Unhygienic condition in city’s hotels and restaurants

By A Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, Aug 26—It seems that the people in this city are quite ignorant about the need for maintaining hygienic condition in the tea stalls, restaurants, fast-food corners etc. while these shops also do not bother about maintaining any hygienic standard.

In most of the tea stalls, fast-food corners and restaurants of the city, food items meant for human consumption are kept in open space and they become the happy hunting ground for flies. Most shops do not keep their utensils clean and some of them even go to the extent of cooking foodstuff in open areas near roads.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation has framed a good number of rules in a bid to maintain the hygienic condition in the stalls, restaurants, etc. in the city but these rules are not followed properly.

One such GMC rule says that every place—where articles intended for human consumption are kept for the purpose of sale—shall always be kept in a clean sanitary condition and shall be provided with sufficient means for effectual drainage and an adequate supply of filtered water. But unfortunately most of the tea stalls do not provide filtered water to the customers and they get their water from the nearby tube wells or roadside water taps. Some of the tea stalls store their water in dirty drums which may help increase the medical bill of the consumers.

The rules chalked out by the GMC also provide: no person shall keep for sale or sell any article intended for human consumption over or alongside any open drain or which 30 ft. of sites where dustbins, public incontinence or public urinals have already been placed; every person dealing in any articles intended for human consumption shall adopt measures to avoid deterioration of such articles and shall ensure that no dust or smoke enters the place where storage or service of foodstuff is done and in no case the oven or chula shall be placed in front of the premises etc.

But unfortunately none of these rules are strictly followed by most of the shops in the city. In most places, the kitchen or open chulhas are placed near the busy roads of the city and exposed to dust while some shops have their chulhas near the open drains. It is not that only the temporary shops or tea stalls do not follow this rule. Some of the oldest restaurants also maintain habit of placing their chulhas in front of the restaurant premises. Most of the restaurants near the ASTC bus stand and the Railway Station in Paltanbazar place their chulhas near the main road and they also keep their foodstuff in open space.

When asked to comment on these aspects, the GMC Commissioner, Sri B N Bora said that they had imposed fines on many of these restaurants but the follow up actions could not be taken properly. He also agreed that most restaurants and tea stalls of the city did not follow the rules laid down by the GMC but it is not easy for us to demolish these restaurants as we do not get any cooperation from the local people.

The rules laid down by the GMC also provide that the shopowners shall ensure that furnaces and the kitchens are of such a nature that could prevent any nuisance from smoke and that in no case shall roadside furnaces or ovens be allowed. But the kitchens of most of the restaurants are so made that they have become a nuisance to the residents of the area.

The GMC also chalked out many other rules like providing proper ventilation, keeping the utensils clean, proper storage of uncooked food, how foodstuff should be served etc. But the GMC bothers little to check whether all these rules are followed or not and as a result, very few of the restaurants bother to follow the rules.

Some restaurants also have the habit of throwing all the rubbish in the nearest available open space or on the roads. These restaurant owners allege that they are forced to do that as the GMC has failed to provide adequate dustbins. But, the GMC authorities on the other hand claim that the people of the city do not want to walk a few steps to dump their rubbish in the dustbins and they just dump all their rubbish on the roads. They also claim that in some cases the dustbins provided by the GMC were stolen by some people who sell iron or tins. The GMC Commissioner, Sri Bora claimed that all these have happened because the people are ignorant of the need for maintaining hygienic condition. The restaurants will be forced to maintain hygienic condition if the people force them to do so, he added.
Unhygienic food-joints mushrooming in city

By Bijay Sankar Bora

GUWAHATI, May 25—Using money Guwahatians are buying diseases thanks to our penchant for eating out in unhygienic roadside eating joints which are mushrooming day by day in the city.

As a result cases of gastroenteric and hepatitis diseases in the city are on the upswing.

Most of the popular fast-food joints in the city are found to be placed in unhygienic surroundings not to speak of numerous cooked-food vendors on wheels.

Some of these eateries even do not have enough space not only to accommodate customers but even the food items. It is disturbingly common to see flies feasting over uncovered dishes while customers sit in chairs near or ever the pavement without giving a damn to air-borne dust particles and toxic emission from ever increasing number of vehicles in the city.

Knowing fully well that in such injurious environment the food they are eating will have toxic particles deposited on them, the eaters are compelled to frequent such eating places in absence of alternative.

If one is very conservative about purity of the food one takes, then he or she has to either forget eating out in the city or to go for the posh restaurants which in turn puts extra pressure on the wallet.

It is quite but natural that anyone with an eye for fast buck will go for food joints business to cash in on the tremendous demand for those in the city which has turned out to be the hub centre of all activities in the region. But the responsibility lies with concerned agencies including Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Health Department to ensure prevalence of hygienic condition in eating outlets.

As things stand as of now, the agencies are not equipped with proper mechanism to check unabated growth of such eateries some of which display exotic names to attract customers. While public health is in danger, the concerned agencies are busy shifting responsibility.

While it is a well-known fact that the city people are reeling under acute drinking water scarcity with only 35 per cent of the population having access to piped water, the enforcing agencies are turning a blind eye as to where such eateries collect water from. It is a common sight in the city especially in morning hours that numerous watermen carrying water from suspect sources to city restaurants.

Health Department is content with once in a blue moon checking of food and water samples from the eating outlets despite a top official of the Department admitting that unhygienic eating places are posing threat to spread gastroenteric and hepatitis diseases.

By his own admission the GMC Commissioner, Sri RN Sharma said that most of the cater-wheelers seen in the city did not have the necessary license for trading in food items. These are simply equipped with a license to ply handcarts.

Unless the public and the enforcing agencies come together to stop the growth of such unhygienic eating outlets, Guwahati will hit the headlines as one of the most gastroenteric and hepatitis prone city in the country.

The Assam Tribune. 26 May. 1997