

## FURNITURE FESTIVAL 2006

# Deshi products on show

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

A furniture festival in the city has been attracting enthusiastic visitors in Mirpur to highlight local products and encourage Bangladeshi furniture makers, who have been going through a bad time recently due to high price of timber.

There are about 110 furniture showrooms along Begum Rokeya Sarani. Instead of putting up separate stalls somewhere else, these showrooms have been nicely decorated to attract customers, turning the area into a festive mood.

The shops taking part in the 15-day fair that started on March 1, include the reputed brands like Hatil, Akhtar, Paris, Kalam, Brothers, Golden Teak in the Mirpur Furniture Market, the largest in Bangladesh, said Bangladesh Furniture Owners Association (BFOA) sources.

Mainly home and office furnishings caught the attention of many visitors thronging the fair but most were dissatisfied with the high price of the products.

Latifunnesa, a housewife from Badda said: "Though the furniture being shown are elegant thanks to nice design and colour, the price is beyond my reach".

Akmal Hossain, a businessman, said: "Not only the price is high, some of the small houses are actually selling items by falsely claiming that their products are made of Teak wood."

Organisers and participants said the taste of the consumers has changed a lot over the years and that has driven them to the

exposition. On the other hand some visitors said that the apartments and modern office complexes in the city with modern architectural design have given rise to the

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need of new and creatively designed furniture as well.

The organisers are satisfied with the response to the fair. "Despite the day to day problems in the city, the fair drew large crowds

in the first few days", said Md Bazul Karim, secretary of the Mirpur unit of BFOA and convenor of this fair.

About the highly priced products, Bazul said Teak wood, popularly known as Shegun from Chittagong Hill Tracts now costs Tk 2,600 per cft, compared to Tk1000 one and a half years ago. Similarly, the price of Burmese Teak wood also rose to TK3000 from Tk 1200 per cft.

Timber traders in Dhaka alleged that syndicated groups of traders are trying to create an artificial crisis by holding timber stock at the hill districts while making money by importing timber from China, Malaysia and other countries.

They also complained that supply of wood like Teak, Chapalish, Garjon, Gamari and many others from Rangamati, Chittagong, Bandarban and Sylhet has almost stopped.

Nazrul Islam Bahar, manager of Kalam Furniture and Saw Mill said, "We heard about some outlets selling fake items to customers. To curb this, most of the outlets have pasted the name of the wood on the price tag".

Other shop owners said the prices of the products are fixed so that there is no scope for bargaining plus discounts up to 15 percent is also given on the goods. And to encourage customers, there is a free home delivery service and a one-year warranty.

This festival has been organised by BFOA's Mirpur Regional Branch with logistical support from KATALYST, a development project funded by a consortium of European donors.



STAR PHOTO

# DCC blamed for mosquito menace

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

While mosquito menace in the city has worsened over the last few weeks, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) authorities are yet to take effective measures to solve the situation.

"It is becoming hard to sleep at night due to mosquito bites. Even the mosquito nets or coils can stop them. The inactive role of the DCC makes it look like they are actually safeguarding the mosquito population," said Salim Ahmed, an angry resident of Dhanmondi.

Ahmed has taken a number of measures to fight the daily menace. "We shut off all the windows and doors by the evening. Previously this used to work but nowadays, the mosquitoes still infiltrate our defensive measures," he said.

Shawly Rizia, a resident of Uttara, thinks that the mosquitoes seem to be immune to all coils, sprays, tablets and other chemical and physical measures.

"We rely on the larvaecide that the DCC is supposed to spray on daily basis," she said.

Rizia, however, thinks that

except for the prominent areas like Gulshan, cantonment and Baridhara, areas like Uttara, Nikunja and Badda do not get their daily dosage of larvaecide.

Residents of other highly affected areas like Kalabagan, Panthapath, Agargaon,

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**The Mosquito Control Department of DCC claimed that no particular area in the city is being given special preference over others as far as the work of spraying is concerned.**

Mohammadpur, Nilkhet, Shahbagh, Hatirpul, Azimpur, Rampura, Gulistan and Sayedabad also complained that these areas are not being sprayed regularly.

"Every year, a number of people are afflicted with dengue and malaria in this area. We fear there may be a repetition of it this year too," said Prantik Dey, a resident of Sayedabad.

divided the city into 10 zonal areas. Four staff have been appointed for the 90 wards of the city, who spray larvaecide once at daytime and once again in the evening," said Anwar, an official of the Mosquito Control Department.

Many city dwellers, however, disagreed, saying the DCC staff are very irregular. "I see the person responsible for this area

on an interval of two to three days," said Tofazzel Haque, a resident of Kalabagan.

Haque said when larvaecide man comes to spray the area, he moves through the roads avoiding the narrow alleys with most drains and puddles, the breeding places of mosquitoes.

Residents of areas like Azimpur, Dhaka College area and Elephant Road claimed that they often have to pay some extra money to most of these staff so that they spray their areas properly.

There are also allegations that the larvaecide sprayed by the DCC is either out-of-date or adulterated. "The sprays do not seem to work any longer," said Saad Hammadi, a resident of Hatirpul.

Dr Nasimus Seraj of the Department of Entomology, DCC, however, denied the allegations, saying, "We are doing our best to fight this crisis. The DCC has an ongoing work plan of Tk 12 crore for the year of 2005-2006 to solve the mosquito problem."

He assured that necessary steps would be taken soon to solve the current crisis.

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