

Non-smoke tobacco companies don't disclose ingredient

Say UBINIG and Prabartana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maximum non-smoke tobacco companies don't disclose the ingredients used to make their products, said speakers at a webinar jointly organised by UBINIG and Narigrantha Prabartana yesterday.

Disclosing ingredients are obligatory according to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco control, speakers said at the webinar where findings of a research project were presented. The project was conducted by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Executive Director of UBINIG Farida Akhter presented the findings. The study found that 62 percent Zarda brands have no ingredient information on the packaging, she said. She alleged that at least 12 brands export their tobacco to Europe and America via various Indian companies.

For the study, an organisation named Tamak Birodh Nari Jote (Tabinaj) collected 109 brands of Zarda. Out of these, only 41 brands disclosed information on top of the packaging.

The information is significant, Farida said, as tobacco product ingredients may affect public health in various ways.

Rumana Huq, of Dhaka University's Economic Research Bureau, said accurate information of smokeless tobacco companies are not available.

"The government earns only Tk 4 million from this informal sector, when in reality the sector is much bigger," she said.

"In the fiscal year 2018-19, customs duty on smokeless tobacco was withdrawn, but the reason behind this is unclear," said Rumana Haq.

Several journalists, NGO representatives, and members of Tabinaj from different districts were present at the webinar.

Delay in delivery of verdict copy halts final disposal

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Neither the defence nor the state could file appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the High Court verdict in the 2009 BDR carnage case, although HC verdict's full text was released seven months ago.

The defence and state sides of the sensational case could not submit the appeal as they are yet to get the certified copy of the HC judgement from the office concerned of the court.

SC Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star recently that the copy section has been working to deliver the certified copy.

He, however, could not specifically say when the parties will be provided the copy.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam earlier told this newspaper that the government will appeal to the Appellate Division against parts of the HC verdict that acquitted the accused, and seek due punishment for them.

The AG said he requested the authorities concerned of the HC to deliver the certified copy at a minimum cost as the official cost of a copy is around Tk 1.3 lakh which the convicted accused may not afford.

An HC official concerned, requesting anonymity, told this correspondent that no decision was made to reduce the cost of the certified copy of the HC verdict as the authorities concerned of the Supreme

Court and government are involved in this issue.

He could not specifically say how much time will be needed to resolve it.

The HC on January 8 released the 29,059-page-full text of its verdict, that confirmed death penalty for 139 accused and upheld life imprisonment of 185 others for their involvement in the atrocities and massacre at the BDR Pilkhana headquarters in 2009.

The verdict is one of the largest in the world, in terms of accused involved -- 846 and numbers of pages.

"We have applied to the 'copy section' of the High Court for the certified copy of its BDR verdict, after the court [HC] announced the verdict in November 2017. We also communicated with the department after the HC released the full text of the verdict on January 8 this year. But we are yet to get any certified copy of the verdict," Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer for more than 400 accused of the case, told The Daily Star in the first week of July.

He said the authorities concerned of the HC recently estimated that the cost for a certified copy may be more than Tk 3 lakh.

He said the convicted accused will decide after receiving the certified copy whether they will file appeals individually or collectively.

The defence lawyer said the convicted of the BDR mutiny case, including the 69 accused, who got

acquittal, have been suffering in jail for more than 11 years and they don't know how long they will have to suffer as the case has not been finally disposed of by the Appellate Division.

Replying to a question, Advocate Aminul Islam said another case -- filed under the Explosive Substances Act -- in connection with the mutiny at the BDR headquarters in February, 2009 is still pending with a Dhaka court.

The trial proceedings of this explosives case -- in which the 69 accused are involved -- are now at the stage of recording statements from the witnesses, he added.

The trial court is scheduled to record the statements on September 7.

"We will move a bail petition on behalf of the 69 before the trial court on September 7," said the defence lawyer.

"Appeals will have to be filed in 30 days after receipt of the certified copies of the High Court judgement. Later, the Supreme Court may set a date to start hearing. The chief justice may constitute a bench for hearing and disposing of the appeals in this particular case," he said.

The mutiny on February 25, 2009 left the nation shocked -- as details of the unthinkable cruelty perpetrated at the Pilkhana headquarters of the paramilitary force emerged.

BDR was later renamed as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Human chain against MP attacked in port city



At least 15 people were injured when alleged supporters of Ctg-16 MP Mostafizur Rahman attacked the human chain.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A human chain, organised by Chattogram Mukti Joddha Command, demanding action against a lawmaker supposedly for his derogatory comments on a freedom fighter, came under attack at Chattogram Press Club yesterday.

Alleged supporters of Chattogram-16 MP Mostafizur Rahman attacked the gathering at 11:30am, leaving scores of people with minor injuries.

Abdur Razzak, finance secretary of Chattogram district (south) Mukti Joddha Command, alleged that the MP "dishonoured" freedom fighter Ali Ashraf over personal enmity and deprived him of state honour during his burial on July 27.

"After Ali's death, MP Mostafizur told local news portals that there was no incident relating to the Liberation War in Banshkhali, so we gathered to protest his comment," he said.

At least 15 participants of the human chain got injured in the attack, which was planned and instigated by Tazul Islam, assistant personal secretary of the MP, he further alleged.

Officer-in-Charge Md Mohsin of Kotwali Police Station said on information, police brought the situation under control and arrested three from the spot. A case has been filed.

This correspondent repeatedly tried to reach Tazul for comments, but he did not receive the phone calls.

Myanmar must

FROM PAGE 3

"The government has placed restrictions on mobile internet communications across eight townships in Rakhine State, and one in neighboring Chin State, making delivery of humanitarian aid even more difficult and depriving civilians of information. The government has not granted UN agencies and humanitarian groups unrestricted and sustained access to Rakhine State, heightening the burdens on ethnic populations in need," the statement said.

The global rights watchdog said that Bangladeshi government had organised several official repatriation attempts which failed because refugees have been unwilling to return, saying they feared persecution and abuse in Myanmar.

Refugees who have spoken to Human Rights Watch overwhelmingly express a desire to return to their homes in Myanmar once it is safe; when they have citizenship and freedom of movement; and when there is genuine accountability for atrocities," reiterated the statement.

Meanwhile, conditions in the camps in Bangladesh are deteriorating, HRW added.

"While Bangladesh commendably opened its borders to the Rohingya fleeing atrocities, the government's policies over the past year have put refugees' lives at serious risk and violated their basic rights," alleged HRW.

Bangladesh began building barbed wire fencing and guard towers around the refugee camps despite opposition by UN and other humanitarian agencies, which is a violation to their rights to freedom of

movement, HRW said.

"Refugees expressed fears that the fencing would restrict their ability to obtain essential services, make it impossible to flee in case of emergency, and create significant barriers for contacting relatives in other camps," pointed out the statement.

"For the past three years they have denied access to basic accredited education to the over 450,000 Rohingya children in the camps," it said.

The statement also spoke about the lack of digital rights of the Rohingya population.

"Nearly a year ago, the Bangladesh government, in response to a peaceful demonstration in Kutupalong camp commemorating 'Rohingya genocide awareness day', shut off all internet access in the refugee camps, directed mobile phone carrier companies to stop selling SIM cards to Rohingya, and confiscated thousands of SIM cards from refugees. Aid workers said this has seriously hampered their capacity to provide emergency health services, provide timely and accurate information about the virus, and rapidly coordinate essential measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the camps," it said.

"Concerned governments should ramp up support for the refugees in Bangladesh while issuing targeted sanctions against Myanmar for failing to create the necessary conditions for the refugees to finally go home," concluded the statement, quoting Adams.

United Hospital Limited, the 500-bed multidisciplinary hospital in the capital's Gulshan, commemorated its 14th anniversary yesterday.

The day started with Quran recitation after Fazr prayers, says a press release. After Asr prayers, a special prayer was offered at the hospital to seek blessings, in presence of hospital consultants, nurses and management staff.

Mohammad Faizur Rahman, chief executive officer of the hospital, encouraged all to work as a unified team to deliver better healthcare to meet increasing patient expectations.

13 lakh yaba pills seized from Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, COX'S BAZAR

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday claimed to have seized 13 lakh pieces of yaba pills and arrested two Rohingyas from the Bay of Bengal in Cox's Bazar.

"We were following the movement of a trawler since Saturday. On Sunday, we chased them at deep sea. As authorities hoisted local cautionary signal number four at sea due to bad weather, the smugglers were forced to come to shore and we arrested them," Maj Mehedi Hasan, deputy director of Rab-15, told The Daily Star.

The Rab official seized the contraband items while searching the trawler, he added.

Mohammad Aiaz (34) of 13 Balukhali rohingya camp and Mohammad Billal (45) of South Hazipara under Jhilonjia union in Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar were arrested during the raid, said officials.

United Hospital marks 14 years of service

CITY DESK

United Hospital Limited, the 500-bed multidisciplinary hospital in the capital's Gulshan, commemorated its 14th anniversary yesterday.

The day started with Quran recitation after Fazr prayers, says a press release. After Asr prayers, a special prayer was offered at the hospital to seek blessings, in presence of hospital consultants, nurses and management staff.

Mohammad Faizur Rahman, chief executive officer of the hospital, encouraged all to work as a unified team to deliver better healthcare to meet increasing patient expectations.

Shameem Ahsan new Bangladesh envoy to Italy

UNB, DHAKA

The government has appointed Md Shameem Ahsan, currently serving as the high commissioner of Bangladesh to Nigeria, as the next ambassador to Italy.

Ahsan is a career foreign service officer belonging to 11th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Foreign Affairs cadre, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

He has worked in various capacities in Bangladesh missions in Kuwait, Doha, Nairobi, Rome and Washington DC. Prior to his present assignment, he served as Bangladesh Consul General in New York.

At the headquarters, he served in various capacities including as director general (external publicity) and (Europe).

IUB holds webinars marking Mujib Borsho

CITY DESK

To celebrate Mujib Borsho, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) hosted a series of webinars, as part of its various activities round the year, a press release said.

The webinars took place on August 17, 19, and 22. The sessions were held on issues such as Bangabandhu's secular ideology, dream for Bangladesh, and the country's role in geopolitics.

Education minister Dr Dipu Moni and Foreign Affairs minister A K Abdul Momen served as chief guests at the programmes. The sessions were broadcast live on IUB's YouTube and Facebook page.

At the first session, Dr Dipu Moni emphasised the role of Bangabandhu's secular ideology on imparting quality higher education to ensure overall development of the nation.

At the third session, the foreign minister highlighted Bangabandhu's pioneering role in building a progressive, all-inclusive, democratic and sovereign Bangladesh.

Luminaries such as Dr Kamal Chowdhury, Former Principal Secretary to the PM; Professor Fakrul Alam of UGC; A Matin Chowdhury, Chairman, IUB; Abdul Hai Sarker, Chairman, ESTCDT; Ambassador (Ret) Muhammad Zamir, Former Secretary & Chief Information Commissioner; Professor Nasreen Ahmed, former Pro-VC, DU; and more also discussed at the sessions.



Dream of a

FROM PAGE 3

Since then, Hafiza's application for repatriation back to the camps has been "under process".

"I just want my daughter back home with me. I wish now that I had never tried to get her married. I just wanted her to have a better life in another country."

According to Razia Sultana, who is also the founder of Rohingya Women Welfare, the promise of marriage and a better life is one of the most common ways to lure young girls out of the camps and into sex slavery.

"We try very hard to make families aware of the dangers of using these trafficking routes, and ask them to focus on educating and empowering their daughters instead," she explained. "Now, there are many Rohingya women in the community who are working towards similar ends."

Shamsun Nahar, who runs a training centre in Kutupalong (with donations from expatriate Rohingya) to teach embroidery and other crafts to Rohingya girls, is one such woman.

After she became a refugee in 2017, she received training as a psychosocial worker from an INGO, which she now employs to talk to the girls she works with.

"Our community is quite conservative and there is a tendency to marry at a young age, often as teenagers," she said. "I try very hard to engage with the girls at my centre about the dangers of early marriage, especially the health related factors."

"For most Rohingya families living as refugees in Bangladesh, the best they can hope for their daughters is to get them married to an expatriate Rohingya living in India, Malaysia or Thailand," she said.

Noor, one of the teenage girls from her centre, agreed to this point of view. At only 14 years old, she has accepted an arranged marriage to a 22-year-old Rohingya man from Malaysia as a stepping stone to a better life outside of the refugee camps.

"My older sister got married at 13, so it is

only natural it be my turn now. I heard my future husband is a good man with a steady income. I am happy with this decision, I don't want to be a refugee forever," she said.

When asked how she will reach her future husband in Malaysia, Noor says their families will "find a way."

While there seems to be a general level of anxiety pervading the camps over the uncertainty regarding their futures, especially in the younger generations, more and more Rohingya girls are opting to forego marriage and work within their communities instead.

"Since we started working in the refugee camps in 2017, we have seen some big changes," Erum Marium, executive director of the Brac Institute of Educational Development, told The Daily Star.

"At first the families were quite cautious

about sending their daughters to the child- and adolescent-friendly spaces we had created, but a huge strength of this community is that they are very willing to engage, and over time, they were very receptive to our interventions."

"For example, despite all the restrictions and strict gender roles, a large number of women took up the roles of Myanmar language facilitators at learning centres in the camps. The Rohingya youth are a vibrant and resilient group and are very open to new opportunities," Marium added.

Rubina (15) is one such Rohingya adolescent with the hopes of working for the betterment of her community.

"Before I became a refugee, I dreamed of being a school teacher," she said. "I studied in Rakhine and even when the authorities shut my school down, my father hired a private tutor for me. I want to keep studying, and I want to teach other Rohingya girls about the importance of being educated as well."

Rubina (15) is one such Rohingya adolescent with the hopes of working for the betterment of her community.

"I would never get married at an early age, I know my rights," she added defiantly.

BUILDING & LAND SALE

(Suitable for Factory/ Hospital/University)