

IMITATION JEWELLERY

Traders experience sharp fall in sales despite increasing demand

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Mumu has been roaming around the shops in Ghausia for the last hour, looking for jewellery to match the attire she would wear at her best friend's wedding, which is knocking at the door.

She has to attend at least four functions including two *holuds*, the wedding and the reception.

The sarees are new and pretty and she wants jewellery to upkeep the beauty of her clothes. The ornaments

she possesses are discoloured and outdated.

But she could not find any at a price within her reach. The price of imitation jewellery has increased considerably in the past year.

"I have been walking around the shops for one hour, but was not able to find any set at a fair price. Last year I bought a few sets of jewellery at a much lower price, but I need new ones now," said Mumu.

Imitation jewellery shop owners and salespersons expected a boost in

sales given the recent rise in gold price and female especially young girls' preference for imitations rather than gold as ideal party wear.

But the reality is the opposite. "We are experiencing a drop in sales," said Khurshed Alam, a salesperson of Mishuk at Mouchak market.

Other dealers and traders in the business echoed the same concern.

In spite of the increasing demand traders experience this decline in sales because of the financial constraints of average customers and the

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rising prices of imitations.

Two types of imitation jewellery are available -- local and imported. While the local ones are bought from wholesalers in Chawkbazaar, the imported ones come mainly from India.

Indian brands like Citigold, Sunny gold, Sony gold, Amin gold, Micro gold, RK are very popular among women of all ages. These are made of copper and iron and plated or coloured with gold.

"Despite having a close resemblance to gold in appearance, imitations cannot pass off as gold because gold is softer in texture and can be tested on a touchstone," said Shaheen, office secretary of Bangladesh Jewellers, Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"Gold plated ornaments discolour after a few years and one can purchase a new set with the cost of re-plating them. The gold colour lasts a few months," said Mohammad Hanif, owner of Raba and Rongdhonu Imitation Jewellery.

"Gold colouring is brighter in appearance than genuine gold and

discolour faster," added Mohammad Halim, co-owner of Rongdhonu.

An imitation necklace with a striking resemblance to a gold piece would cost Tk 150 whereas the cost of a gold chain is between Tk 2,000-3,000, according to Rashid, the owner of Nasif Komar at Mouchak.

Customers prefer imitations partly because of the cheaper cost and partly for the rising occurrences in theft.

"It (imitation) is cheaper," said Minu, a housewife. "I prefer imitation after losing two bhoris of gold to muggers in separate incidents," she added.

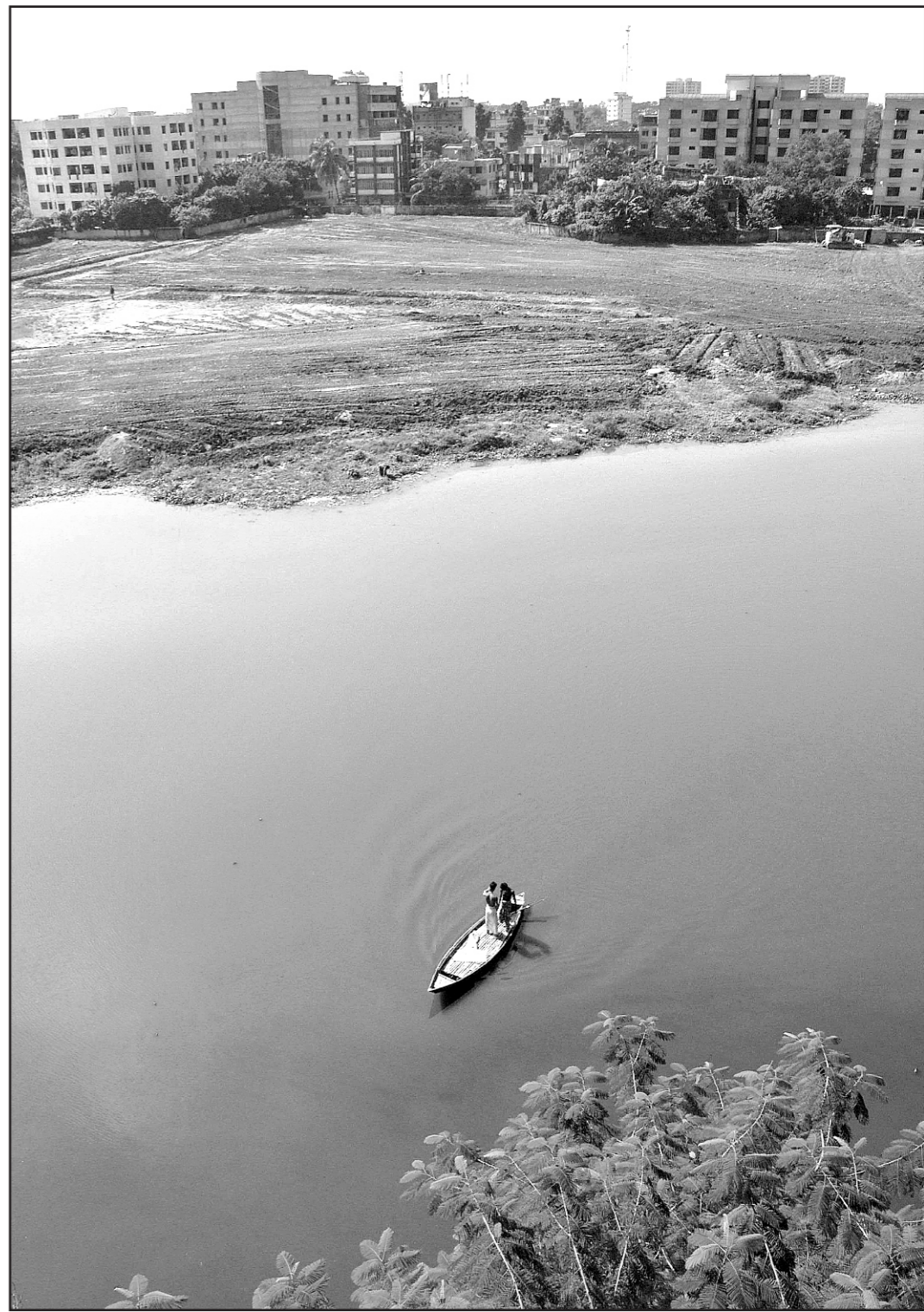
"Last year an imitation set cost between Tk 200-250 whereas this year the same set costs between Tk 300-350," said Akramullah, owner of Bhuiyan Cosmetics at Mouchak.

"We are compelled to raise prices because of increase in taxes on imitations," he added.

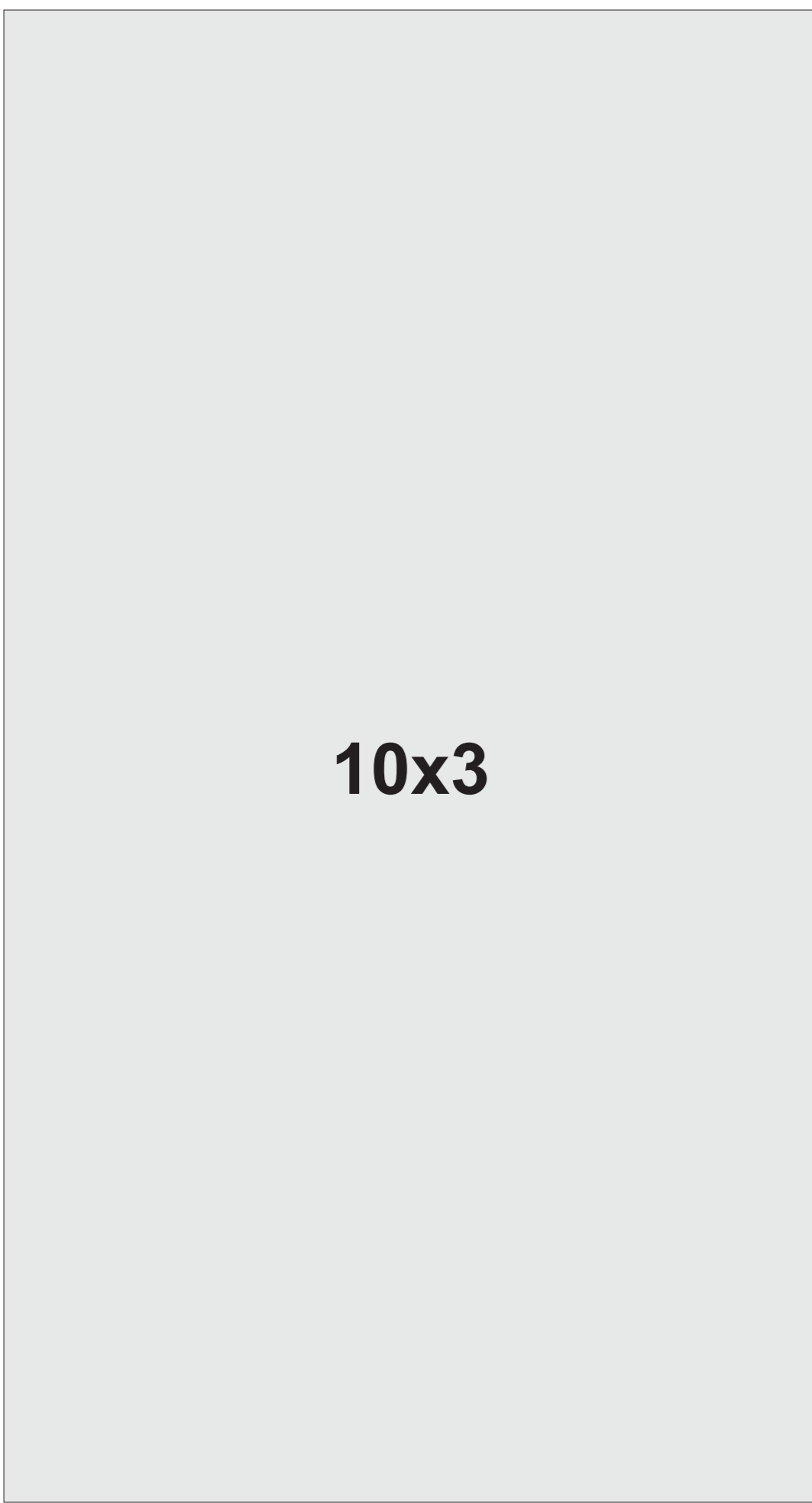
Dealers could not specify why taxes on imitations have increased but some of them attributed it to the gold price hike that in turn could be a likely reason for increasing prices in gold-plated ornaments.



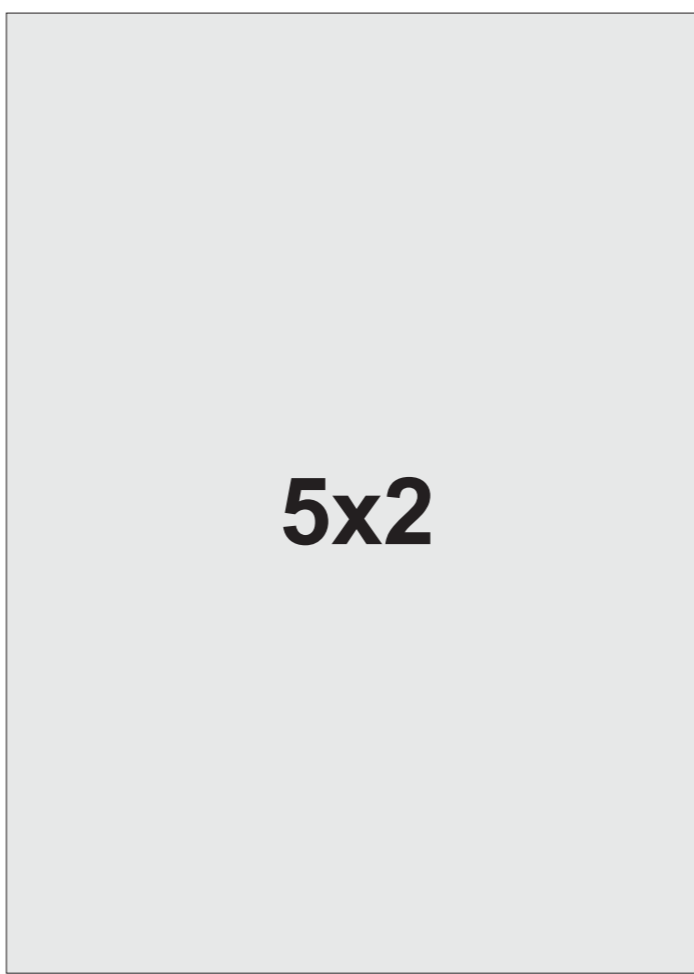
Imitation jewellery shops in the Ghausia market are filled with ornaments, but customers are few.



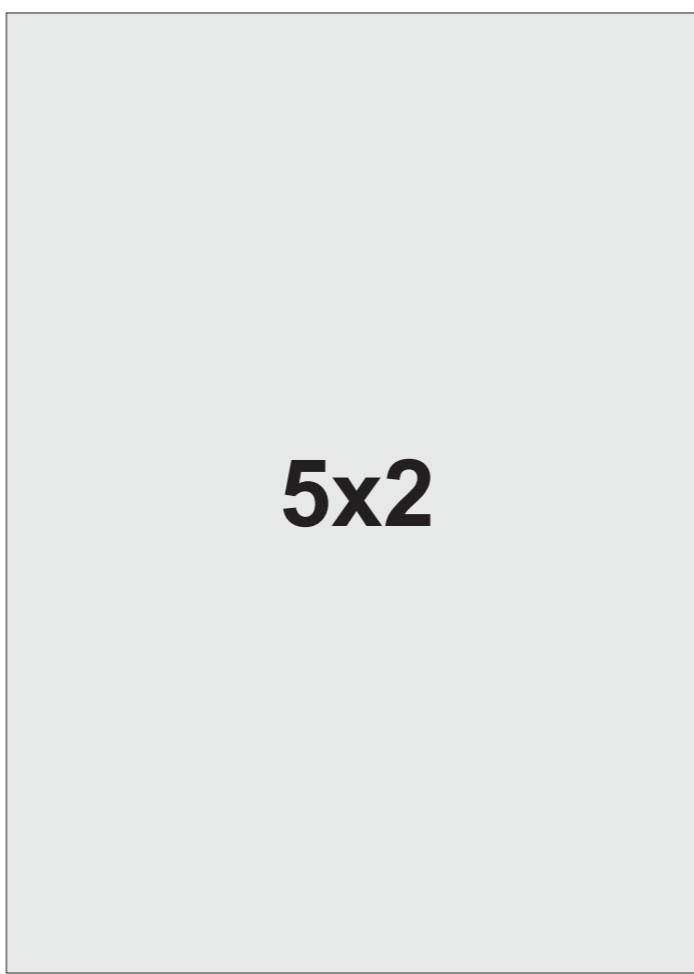
A certain part of the lake behind NAM quarters in Banani is being filled up by Rajuk in the process of creating plots for residential purposes.



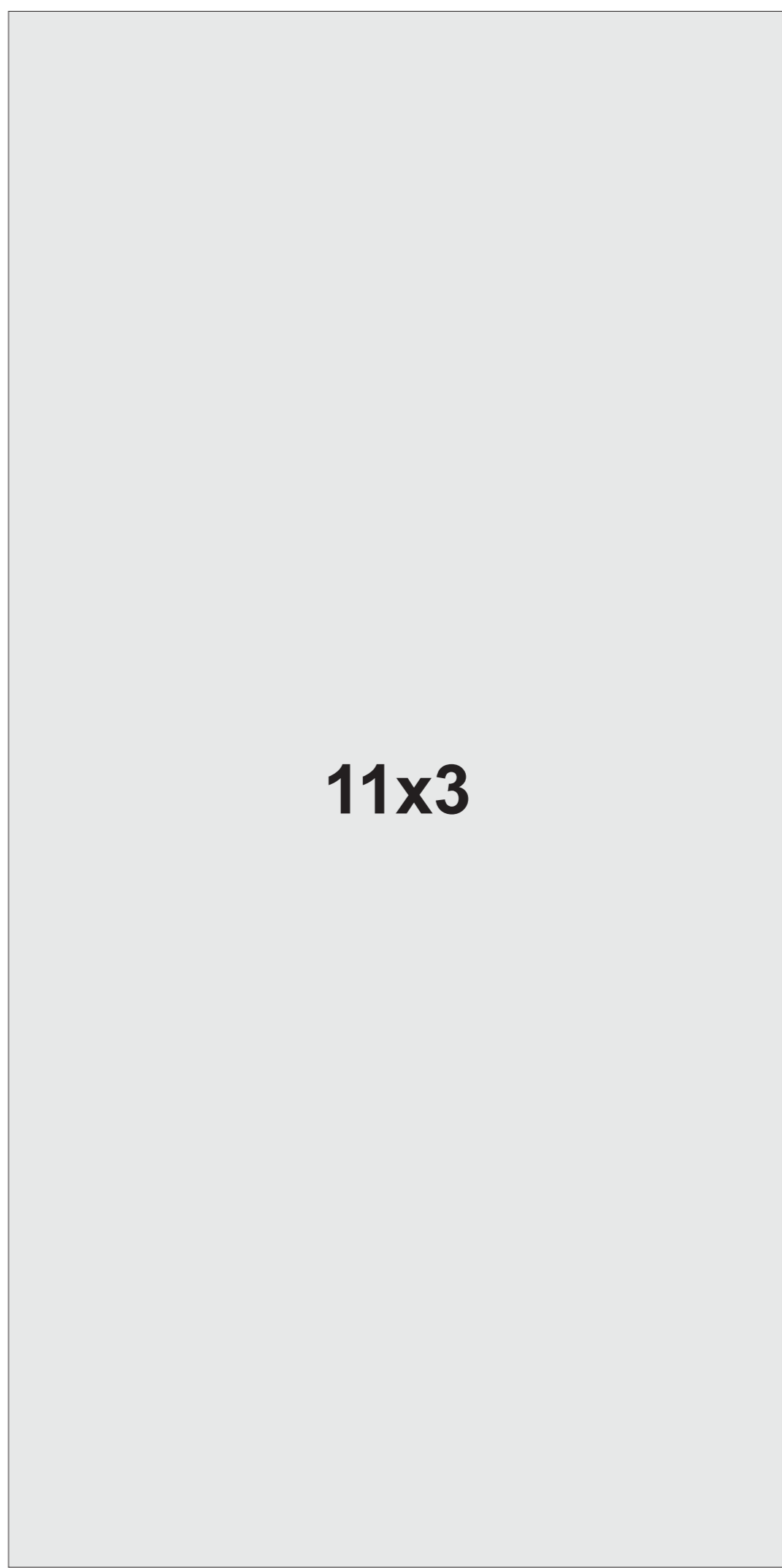
10x3



5x2



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