

24 February 2015

Page # 22

Ministry claims**67pc of imported edible items  
contain Haram ingredients**

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ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Science and Technology officials have claimed that about 67 per cent of imported edible items available in Pakistani markets contain Haram ingredients.

Additional Secretary Ministry of Science and Technology Ejaz Ahmad Mian presented a list of 23 items before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology which met with Tariq Bashir Cheema in the chair, here on Monday.

The committee met to discuss a calling attention notice regarding the sale & purchase of prohibited edibles items moved by Shahida Akhter Ali, MNA and budgetary proposals of the ministry for 2015-16.

The members were briefed by the secretary that items including chips, yogurt, pizza, chicken, noodles, are available in especially at filling stations and markets imported from foreign countries contain Haram ingredients. The committee was told that Pakistan has imported the food items from Holland, Spain, USA, UK, France, Denmark, Indonesia and other countries for

last several years.

The secretary said that people compelled to eat those items for there is no authority in the country to ensure the implementation of Halal standards. The committee called for banning the sale of Haram items, and convened a meeting of relevant federal and provincial authorities on Thursday to discuss the issue.

The committee appreciated the efforts of the movers for fetching the attention of the government functionaries towards very important issue. The committee strongly condemned the sale & purchase of Haram edible items and directed that the ministry may take stringent measures, with collaboration of Ministries/Departments concerned to develop mechanism to check the sale of Haram products. The committee expressed its deep concern over the absences of mechanism to stop the sale of Haram edible items in the country and directed that ministry may raise the issue with all provincial governments to ensure that all edible items available in the markets are free from any Haram element.

The officials informed that a

bill namely Halal Authority Act, 2014 was under consideration and sent to the cabinet for approval. Since the matter comes under provincial governments, hence it was also necessary to pass it from the Council of Common Interest (CCI). After the CCI approval, the bill will be tabled in the National Assembly. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the monitoring of the food items became purely provincial subject. Punjab has established the Food Authority while the remaining provinces have to form such Authority yet.

The committee also discussed the budgetary proposals for 2015-16 and expressed dissatisfaction over the insufficient budget allocation for the Ministry of Science & Technology. The committee said that budget might be increased so that they could complete their ongoing projects without further delay. The committee directed the ministry to come up with the proposals with minimum possible demands so that the committee could help them to enhance their budget. Thereafter, the committee deferred the issue till its next meeting.



24 February 2015

Page # 3

# Haram ingredients in most of imported food items

NA committee presented a list of 19 products being sold in market

By Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: A senior government official stunned members of a National Assembly committee on Monday when he told them that most of imported packed food items being sold in the country contained Haram ingredients.

The Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology, Mian Ijaz, presented a list of 19 such items containing Haram ingredients.

He said the ministry had no mandate to stop sale of such products.

The products are: two brands of Chicken Tonight (imported from Holland), Bubblicious (UK), Chupa Bubble (Holland), Pascual Yogikids (Spain), three brands of Skittle

Fruit (UK), Picnic Chicken (USA), Slima Soup (UK), Knorr Chicken Soup (France), Cup A Soup (UK), Tulip Chicken (Denmark), Rice Chicken Broccoli (USA), Pasta Chicken Broccoli (USA), Pasta Creamy Chicken (US), Heinz Dinner Chicken (England), Jell-O (US) and Pop Trats (USA).

The items, according to the ministry's data, contain ingredients like white and red wine, gelatine and E120 (animal-based food colour). Some of the food items containing chicken have been placed in the list due to "doubts" about the "slaughtering mechanism" since "stunning is prohibited" in Islam. Some other products have been placed in the list due to lack of "proper source or traceability to ascertain the Halal/Haram status".

The members were told that the ministry intended to see establishment of the Pakistan Halal authority through an act of parliament to promote imports and exports and inter-provincial trade and com-

merce in Halal items and processes.

A draft of the bill seeking establishment of the authority has been forwarded to the cabinet and the Council of Common Interests for approval, after which the ministry will be in a position to ensure that edibles containing Haram ingredients are not sold in the country.

The ministry's officials had been called by the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Science and Technology headed by Tariq Bashir Cheema of the PML-Q for a briefing on a notice moved by JUI-F MNA Shahida Akhtar and other party members in the assembly in November last year regarding "the sale and purchase of prohibited edible items in the country".

The NA speaker had referred the matter to the committee after the JUI-F members, including the party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, had called upon the government to ban such items.

The committee members were informed that food had become a

provincial subject after the passage of the 18th Constitution Amendment and it was the responsibility of the provincial governments to evolve a foolproof mechanism to check the sale of Haram products.

After the refusal of the ministry officials to take responsibility for the sale of Haram imported foodstuff, the committee members decided to hold another meeting with the officials concerned of the provincial governments on Thursday.

Talking to *Dawn* after the committee's meeting, Shahida Akhtar said it seemed that no one was ready to take responsibility for the sale of "prohibited" imported food items.

She said the Ministry of Science and Technology had put responsibility on the Ministry of Commerce and the provincial governments. She said a majority of the members called for immediately banning the products. However, the committee decided to hear from the officials concerned before recommending any action.

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