IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH HIGH COURT DIVISION (CRIMINAL MISCELLANEOUS JURISDICTION)

Present

Mr. Justice Ashish Ranjan Das And Mr. Justice Md. Riaz Uddin Khan

<u>Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 30375 of 2022</u> <u>With</u>

Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 11990 of 2022

IN THE MATTER OF:

Applications under Section 561-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure

-And-

IN THE MATTER OF:

Sadiul Islam

...Accused- Petitioner

(in Crl. Misc. no. 30375 of 2022)

Versus

The State and another

...Opposite Parties

Alhaj Md. Mizanur Rahman Mollah

...Accused-Petitioner

(in Crl, Misc. no. 11990 of 2022)

Versus

The State and others

...Opposite Parties

Mr. Raquibul Haque Miah (Ripon), Advocate

...For the Accused-Petitioners

(in both cases)

Mr. Md. Shahidul Islam, Advocate

...For the Opposite Party No.3

(in both cases)

Mr. S.M. Asraful Hoque, D.A.G with

Mr. Sheikh Serajul Islam Seraj, D.A.G

Ms. Fatema Rashid, A.A.G

Mr. Md. Shafiquzzaman, A.A.G. and

Mr. Md. Akber Hossain, A.A.G

----For the State

<u>Judgment on: 03.12.2023</u>

Md. Riaz Uddin Khan, I:

Since the issues in both the Criminal Miscellaneous Cases involve similar questions of facts and law, they are being disposed of by this single judgment.

In Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 30375 of 2022 Rule was issued asking the opposite parties to show cause as to why the impugned proceeding in C.R Case No. 69 of 2019 under section 26 read with section 58 of Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013, pending in Adalat Khadya the court of Bishuddha (Special Metropolitan Magistrate), Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka South City Corporation, Dhaka, should not be quashed and/or pass such other or further order or orders as to this Court may seem fit and proper.

In Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 11990 of 2022 Rule was issued asking the opposite parties to show cause as to why the impugned proceeding in Case No. 28 of 2021 under section 26 read with section 58 of Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013, pending in the court of Bishuddha Khadya Adalat (Special Metropolitan Magistrate), Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka South City Corporation, Dhaka, should not be quashed and/or pass such other or further order or orders as to this Court may seem fit and proper.

At the time of issuance of rules both the proceedings were stayed by this Court.

Brief fact of Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 30375 of 2022 arising out of CR Case No.69 of 2019

is that Opposite Party No. 2, Prosecuting Officer filed the Pure Food Inspector, petition on 18.06.2019 before the Bishuddha Khadya Adalat, Dhaka on allegations against the petitioner that the BSTI vide a letter issued under Memo No. 1429 (18) dated 11.06.2019 informed the Chairman of Bangladesh Nirapad Khadya Kartripakkha (hereinafter to referred as the Authority) that examination of iodized salt manufactured by the Company of the accused, they found the product as nonstandard; since the iodized salt manufactured by the Company was not with proper standard and the is directly accused petitioner or indirectly involved in manufacturing the below standard food which is an offence under section 26 and punishable under section 58 of the Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013 (hereinafter referred to as the Ain, 2013); that the complainant could know about such offence after receiving the letter from BSTI along with the Test Report issued by the BSTI Lab and the case was filed before the Bishuddha Khadya Adalat, Dhaka; also stated that, in the complainant event discovering the involvement of any other person in alleged offence directly or indirectly, he would supplementary prosecution file a subsequently against the person/s involved in the occurrence.

On such complaint the Bishuddha Khadya Adalat (hereinafter referred to as the Adalat) on 18.06.2019 upon examining the complainant took cognizance of the offence under Section 26 along

2013 against with Section 58 of the Ain, the petitioner and issued summons against The petitioner on being aware about the instant criminal case filed against him surrendered before the Adalat on 01.10.2019 and was granted interim bail. 04.02.2021 the petitioner was granted regular bail. The next date was fixed on 16.03.2021 for hearing of charge and thereafter dates after dates were fixed but the complainant neither appear before the Adalat nor took any step praying for adjournment. However, next date was fixed on 20.04.2022 for hearing of charge.

At this stage the petitioner moved this Court and obtained Rule and order of stay.

Brief fact of Criminal Miscellaneous Case No. 11990 of 2022 arising out of Bishuddha Khadya Case No.28 of 2021 is that Opposite Party No. 2 as prosecuting officer/complainant filed the complaint 15.07.2021 before the petition on Adalat allegations inter alia that, on 10.06.2021 he along with Sample Collector Kuti Mia on apprehension that the iodized salt namely New Iodized Salt with brand-"Molla Salt" being below standard he purchased a packet weighing 2000 grams of said salt from New Super Market, Dhaka for the purpose of examination and then following formalities sent half portion of that salt to the Food Examiner of Modern Examination and Training Center of the City Corporation; the Food Examiner issued a report on 20.06.2020 stating that the said iodized salt is below standard; the

complainant after completing formalities of inquiry including issuing notice upon the petitioner filed the instant case on 15.07.2021 contending that since the packet of salt contained the label/information of the Firm, the Managing Partner, i,e. cannot petitioner avoid the responsibility producing and marketing the below standard iodized salt which is a violation of the provisions of 26 which and punishable Section offence section 58 of the Ain, 2013. The complainant also stated in the complaint that, in the event of discovering the involvement of any other person in the offence in future a supplementary prosecution would be filed.

Upon such complaint the Adalat on 15.07.2021 after examining the complainant took cognizance of the offence under Section 26 along with Section 58 of the Ain, 2013 against the petitioner and issued summons against him. The petitioner on being aware about the instant criminal case filed against him surrendered before the Adalat on 23.09.2021 and was enlarged on interim bail. The next date was fixed on 11.11.2021 for hearing of regular bail in presence of the complainant and thereafter dates after dates were fixed but the complainant neither appear before Adalat nor took any step praying adjournment. In such circumstances, the petitioner filed application for regular bail and to fix date for hearing the charge. However, next date was fixed

on 07.03.2022 for hearing of regular bail but the Adalat did not fix any date for charge hearing.

At this stage the petitioner moved this Court and obtained Rule and order of stay.

Mr. Raquibul Haque Miah, learned advocate for the accused petitioners in both the cases submits that on the face of the complaint petition in CR case no.69 of 2019 against petitioner Sadiul Islam filed by Pure Food Inspector before the learned Bishuddha Khadya Adalat on 18.06.2019 containing allegation that BSTI by letter a informed the Chairman of 11.06.2019 Authority that the iodized salt (Confidence) was found nonstandard through lab test by the BSTI while complaint petition in Bishuddha Khadya case no.28 of 2021 against petitioner Alhaj Md. Mizanur Rahman Mollah filed 15.07.2021 contains on similar allegation. None of the instant complaint petitions come within the ambit of Sub-Sections 1 and 2 of Section 66 of the Nirapod Khadya Ain, 2013 and the same do not contain the time, place, date and manner of any occurrence, the instant complaint petitions are not complaint petition within the meaning of Section 66 of the said Ain as well as the Code of Criminal Procedure or settled law of the such, the impugned proceedings are maintainable and the Nirapad Khadya Adalat had no authority to take cognizance on such incompetent complaints.

He then submits that the preconditions to file a complaint petition under section 66 of the said Ain are that- (a) as per Sub-Section 1, any person can make a written complaint to the Chairman of the Authority or the Inspector regarding violation of particular provision of the said Ain; (b) as per Sub-Section 2, after being so informed about the commission of offence under the said Ain and being primarily confirmed about the commission of offence upon inquiry and examination (lab test), the Chairman or his authorized officer or the Inspector can file the complaint petition before the said Adalat, and (c) as per Sub-Section notwithstanding anything contained in the Section, any person can file a case under the Ain before the Adalat within 30 days from the date of the cause of action. In the present case, there was no written complaint to the Chairman or the Inspector required under Sub-Section 1 of the said Ain and no examination or lab test of sample collected as per the Rules framed under the said Ain within the meaning of Sub-Section 2 thereof. Furthermore, the complaint petitions in instant cases have been filed hopelessly beyond time limit which is mandatory to be complied with or to be strictly followed by the Inspector or Prosecuting Officer as provided in Sub-Section 3 of Section 66 of the Ain which is a enactment, because, Sub-Section special imposed a mandatory precondition with the word i.e. the expressed intention of the legislature, "এই ধারায়

ভিন্নৰূপ যাহা কিছুই থাকুক না কেন". Therefore, it is crystal clear that both the complaint petitions of the impugned proceedings are filed beyond the statutory limitation period.

He next submits that record of CR case no.69 of 2019 against petitioner Sadiul Islam shows that the complainant was asked to appear before the learned Adalat by order dated 21.11.2019, complainant did not appear before the learned Adalat on the next 14 consecutive dates during the period from 27.01.2020 to 07.03.2022. Though the case was fixed for charge hearing on 16.03.2021 and though a chance was given by the learned Adalat vide order dated 23.06.2021 to the Complainant for taking steps in the case for ends of justice, but the Complainant by disregarding the said orders of the learned Adalat did not appear in the case on subsequent 6 fixed dates. Since the learned Adalat did appearance of dispense with the personal the Adalat by the Complainant in the case, rather, the order dated 21.11.2019 asked the Complainant to appear before it on 27.01.2020, it is clear that the complainant knowing full well that the proceeding is a malicious proceeding abandoned the same and in the circumstances, the learned Adalat was obliged under the provision of Section 247 of Code of Criminal Procedure to acquit the petitioner from the allegation of the instant case. Similarly, the record of Bishuddha Khadya case no.28 of 2021 against petitioner Alhaj Md. Mizanur Rahman Mollah shows that the complainant was asked appear before the learned Adalat to adduce question of submission on jurisdiction the learned Adalat to entertain the complaint petition, complainant did not appear before the learned Adalat on many consecutive dates during the period from 23.09.2021 to 26.01.2022. learned Adalat did not dispense with the personal appearance of the complainant in the case, rather, the Adalat by an order dated 23.09.2021 asked the complainant to appear before it on 11.11.2021 to explain the maintainability of case. Therefore, it is clear that the complainant knowing full well that the impugned proceeding has no basis abandoned the same and in the circumstances, the learned Adalat was obliged under the provision of Section 247 of Code of Criminal Procedure to the acquit the petitioner form the allegation of the instant case.

that further submits He the legal responsibility of manufacturer of iodized salt is governed by the Iodized Salt Act, 1989 (Act No. X of 1989) as well as the National Salt Regulation, 2016 and the quality of salts including edible salt or iodized salt is determinable by the method prescribed by the BSTI and the authorized officer or inspector BSTI is authorized administrative and initiate criminal action manufacturer before the proceeding against the criminal court as constituted under the Act No. X of the learned Adalat 1989 and as such, has

jurisdiction to maintain the impugned proceeding against the petitioner. Rather the proceedings like the impugned proceeding can only be maintained against the persons and/or seller who retained nonstandard iodized salt.

He also submits that the authority of the BSTI notice issued cause upon the Confidence Salt Limited, regarding the rate of PH value as allegedly determined in Chemical Test conducted on sample collected on 08.04.2019 and stayed the operation of CM License of the Company and when after further cross Chemical Tests of the samples of same product it was found that their earlier test was erroneous/wrong and defective, the BSTI withdrawn their administrative actions against the Company and renewed CM License (valid up to 30.06.2022) in favour of the Company and therefore, it is clear that an interested quarter of the BSTI, collusion Chattogram in with the complainant arranged to file the instant case just to harass and humiliate the petitioner and continuation of the same is abuse of the process of the Court.

He next submits that the entity, Molla Salt Industry, has 6 (six) other partners and technical administrative officer who involved are in of manufacturing process the iodized question while the company, Confidence Salt Limited 3(three) other directors and technical administrative officer who involved are in manufacturing process of the iodized salt in

question. In view of provision of section 59 of the said Ain, the complainant was obliged to file the complainant petition against all partners and concerned officers/staff of the entity. But in the present cases, the complainant being refused to get inappropriate gain filed the cases against petitioners only with ill-motive to harass humiliate them and as such, to prevent the abuse of the process of the Court and to secure ends of justice, the impugned proceedings are liable to be quashed.

advocate lastly learned submits allegedly a surveillance team of BSTI, Chattogram alleged sample of collected the iodized manufactured by the Confidence Salt Limited from a shop namely M/s. Mohol Traders at Agrabad within City Corporation, Chattogram Chattogram 08.04.2019 and admittedly the place of occurrence is situated within the territorial jurisdiction of the Food learned Pure Court, Chattogram Corporation, Chattogram for which the learned Adalat has no jurisdiction to take cognizance of the case and as such, the impugned proceeding of CR case No.69 of 2019 being without territorial jurisdiction is liable to be quashed.

The opposite party No.3, Bangladesh Nirapad Khadya Kartripakkha, filed counter affidavits in both cases. Mr. Md. Shahidul Islam, learned Advocate appearing for the opposite party No.3 in both cases submits that the product of the accused petitioner

Sadiul Islam dated 10.04.2019 to 15.05.2019 failed to pass the standard of PH value of edible salt decided by BSTI and the inspection team of BSTI rightly collected sample of edible salt produced by the company of the accused petitioner in compliance with the provisions of Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution Ain, 2018. The PH value of the test report of the sample was found beyond the permissible limit. It is to be noted that the PH value of neutral salt is 7 and PH less than 7 in salt is acidic salt and PH more than 7 in salt is basic (alkaloid) salt. Consequently, the PH value of edible salt is strictly required to be complied with in terms of BSTI standard. Similarly the product of accused petitioner Mizanur Rahman Mollah was found non-standard by the lab test of the authority and as such the authority rightly filed the cases indicting the accused petitioners and both the rules issued instant cases against the are liable to be discharged.

He then submits that the edible salt is a food item defined under section 2(20) of আয়োডিনযুক্ত লবন আইন, ২০২১ ঝhe definition of edible salt contemplated under section 2(20) is to be read with section 2(3) of নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩. In that view, the accused petitioners are rightly indicted for violating the provisions of section 26 of নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩ which is punishable under section 58 of the said Ain of 2013 and the complainants rightly filed the case against the accused petitioners in compliance with the

provisions of law and the learned Judge of the Adalat rightly took cognizance of the cases against the accused petitioners.

The learned advocate further submits that the expiration of 30(thirty) days in filing complaint before the proper Court does not vitiate the proceeding of a case at all. On careful perusal of provisions of Section 66 of নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩ it transpires that it is nothing but a directory provision. No consequence of failure to comply with the provisions of section 66 of নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩ has been described and as such the provision being mere a directory having no consequence.

He then submits that the information as to result of report of chemical test of edible salt of the accused petitioner was forwarded to the office of the opposite party no.3 by the concerned officials of BSTI and the complainants filed the cases before the Adalat on bonafide belief out of discharging of their official duty. The failure to comply with the provisions of section 59 of the Ain, 2013 does not vitiate the whole process of the Court to be frustrated.

He lastly submits that the complainants got their legal authority to file the cases against the accused petitioners under section 51 of নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩. As a result, the accused petitioners are rightly indicted for violating the provisions of section 26 নিরাপদ খাদ্য আইন, ২০১৩ which is punishable under section 58 of the said Ain of 2013 and as such both

the rules issued in the instant cases are liable to be discharged.

We have heard the learned advocates of both the parties, perused the applications, supplementary affidavits, counter affidavits along with the annexures.

According to the learned advocate for the petitioners that the complaint petitions cannot be treated as petition of complaint according to section 66 of Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013 as there is no mention of time, place, date and manner of occurrence and both the petitions were filed beyond the statutory period of 30 days from the date of alleged occurence. We have carefully examined both the petitions of complaint and we find that the above submission has no substance. Section 66 of the Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013 reads as follows:

৬৬। অভিযোগ ও মামলা দায়ের।- (১) খাদ্য ক্রেতা, ভোক্তা, গ্রহীতা বা খাদ্য ব্যবহারকারীসহ যে কোন ব্যক্তি এই আইনের অধীন নিরাপদ খাদ্য বিরোধী কার্য সম্পর্কে চেয়ারম্যান বা তদকর্তৃক ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত প্রতিনিধি বা পরিদর্শকের নিকট লিখিতভাবে অভিযোগ জানাইতে পারিবেন।

- (২) চেয়ারম্যান বা তদকর্তৃক ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কোন কর্মকর্তা বা পরিদর্শক, এই আইনের অধীন যে কোন অপরাধ সংঘটনের বিষয় অবহিত হইবার পর, প্রয়োজনীয় অনুসন্ধান ও পরীক্ষা-নিরীক্ষান্তে সংশ্লিষ্ট অপরাধের বিষয়ে প্রাথমিকভাবে নিশ্চিত হইলে, খাদ্য আদালতে মামলা দায়ের করিবে।
- (৩) এই ধারায় ভিন্নরূপ যাহা কিছুই থাকুক না কেন, যে কোন ব্যক্তি, এই আইনের অধীন মামলা দায়েরের জন্য কারণ উদ্ভব হইবার ৩০(ত্রিশ) দিনের মধ্যে, নিরাপদ খাদ্য বিরোধী যে কোন কার্য সম্পর্কে খাদ্য আদালতে মামলা দায়ের করিতে পারিবেন।

On careful reading of the section it appears that according to Sub-Section 1, any person can file

written complaint to the Chairman or his authorized Inspector officer or the of Nirapad Kartripakkha regarding any activity against safe food; as per Sub-Section 2, after being informed about the commission of offence under the Ain, 2013 on being *prima facie* confirmed commission of offence upon inquiry and examination, Chairman or his authorized officer Inspector shall file case before the Khadya Adalat, and according to Sub-Section 3, notwithstanding anything contained in the Section, any person can file a case under the Ain, 2013 before the Khadya Adalat within 30 days from the date of the cause of action. So, there is no doubt that the case must be filed within 30 days of date of cause of action. It is a mandatory provision of law provided by special enactment. In that view, no case can be filed by any person under the Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013 beyond the 30 days limitation period from the date of cause of action provided under section 66 of the Ain. In the present CR case No.69 of 2019 sample of "Confidence salt" collected was surveillance team on 08.04.2019 and was sent for lad-test to BSTI and thereafter on receiving test report on 11.06.2019 from the office of BSTI, the prosecuting officer and Inspector of the Authority filed the case on 18.06.2019 before the Khadya the Adalat. Here, cause of action arises 11.06.2019 when the Authority came to know about the offence, i, e. the test report of the non-standard

of the edible salt and not the date when the sample was collected or seized for lab-test. In the present Bishuddha Khadya case no.28 of 2021 one Inspector of the Authority collected the sample of "Molla salt" on 10.06.2021 and on the same day sent it for labtest to Food analyst, Modern Laboratory and Training Centre under Dhaka South City Corporation thereafter on receiving test report on 20.06.2021, prosecuting officer and Inspector Authority filed the case on 15.07.2021 before the Khadya Adalat. Here, though the date of occurrence in the petition of mentioned complaint 10.06.2021 but the date of cause of action will be 20.06.2021 when the Authority came to know about the offence, i.e test report regarding non-standard of edible salt. In that view, both the cases are filed well within the statutory limitation period of 30 days as provided under section 66 of the Ain, 2013.

The petitioners contented that since there is law namely the Iodized Salt Act, 1989 (Act No. X of 1989) as well as the National Salt Regulation, 2016 and the quality of salts including edible salt or iodized salt is determinable by the method prescribed by the BSTI and the authorized officer or of is authorized inspector BSTI to take administrative action and initiate criminal proceeding against the manufacturer as such the instant proceedings maintainable. are not contention has no substance, because the allegation brought against the present petitioners is also an

offence under section 26 of the Nirapad Khadya Ain, 2013 which is punishable under section 58 of the said Ain. Ιt is settled law that it is the prosecution who is at liberty to proceed with the case under any one of the Ain against the accused if the alleged offence comes under more than one penal laws but the accused cannot be tried twice for the same offence under different Ain. However, administrative action and criminal proceeding is not the same thing. The petitioner could not show us that they were earlier tried under the Iodized Salt Act, 1989 or any criminal proceeding was initiated under the said Act for the alleged offence. The contention, that in both cases there are some other persons who are also responsible for the manufacture of such salt and they have not been made accused, substance. Because, has no non-inclusion probable/suspected accused who could have been made accused cannot be а ground for quashing proceeding.

On point of territorial jurisdiction it is well settled that the criminal proceeding will not be quashed on the ground of lack of territorial jurisdiction. Section 177 to 185 of the Code of Criminal Procedure deal the procedure of territorial jurisdiction and whenever a question arises as to which of two or more Courts subordinate to High Court Division ought to inquire into or try any offence, it shall be decided by the High Court Division.

The petitioners contended that after filing the cases and examined by the judge of the Adalat, the complainants of both the cases did not appear before the Adalat for many consecutive dates, though both of them were asked to appear by specific order of the Adalat; hence, under section 247 of the Code of Criminal Procedure the learned judge of the Adalat were obliged to acquit the accused petitioners. Section 247 of the Code of Criminal Procedure reads as under:

247. If the summons has been issued on complaint, and upon the day appointed for the appearance of the accused, or any day subsequent thereto to which the hearing may be adjourned, the complainant does not appear, the Magistrate shall, notwithstanding anything herein before contained, acquit the accused, unless for some reason he thinks proper to adjourn the hearing of the case to some other day: Provided that, where the complainant is a public servant and his personal attendance is not required, the Magistrate dispense with his attendance, and proceed with the case.

We have carefully examined the records of both the cases. It appears from the record of CR case no.69 of 2019 that on the date of filing of the case on 18.06.2019 the complainant was examined by the learned judge of the Bishuddha Khadya Adalat. The complainant never appeared before the Adalat except on 04.02.2021 only. It further appears that the accused was present on several dates but was also absent by petition on some other dates praying for adjournment which were allowed by the Court. On the other hand the complainant was neither present nor any step was taken for many consecutive dates. The record of Bishudda Khadya Case no.28 of 2021 also shows that on the date of filing of the case on 15.07.2021 the complainant was examined by the learned judge of the Adalat. The complainant never appeared before the Adalat although was asked to appear by order dated 23.09.2021. Even no step was taken seeking adjournment. Section 247 of the Code of Criminal Procedure mandates that if upon issuance of summons, a day is fixed for appearance of the day subsequent accused any thereto, the complainant does not appear, the Magistrate shall, notwithstanding anything herein before contained, acquit the accused, unless for some reason he thinks proper to adjourn the hearing of the case to some other day. We have already noticed that no step was taken on behalf of the complainant and the learned judge giving adjournment dates after dates without mentioning any reason for non-appearance of the complainant. It is mentionable that the present complainants are public servant and the proviso of section 247 states that if the presence of public servant complainant is not required, then his personal attendance may be dispensed with. But

records of both the cases do not show that in the present cases the personal attendance of the complainants was dispensed with. No doubt, the Magistrate has discretion to adjourn the hearing of case to some other day, if for some reason he thinks proper. In the present cases, for many the complainants were consecutive dates without taking any step. Since the complainants of the cases did not appear before the Court for many consecutive dates without taking any step and their personal attendance was not dispensed with, the judge should have acquit following the procedure of section 247 of the Code Procedure. Criminal In the facts circumstances of the cases and the reasons stated above, we are of the opinion, that the continuation of both the proceedings is abuse of the process of the Court.

In view of the discussions made and the reasons stated hereinbefore, we hold that there is substance for interference by this Court under its inherent jurisdiction to prevent the abuse of the process of the Court and to secure ends of justice having merit in the Rules.

In the result, both the Rules are made absolute.

The proceedings of both CR Case No. 69 of 2019 and Bisuddha Khadya Case No. 28 of 2021, pending in the Court of Bishudha Khadya Adalat (Special

Metropolitan Magistrate), Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka South City Corporation, Dhaka are hereby quashed.

Communicate the judgment and order to the Court of Bishudha Khadya Adalat (Special Metropolitan Magistrate), Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka South City Corporation, Dhaka at once.

Ashish Ranjan Das, J:

I agree.

Ziaul Karim Bench Officer