

Knives, new and old, ready for use at Eid

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With Eid-ul-Azha drawing near, city dwellers are now rushing to buy different kinds of knives, which they require to slaughter animals to fulfil the obligation of the festival of sacrifice.

Knives for slaughter, chopping, carving, paring, slicing, skinning to name a few and small axes to chop bones are much in demand.

The market selling the different kinds of knives and other items required to prepare for the sacrifice has gained momentum just two days to the festival.

"I have to buy chopping boards and mats along with one or two knives," said Kasru Ahmed, a buyer.

Blacksmiths have been kept

on their toes fighting against time to meet the demands of customers.

"We make ready all kinds of knives before Eid every year and this year is no exception. We started moulding and making these knives 20 days back, but with Eid at hand, the demands are increasing," said Mohammad Ali, a blacksmith in Karwan Bazar.

Though sales have not picked up as expected, the blacksmiths are hopeful that demands will rise a day before the festival.

"Customers come to us after they buy the sacrificial animal, and it is obvious that business will increase," said Khokon, of Allahar Daan metal store in Karwan Bazar.

But most businessmen

complained that their business suffers because of the makeshift shops on the eve of Eid.

"Many seasonal businessmen arrive at the last moment to sell their products just beside the cattle markets. This stalls our business," said Rahmaatullah, another knife seller. "All round the year, we wait for this Eid to see some profit but the lion share is taken by these makeshift shop owners," he said.

Buyers complained that price hike has also touched the 'knife market' while the sellers said the price hike in raw materials is the main reason behind this.

"The price of cast iron spring now costs Tk 60 a kilogram (kg) compared to Tk 20 last year. Besides the labour cost and rents have also increased," said Amzat, a businessman in Karwan Bazar.

This year the slaughtering knives cost Tk 250 to 300 each, small axes cost Tk. 150 each, *chapati* Tk 200 a kg, *boti* Tk 250 a kg. Besides, various kinds of small knives are sold at Tk 50 to Tk 200. Prices of different sizes of chopping boards range from Tk 80 to Tk 150 and price of mats range from Tk 30 to 50.

"I brought 500 chopping boards this year, hopefully all these will be sold before Eid," said Chand Miah, a seasonal businessman who brings wood from Jamalpur every year.

Besides buying new knives, many customers also come to sharpen or repair the old ones.

"Each shop here gets around 25 repair orders and the number of knives for sharpening is higher," said Kamal another businessman.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Two big trees in front of the Prime Minister's Office have been cut down despite the postponement of the tree felling by the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) workers on the airport road amid protests by the environment-alists.

Only last Wednesday, a high official of DUTP told this correspondent that the trees from Shaheed Jahangir Gate to Bijoy Sarani fountain, especially in front of the Prime Minister's Office, would not be cut down immediately. But it was found later that workers began to chop down the trees and by Friday night they removed both the trees.

When asked about it, the same official could not give a satisfactory answer. He said that he had no information about why the trees were cut down suddenly.

"To develop the drainage system, construct footpaths and set up electric poles, we are cutting down trees but we are not doing it randomly," said a high official of DUTP. "To reduce the excessive traffic flow, we are widening the airport road and we have to remove some trees."

The DUTP workers have already cut down about 100 trees in the last couple weeks along the road from Banani Staff Road level crossing to Bijoy Sarani fountain. They will also remove more than 800 trees of which some are 10 to 30 years old.

"Generally trees are cut down at dawn and midnight and are removed from the spot quickly," said a DUTP worker engaged in tree felling.

Visiting the place it has been noticed that the walkways have been demolished. The divider of the road from Chairmanbari to Banani has also been demolished. Trees including *debdaru*, *coroi*, *segun*, *mehguni*, *shishu* had been felled two weeks ago.

According to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the implementation of a Tk 20-crore project began in November last year to widen the airport road. Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) is implementing the project.

"The road will be divided into six lanes and the width will be increased by 10 to 30 feet depending on the availability of space



Trees in front of the PMO were not spared despite assurances from authorities.

on both sides of the road," said Md Touhiduzzaman, the executive engineer of DUTP.

On the other hand, some environmentalists criticised the indiscriminate cutting down of trees in the name of infrastructure development. They mentioned that the authorities could wide the road without chopping down the trees.

Abu Naser Khan, the convener of Save the Environment, said, "It

would not be needed to remove the trees, if the government did it in a planned way."

"This type of decision will cause great harm to the environment," said Alamgir Kabir, the central convener of Green Voice.

Asked about tree plantation in that places, an executive engineer of DUTP said, "We haven't decided to plant new trees but it is under our consideration."

Twelve government and autonomous bodies including Bangladesh Biman, army, navy, Civil Aviation Authority, Desa, Wasa, BTTB, and Roads and Highways Department have allocated roadside lands for the project.

The project, which was supposed to start in 2003, started in last November and is now expected to be finished in May 2006, sources of DUTP said.



Blacksmiths at Karwan Bazar have been kept busy to meet the demands of customers.

CASH MEMO

A rare practice in most shops

NOVERA DEEPIA

Most shops in the city, including pharmacies, fancy shops, food outlets and grocery corners, do not have the practice of providing cash memos to customers.

"I did not get a proper cash memo from Time Out in Gulshan. All I got was a hand written memo on a plain sheet of paper instead of a proper, specific printed one," said Faraz Ahmed, a regular customer of fast food shops.

"Shops issuing hand written or improper memos with no indication of value added tax (VAT) and/or other taxes, can rip customers off," said Quazi Faruque, general secretary of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

"Customers are not aware that proper receipts and memos must be issued whenever some item is purchased," said Faruque. "This is the reason why businesspersons and salesmen are getting away with this unethical practice," he added.

Pharmacies are no exception to the rule.

"Fifty percent of the pharmacies except those adjacent to hospitals do not issue cash memos or receipts," said Mamunur Rashid, an NGO official, who regularly buys medicines for his ailing father.

"People rarely ask for memos as they usually buy medicines in a hurry. Occasionally when I ask for a memo, shopkeepers pretend they know nothing about giving a receipt for the money paid, which is clear indication of dishonesty," he added.

Pharmacies of the biggest medicine market in the city, Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC), popularly known as Mitford Hospital, do not give cash memos.

"Even if cash memos are given, VAT is rarely shown or included. The price of medicines fluctuate because of their dishonesty," said Rajiv Hossain, a resident student of SSMC hostel.

When asked why the cash memos are not issued, Jibon, a salesman of the medicine corner of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), said: "We do not usually give cash memos if the amount is negligible and most customers do not ask for it. If they do, we always provide them with a memo."

Consumers are taken for granted in Bangladesh in the absence of enforcement of consumer rights laws because of mass illiteracy and lack of practice. Consumers are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, as consumerism is still a new concept here.

Consumers are cheated and exploited by some dishonest businessmen and vested interest groups because of lack of appropriate and adequate protective laws, standards and effective implementation of existing laws.

"Most shoe-shops, except the famed ones, do not give memos. They keep cash memos but are reluctant to issue them," said Sharmeen Shams, a resident of Bashundhara. "This goes for shops in large malls like Rapa and Eastern Plaza or Rifles Square," she added.

"Neither the customer nor the shopkeeper is aware of the consumer rights laws. It is obvious that the shopkeepers are ripping us off by taking money according to their whims," she further said.

Rifles Square, one of the biggest CD, VCD and DVD markets in the city, sells mainly pirated versions of CDs and DVDs.

Manjulika Chowdhury, a regular customer of CDs, said that as the item sold is pirated salespersons are not obliged to give cash memos. For this reason she does not ask for one.

But Quazi Faruque of CAB said, "According to the existing law every salesperson is bound to provide cash memo to their customers for every item purchased, even if the product is pirated."

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