তারিখ 05 NOV 2017
পৃষ্ঠা ... কলাম ...

NEWAGE

Schoolchildren at health risks

Manzur H Maswood

STREET foods sold in front of the capital's schools pose serious risk for children's health as they contain harmful bacteria.

A recent government study found aerobic bacteria, total coliform, escherichia coli, salmonella and other harmful bacteria in velpuri, fuchka, jhalmuri and pickles sold like hotcakes in front of the capital's schools.

These bacteria cause diarrhea, pneumonia, breathing problems, urinary tract infection, bloody stools and fever, said health experts.

The study was done by the Institute of Public Health during July 2016 and June 2017, collecting street food samples sold in front of the capital's 46 schools, located in 49 neighbourhoods, having students from high, middle as well as low income groups.

Though street foods are popular in all the cities of the world, the problem 'occurs in our capital due to the authorities' failure to keep tabs on selling unhealthy and unhygienic foods,' said health experts.

They said that neither the capital's two city corporations, nor the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution keep a watchful eye on the foods sold on the streets.

According to the study 85 to 90 per cent of velpuri, fuchka and jhalmuri sold at school gates are contaminated with diarrhea causing e coli and faecal bacteria.

It found 32.25 per cent of velpuri and 6.5 per cent of jhalmuri contaminated with both e coli and salmonella which cause diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps.

It found 75 per cent of velpuri and 99 per cent of fuchka and jhalmuri and 10 per cent of pickles had unacceptable levels of yeast and mold, responsible for causing allergic reactions, as well as poisoning and fungal infections.

Disclosing the findings at a function of the Institute of Public Health, National Food Safety Laboratory chief Shahnila Ferdousi, who led the study, said street foods sold at school gates were found to be 'grossly contaminated' with faecal materials and pathogenic microorganisms.

She called the situation a matter of serious public health concern affecting the school children.

The study recommended to the authorities to put in place inspections to make street foods safe for the consumers by ensuring that the sellers follow hygiene practices while preparing, handling and serving them to school children and the other consumers.

The recommendation also called for ensuring that the vendors maintained personal hygiene while preparing street foods for consumers, if

Continued on page 2 Col. 1

Schoolchildren at health risks

Continued from page 1

necessary by arranging basic food hygiene training for the vendors.

Street foods appear to be risky for school children, said Food and Agriculture Organization's senior national adviser in Bangladesh Shah Monir Hossain.

The problems arise, he said, as the vendors use contaminated water in preparing these foods and seldom maintain personal hygiene.

Shah Monir, a former director general of the Health Services, said that the two city corporations should keep a watchful eye on the street food scene.

Unhygienic and unhealthy foods are sold on the capital's streets and at parks due to the two city corporations negligence, Poribesh Bachao Andolan general secretary Abdus Sobhan told New Age.

Asked for his comments, Dhaka South City mayor Sayeed Khokon did not contradict with the study findings.