

THE IMPORTANCE OF AWARENESS

ANIKA HOSSAIN

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

On May 4, 2015, a student from the first grade of the Mohammadpur Preparatory School was sexually assaulted by a school employee. This incident was brought to the attention of the media and has caused an outrage citywide. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident – there are countless that go unreported every day.

Sexual assault on minors usually happens at home or at school and although this is not widely acknowledged, the perpetrators on the most part are not strangers – they are people the minor will come into contact with, perhaps on a regular basis. Therefore, it is the responsibility of parents and school authorities to take preventative measures to the best of their ability, and this can only happen through awareness.

Most cases of abuse on minors are

not reported for several reasons. Children below a certain age may not fully understand what is happening to them, those who do, may be too ashamed or afraid to talk about it. Many feel guilty and believe they are to be blamed for their own abuse, and sometimes, the adults they trust may not believe them or may be too uncomfortable to address the issue properly. All of the said instances happen due to the unfortunate fact that sex is still a taboo subject in this country– children do not learn about sex through proper channels and grow up believing there is something unsanitary about it and should be kept quiet.

“We skipped the reproduction chapter in Biology completely,” says Aporajita M, a recent graduate of a reputed English Medium school in Dhaka. “The Biology books were the only ones we had to buy directly from

the school because the chapter on reproduction had to be taken out before they were given to us. We never had talks about sexual harassment and we did not have a school counsellor we could go to about our problems.”

“My daughter studies in the Bengali Medium section of the Mohammadpur Preparatory school where the little girl was assaulted,” says a parent who wishes to remain anonymous. “She has never had a sex education class and to my knowledge there is no in-school counsellor the students can talk to about personal issues.”

Ehsan Ibne Amin, a student of another reputed government school in Dhaka says, “We studied sexual reproduction in school, but it was very vague, the teachers were too embarrassed to teach us in detail. I don't recall ever talking about abuse. We learned about sex through magazines,

movies and ofcourse friends.”

All these cases reflect not only the lack of responsibility of school authorities to ensure a proper sex education for their students, but also the lack of concern shown by parents about their childrens' incomplete knowledge of such important matters. Unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse of minors can only be prevented if a child is taught about these issues from a young age. Children as young as three years old can learn about what parts of their bodies should not be touched. Adolescents should learn about the act of sex and the concept of feeling comfortable being intimate with a partner and what constitutes abuse.

Homes and schools alike should create a safe and open atmosphere for the children to discuss such issues. Then and only then, can we prevent such incidents from happening again. ■



While Bangkok, one of the most-visited cities in the world, still lumbers under the stigma of the soulless sleaze for some, the highlight of my trip was without a doubt – food. Bangkok is a paradise for foodies! From the universally loved Pad Thais and Tom Yums to exotic bug food – it has got it all.

My foodie adventures started at Plathong BBQ Buffet, a little known place that serves over 100 items of food at just 129 Baht (roughly BDT 300). What makes it special is that most of them are raw, waiting to be cooked on your very own BBQ grill. If you think of overloading your platter, remember that they will fine you for wasting food. It was truly the ideal place for long conversations as my shrimp and meat took a while to get cooked to perfection. The best part of my meal was the dessert- a chunk of coconut ice cream served with sticky rice, nuts and jello.

The following morning, my friend took me to a fresh market and I started craving Thai breakfast. While the experience of being in a bustling local market was great, I was really puzzled about what to get. That's because most locals eat rice or noodles three times a day which reflected on the food selection. My only food blunder came with my selection of Tom Yum Soup. It's a lot spicier than what we have here! I stared in disbelief as they also gave plate of optional add-ons (more spices) even though I barely finished a quarter of the bowl.

Later that day, I had my favourite food experience at a place called “Today Steak”, located at Samyan Market near

MY FOOD ADVENTURES IN BANGKOK

MONZUR MORSHED

MBK mall. Every local in the area knows their signature dish which they proudly call “The Macho Platter”. Basically, it's a gigantic plate of assorted meats, bread, cheese, fish, some vegetables and spaghetti. All this set me back just 300 Bahts and I could even order a supreme sized coke. I thought this was a great place to try out Thai style steak without breaking the piggy bank.

For the next day, I had already booked an evening with Chef Bee because I not only wanted to taste Thai food, but learn how to cook it as well! Bee and his family run “Tailek's House”, an uber cool Homestay/Guesthouse where they welcome any interested travelers for a cooking lesson and dinner on mostly Saturdays. We started our venture by visiting a local market together. I was really impressed to see the preparation of



PHOTO: COURTESY

fresh coconut milk and the abundance of interesting items such as angry bird fishcakes. After getting what was needed, we headed back to the house where she showed me how to cook a red curry dish to perfection. The awesome dinner was complimented by conversation between fellow travelers, who came from all over the place. This was definitely different from cooking schools as there was really no hurry to finish or schedule to worry about.

That night, as I was finding my way back to my place - I discovered “Roti Mai

“Sai”, Thailand's version of cotton candy wrapped in a sweet roti. Along with the great taste, I could not but admire all the vibrant colors it came in.

In the course of six days, I got to taste many other delicacies that I don't even know the names of. From a foodie perspective, Bangkok is much more than fried bugs and fast food chains. Look around you and you'll be awarded with one of the most diverse culinary experiences in the world.

The author is the Business Development Manager in Noman Group.

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