area of Mongla Port on August 31.

At one stage, the accused severely beat up Bazlur, leaving him critically injured, Sirajul Islam alleged. Bazlur is now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital, headed by Dr. M. A. Haque.



Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at many places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:13pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 23.7 degree at Sylhet.

The 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 | 32.5 | 26.5 | 70 | 73 |
| Chittagong | 31.5 | 26.0 | 86 | 71 |
| Rajshahi | 33.3 | 26.5 | 76 | 71 |
| Khulna | 32.0 | 26.0 | 96 | 90 |
| Barisal | 31.5 | 27.0 | 76 | 85 |
| Sylhet | 34.6 | 23.7 | 73 | 67 |
| Cox's Bazar | 31.5 | 24.5 | 96 | 87 |



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