

Jewellers unhappy with no progress in looting cases

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

With the latest robbery at a jewellery shop in Uttara on Wednesday night, a total of 21 such incidents took place in the city since 2001 but the police have failed to recover most of the looted gold and none of the cases has been disposed of in the last five years.

According to Bangladesh

Jewellers Samity (BJS), 2,35,030 bhoris (2,741 kg) of gold were looted in these robberies while the police so far recovered only 230 bhoris. The only recovery was made after a robbery took place in two jewellery shops -- Sultana Jewellers and Mohanagar Jewellers -- at Karnaphuli Garden City market in February 2004.

In 2005, robbers looted 6,913



A scene at the jewellery store in Uttara on Thursday morning after it was looted the night before. The owner said the looters took away approximately 2,741 kg of gold.

bhoris of gold but the police could not recover a single bori. The biggest-ever gold robbery in the last five years took place in August 2005 at Venus Jewellers from where robbers looted 4,500 bhoris of gold.

"CID (criminal investigation department) is handling the case. They told me that they have identified the criminals and are trying to arrest them. But the police failed to recover the looted gold," said GC Malakar, owner of Venus Jewellers.

The number of robberies is increasing alarmingly this year. In the first five months of this year four robberies have already taken place and 875 bhoris of gold was looted.

The businessmen blamed the government for its inability to ensure security for them.

"We have been trying to meet the state minister for home for more than a year but he has no time for us. The government is not at all concerned about our loss and security," said MA Wadud Khan, president, Bangladesh Jewellers Samity (BJS).

He added that many businessmen have become penniless due to robbery at their shops.

The anxious businessmen urged the government for immediate action to save their business.

"We have submitted a number of memorandums to the state minister for home with our demands and recommendations but no action has been taken yet," said the president of BJS.

When asked, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman said the shop-owners are also responsible for this failure.

"We asked them long before to install CCTV at their shops. It does not cost that much but most of the owners seem to be reluctant. If the CCTV is on all time in a shop, our job after the robbery becomes easier," said the DMP

commissioner. The commissioner also blamed other factors for these incidents.

"In most cases security guards are directly involved with the robberies, but we can't trace them because the agencies who supply these guards do not keep their complete bio-data," he said. "And if there is any bio-data, we find the address and other things are fake."

He emphasised police verification of the security guards before their recruitment.

In the latest robbery at two jewellery shops in Uttara's Rajlaxmi Complex the robbers looted gold and diamond jewellery and cash worth about Tk 1.5 crore.

A number of businessmen also said gold robberies are increasing due to the continuous price hike of gold. "Such unusual price hike is doing harm to our business in two ways--increasing robberies and decreasing sales," said Nasimuddin, a jeweller in Chandnichawki.

To protest the robberies and the law enforcers' failure to bring the culprits to book, the gold traders start greater movement from today. They will form a human chain at Uttara.

"All the jewellery shop-owners in Bangladesh will attend a grand meeting at Baitul Mukarram in the capital on Wednesday (May 31). We will submit a memorandum to the state minister for home affairs and if the police do not take necessary actions after that we will go for tougher movement," said the president of BJS.

The DMP commissioner said he is ready to sit with the traders to discuss the matter.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Poison in the air!

Govt initiatives fail to improve Dhaka's air quality

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Meanwhile, brick kilns around the capital city and diesel-run vehicles also contribute to air pollution, the official added.

There are 4,000 brick kilns around the city, which use tyres, wood and low-quality coal which contains more than 4 per cent sulphur, emitting poisonous particles into the air. No initiative has been taken yet to measure quantity of poisonous particles emitting from brick kilns. The AQMP official said they will soon take steps in this regard in collaboration with Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

The project found that the amount of

such poisonous particles often reaches nearly double of the permissible limit, which is 65 microgram per cubic metre for particulate matter 10 and 150 microgram per cubic metre for particulate matter 2.5.

Dr FM Siddique, a professor of medicine at Dhaka Medical College, said such particles affect the cardiac and respiratory system, nose, throat and ear.

"Inhaling particulate matters even for a short time may cause negative effect on a

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STAR PHOTO

WORLD CUP FEVER GRIPS CITY

Traders dupe buyers with fake 'brand' TVs

IMRUL HASAN

The up-and-coming World Cup football championship, has given rise to plenty of fake 'brand' television sets flooding the city markets, deceiving many unsuspecting customers.

Television sets of different prominent international companies are falsified under fake brand names like LG, Sony, Samsung and Panasonic.

Of these popular brand names, LG, Sony and Panasonic are exploited the most. Items bearing identical names are displayed at shops and showrooms attempting to lure customers into purchase.

The locally produced goods sometimes carry subtly changed brand names. Changes to 'Son' from 'Sony' or 'Pansonic' from 'Panasonic' go unnoticed by enthusiastic buyers.

"Our brand is copied most as it has earned people's trust," said Abdul Mannan, chairman of Butterfly Marketing Ltd. LG's agent, adding that the name is losing its reputation because of the high rate of forgery. "It is hampering our business," he said.

Most fake electronic items are available at the Bangabandhu National Stadium Market, Moulana Bhasani (Outer Stadium), Baitul Mukarram super market and Nawabpur Road market.

The electronic goods sales outlets attract customers mostly from the lower income group.

On the other hand, customers feel that they get their money's worth because they buy a brand item at a lower price than the nominated sales agents.

"How would I know the difference? I buy a product as it meets my purpose," said Raisul Islam, a customer who bought a 14" 'Sony' TV from Moulana Bhasani (Outer Stadium), for only Tk 9,000, where the actual price is Tk 14,000.

Some salespersons at Bangabandhu National Stadium market said that low quality parts are smuggled from India and China. They are assembled here and then a brand name gets added.

Traders buy damaged or out-of-order television sets, repair them, transforming them into new ones with a new coating of paint, ensure the brand name is conspicuous and sell them off as

new items to unsuspecting customers.

"The painting is generally done behind the swimming pool market and adjacent to the Stadium market," a salesman of a shop of Stadium market said.



A visit to these spots showed that painting on TV's, VCD's and electronic items goes on round the clock.

Traders on the other hand do not give a guarantee card on any of the goods, and as such cus-



tomers are ripped off in the name of replacing damaged parts.

Arman Khan of East Bashabo faced such a situation having bought a 21" Sony colour TV from Stadium market that went out of order within a month.



"They did not replace or repair it," he complained.

Some traders said that customers are gradually becoming aware of the duplicated items, and are comfortable buying Chinese, Korean or Taiwanese

brands like Konka, TCL, Walton, Hisense, Hayes & Hayer or Changhong.

"These brands are not yet copied by fake TV makers and are cheap too," said Rasel Ahmed who owns an electronic goods store at the Stadium market.

Traders and salespersons said that forgery would decrease if smuggling of electronic parts can be prevented.

"Some traders carry on this business as eyewash," said a salesperson of Bangabandhu National Stadium. "In fact their main business is smuggling heroin, phenyl and especially gold," he added.

Butterfly Marketing Ltd., the sole distributor for LG television sets in Bangladesh found evidence of duplicated items after making several inquiries at the stadium market.

In order to end such illegal business under control, authorities of Butterfly Marketing Ltd., have sent legal notices to alleged sellers, but in spite of this sales go on as usual.

"We will now resort to legal action against these shop owners," said Abdul Mannan, Chairman of Butterfly Marketing

Ltd.

"Although the import duty on a 21" colour TV is Tk 8,000, a fake TV of the same size is sold much lower than that," he said.

One receipt of the legal notice, Md. Milon, of Sony Electronics of Moulana Bhasani (Outer Stadium) said: "They cannot hold us responsible. We don't sell any LG brand televisions. Our outlets and storehouses could be checked, if necessary."

"This is a conspiracy by other businessmen to stall our business before the World Cup Championships," he added.

Sources of Moulana Bhasani (Outer Stadium) said these misdeeds were highlighted in the newspapers recently, the alleged sellers have removed LG brand TV from their showrooms.

When contacted about such sales, Abu Iqbal, general secretary of Dhaka Stadium Merchants Syndicate expressed surprise.

"We have not received any complaints against electronics shops under our organisation for sales," he said, adding that they would take action if they receive allegations from customers.