

No new licence for rojak seller

NEA decides on life ban after taking into account severity of incident, which killed two

■ BY MAVIS TOH

FORMER rojak seller Sheik Allaudin Mohideen (below, right), who was fined \$9,000 on Tuesday for unhygienic practices that led to a food poisoning outbreak last year, has now been permanently barred from operating a food business by the National Environment Agency (NEA).

On Tuesday, outside the court, a visibly relieved Sheik Allaudin had told reporters that all he wanted, after the episode, was a new NEA licence so he could start over.

He had said: "The food business is the only work I know, and it all depends on the NEA if I can return to work in a kitchen."

But in a statement issued last night, the NEA said it has decided to bar the Indian rojak seller after taking into account the severity of the incident, which led to two deaths and 154 other customers falling ill.

The ban, which took immediate effect, means that besides not being able to apply for a hawkler/food shop licence, the 70-year-old will not be allowed to help out as a food handler at the new stall licensed under his wife's name.

When contacted yesterday, Sheik Allaudin refused to comment on the ban.

His son, Mr Allayuthen, 33, told The Straits Times that his father was unhappy with the agency's decision.

"He is old already. If he doesn't do food business, what else can he do?" he said, adding that his father spends most of his time at home or attending prayers at the mosque.

Sheik Allaudin, who has been out of work since his licence was suspended in April last year, had said on Tuesday that the money to pay his fine came from loans from his relatives, and that he wanted to work to repay them.

His wife, Madam Hajara Aludeen, received a licence from the NEA for a new stall at the Geylang Serai market in February. Mr Allayuthen and his brother Yasin, 31, started running the stall last Thursday after they completed a hygiene course run by the NEA.

Hawkers interviewed at the market yesterday said the stall's business has been good, and the rojak and mee siam are usually sold out by 1pm.

They added that the brothers run the unit, sometimes helped by their mother, but never Sheik Allaudin.

Mr Allayuthen said that business will continue, adding: "My brother and I can cope, and the customers have been really encouraging and supportive."

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