

No standard scale to ensure accurate weight in gold

SULTANA RAHMAN

The non-existence of a digital scale prescribed by the government to weigh gold has given rise to jewellers using various types of weighing machines allegedly pilfering gold weights and misleading customers.

There are no specific guidelines as to what type of digital scale should be used to weigh gold. Those in the trade also lack technology to check *khad* (alloy) in the ornament.

The internationally recognised level of *khad* is 1.08 milligrams (mg) in 11.66 grams of gold, which allegedly is not maintained and the authorities have turned a blind eye to the matter.

Many female customers said that the weight of the same gold ornament varies from shop to shop. They said a gold ornament is costly and a sensitive issue too, not only in price but also in terms of social and cultural wealth.

"I bought a pair of ear-rings that weighed eight grams from a shop at Iqbal Centre in Banani. When I checked it in another shop the weight was only 7.76 grams," said Sharmila, a home-maker, adding: "When we lose money we do not mind, but when we lose a simple gold ornament, we get upset."

A visit to different gold shops showed that digital scales of at least 30 different companies are used, imported mostly from Switzerland, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and China.

Gold jewellers admitted that the difference in gold weights in different shops is at a 'minimum'. "The internationally acknowl-



The mobile courts in action checking accuracy of weights used in jewellery stores.

edged difference is between 2 to 2 1/2 mg which cannot be detected by the naked eye. If the difference is above the international level, it then causes an unpleasant and acceptable situation," said MA Wadud Khan, president, Bangladesh Jewellers Samity (BJS) and owner of Chandrima Jewellers.

He also said that the weight of gold in the hallmark should not be different when physically weighed. "If it differs there must

be problem, which is a crime," Wadud said.

Although BSTI (Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute) 'check' the digital weighing machines used in gold shops and tags them as 'standard quality', the present drive against the malpractice in commodities led by magistrate Rokan Ud-Doullah found 'weight pilferage' in gold business.

The mobile courts fined a

number of gold shops for weight pilferage finding the shortage in weight between 30 to 40 mg than the actual.

Gold businessmen said that sometimes the difference might be created because of the airflow inside the scale and the fluctuation of electricity.

They also believe that same brand scale in the gold business would reduce the fear of 'wrong weights.'

There are about 1,000 gold shops owners of which 800 are members of the BJS who have invested more than Tk 1,000 crore in the gold showrooms in the capital.

The major gold showrooms are found in Baitul Mukarram, Chandni Chawk, Mouchack, New Market, Eastern Plaza, Paltan Super Market, Rajdhani Super Market, Navana shopping complex and Iqbal Centre.

The BJS leaders said that if the authorities prescribe any specific weighing scale, the confusion in gold measurements would be lessened.

"We will fully cooperate with the government's decision for any specific scale," Wadud said. He also urged the government to import technology to check *khad*, which will improve the quality of gold ornaments available in the country.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"Soon after the coalition assumed power, I submitted a petition for mercy to the Prime Minister, home minister and some other ministers and in reply they assured me that they will let me off"

-- Mufti Abdul Hannan

A top Islamist militant leader

Told the court in presence of a large number of lawyers, law enforcers and newsmen on October 2. Source: The Daily Star

"It's for sure that Mufti Hannan did not come to me in person for the recommendation. Probably, some local BNP leaders had come for him and on seeing their [district BNP leaders'] recommendations I had given my opinion on the application as Hannan was not that known at that time"

-- Goutam Chakraborty

State Minister for Water Resources Ministry

Told journalists commenting whether or not he had recommended Mufti Hannan's application for withdrawal of the case submitted to the then home minister during Awami League, on October 6. Source: The Daily Star

"There is no provision for bombing in Islam. These bombers have no knowledge of the religion"



-- Lutfuzzaman Babar

State minister for Ministry of Home Affairs

Told journalists after the meeting of the home ministry a day after the bomb blasts in courts of three districts, on October 4. Source: Prothom Alo

"What would we do... tell me... at that time we had no other choice we could not provide them or ourselves with food. So, we thought why they shouldn't work and have good food... what is wrong in that?"

-- Phulmoti

Mother of a camel jockey who returned home recently

Told The Daily Star explaining why she was forced to send her child in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on October 5. Source: The Daily Star

"By trying a handful of lower-level operatives and then declaring the case closed, an attempt will be made to protect the masterminds behind my father's killing"

-- Reza Kibria

Son of assassinated ex-finance minister SAMS Kibria

Said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on the investigation into the grisly killing of his father, on October 4. Source: The Daily Star

"We will not allow anyone or any group other than the 140 million people of Bangladesh to interfere in the internal affairs as long as BNP is in power. All diplomats must follow the diplomatic norms, manners and rules"

-- M Morshed Khan

Foreign Minister

Said at a press briefing commenting on the Tuesday Group's effort to organise an international seminar on fair elections, on October 3. Source: The Daily Star

Iftar business sees a lull

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Iftar sales in the capital have come down this year due to the recent drives by the mobile court against adulterated and stale food.

Use of food colour and low quality oil is also less this year, said customers.

At popular spots for iftar items in the city like Chawkbazar, Bailey Road, Dhanmondi, Satmasjid Road and the BAF Shaheen Complex market, using colour in food has almost ceased much to the delight of the consumers.

"This year iftar items are more pricey but they seem less harmful. The iftar market is not as colourful as last year but it is certainly more hygienic," observed Ahmed Razu of Chawkbazar.

"While people were buying iftar, the mobile court raided this place recently. After that, the sellers have become very cautious about cleanliness. All the food

items are covered with plastic sheets and there is always someone to shoo away the flies" said Rokeya Begum who was shopping at Shaheen Complex.

The streetside iftar market at Karwan Bazar has seen less number of stalls this year apparently due to the price hike of food products. Even the owners of the makeshift shops are not risking adding food colour or low quality oil in the fear of mobile courts.

Ahmed Sharif, an iftar shop owner from Karwan Bazaar said that the business was very dull this year due to two reasons, price hike of all items and the mobile court. "People have become generally skeptical about iftar items," said Sharif.

Monu Miah, a food seller from Bailey Road said: "Look at the colour of the jilabas. They are crispy and bright golden in colour and not red or orange. The hot sugar syrup is as well made of the

The streetside iftar market at Karwan Bazar has seen less number of stalls this year apparently due to the price hike of food products. Even the owners of the makeshift shops are not risking adding food colour or low quality oil in the fear of mobile courts

best quality sugar."

But in the name of quality, sellers have also raised the prices.

"We have to sell iftar items at a higher price as the ingredients have become costlier too," said a seller of iftar items from Karwan Bazaar.

Manager of a street side iftar outlet in Gulistan said one kg of soybean oil had been Tk 48 not so long ago and now it is Tk 58.

"We have already started our drive in iftar shops. We are stressing on finding iftar items with food colour and adulterated oil. We are checking the kitchens to see whether they are using mobil or any harmful chemical while frying. We are also checking the cleanliness and hygiene standards," said mobile court magistrate Rokan-Ud-Doula.



Iftar items sans colour in fear of mobile court raids waiting to be sold at Karwan Bazar.



Persons without driving licences drive most human hauliers such as the one in the picture in Eastern Dhaka.

STAR PHOTO

Who needs a license?

ERSHAD KAMOL

Most of the drivers of human-hauliers, the main mode of transportation for residents of Khilgaon, Goran, Sipahibagh, Bashabo, Madartek and Mugda areas, do not possess driving licenses.

There are some 36 human-hauliers plying on the Gulistan-Goran-Sipahibagh route while 30 run on the Gulistan-Bashabo-Madartek route. Another 14 ply

between Gulistan and Mugda.

On each route, a committee titled Sramik-Malik Okya Parishad (Drivers-Workers Union) 'manages' the authorities so that a driver without license can move about freely.

A leader of the Parishad said: "We collect money from each human-hauler of the route and from that, pay the police sergeant at Gulistan Intersection Tk 20,000 per month. He takes care of every-

thing for us. This has been the system on all the three routes from Gulistan to the eastern part of the city for decades."

"On this route not more than 20 veteran drivers have genuine license. All the younger ones, who once had been helpers of these vehicles, now drive without any valid permit," said Salu, a driver on the Gulistan-Bashabo route who added that local hoodlums are also involved

in arranging things for human-hauliers.

"Every human-hauler driver on this route has to pay extortion money in the range of Tk 200 per day at four intersections Bashabo, Khilgaon, Shahjahanpur and Gulistan to the local goons who are supposed to manage everything."

There are some other people who are not drivers or helpers but still play a major role in the

human-hauler business. They are members of a syndicate that decides who would drive the vehicles and who would assist them. These syndicate members also take money from drivers.

When his attention was drawn to the matter, Mizanur Rahman, the commissioner of traffic claimed his ignorance.

"I am not informed about it," said Rahman.