

Falsifying food expiry dates lands five in jail

Men found guilty of applying new labels

- By Bassam Za'za', Senior Reporter
- Published: 00:00 January 18, 2011



Dubai: Five men were jailed for four months for tampering with packets of frozen noodles and other food products meant to be delivered to the residences of VIPs and five-star hotels.

The Dubai Misdemeanours Court sentenced four Indian men — a businessman, a warehouse keeper, a security guard and a worker — and a Nepalese worker to four months in prison after convicting them of cheating by falsifying expiry dates on food products being packaged for sale.

Presiding Judge Jamal Abdul Majid also fined the 42-year-old businessman, T.L., Dh20,000 for trading in food products without a licence. Prosecutors said the defendants altered the expiry dates on various foodstuffs, including frozen noodles, sauces, pepper, dried fish, peanuts, mustard seeds and vinegar by applying new labels.

When the defendants appeared in court, they pleaded not guilty and denied what they described as "baseless accusations".

"The tampered products will be confiscated and the warehouse where the products were being sold will be closed for a month. The defendants will also have to print this verdict in a newspaper at their expense," said Presiding Judge Abdul Majid when he delivered the verdict.

Police questioning

Lawyers Ali Abdullah Al Shamsi and Abdullah Al Bannai represented the defendants. "The law enforcement procedures were unlawfully carried out against the suspects. During police questioning, they were questioned in the absence of [a] legal translator," Al Shamsi argued.

"Dubai Municipality inspectors and law enforcement officers went into the warehouse without obtaining permission from prosecutors. Besides, they did not alter or falsify any document. Prosecutors also failed to submit any corroborated evidence against the defendants."

Dubai Police's criminal lab report did not mention any pertinent evidence in the confiscated products and the report also did not mention any material evidence concerning the expiry labels, said Al Shamsi.

As part of his defence, advocate Al Shamsi presented photos before Presiding Judge Abdul Majid confirming that the products' expiry dates had not been tampered with.

The primary judgment can be appealed within 14 days.

© Gulf News 2011