

Blacksmiths: No time rest, no end to woes

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Rain or shine, their hands don't have the luxury to rest for a moment. While his assistant pumps stream of air onto simmering red-hot metal through the hapor, the blacksmith, with a hammer in his hand, crafts the metal into fascinating tools.

Around 20 to 22 such blacksmith shops are found in Karwan Bazar Kamakar shed. In these shops, assortments of tools made of iron or steel are neatly put on display for prospective customers.

Abul Majid, a blacksmith there, said the number of blacksmiths in the city has gone up significantly over the past few years.

"Dhaka city never had this many blacksmiths. There were only a handful of blacksmiths in one particular neighbourhood before. Now, you can find plenty of blacksmith shops there." Majid said.

Even though iron price has gone up from Tk 35 to Tk 40 each kg over the last few months, steep competition are forcing them to sell their finished products at previous rates -- after adding labour and other costs of course

"Not too long ago, it was difficult to find one blacksmith shop even in rural areas. Whereas, there are around four to five hundred blacksmiths doing business in the city now," he added.

Moazzem Kamakar, a blacksmith in the same market, said they had been doing business with a reputation for decades now, but the main objective of the new blacksmiths are to do cut-throat business.

"I have been in this business for over two decades now. I take my work as my creed, but this new breed of unskilled blacksmiths are here for the money only," said Kamakar.

Karmakar told this correspondent that despite the sharp rise in the price of iron, they did not raise the prices of their finished products.

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months, steep competition are forcing them to sell their finished products at previous rates -- after adding labour and other costs of course, Kamakar explained.

Tools made by blacksmiths now sell at around Tk 200 a kg, he added.

According to blacksmiths, demand for their products is the highest during Eid-ul-Azha and it is quite low throughout the rest of the year.



A blacksmith displays his finished products at Karwanbazar.

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WHEN ROAD REAIR BRINGS SUFFERINGS TO PEOPLE: The DCC took up the re-carpeting work on the road between Gulshan-1 and Mahakhali road recently. The work, which should have been completed during off peak hours, is now being done during daytime covering the entire area with thick black smoke. Pedestrians are seen trying to negotiate the hazard.

Rupnagar

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Rana, a construction contractor while filling up a plot at night with rubbish told Star City, "I don't think about the legality of the plot. I just know I got a contract and I hope to make at least Tk 2,000 after completing the work."

Abdul Mannan, owner of such a plot at road number 28 at Rupnagar said, "I have proper documents with signatures of the officials of the National Housing Authority's Mirpur zone. I bought the land from one Abdul Khaleq and it is duly registered."

"Now, the National Housing Authority is claiming the land as a sewerage canal. If the plot is illegal, the NHA officials are responsible for it," said Mannan who got an eviction notice from the NHA. The matter is now pending at courts.

An NHA engineer in charge of Mirpur section 2 and Runagar residential areas said except for the Shiyalbari lake and the main drainage canal, there is no other open water sources in the area and both the water bodies are facing rapid encroachments.

According to the master plan designed in 1984 for the vast residential area, the western fringes of the allotted plots are maintained for the main drainage canal and a 60 feet ring road is supposed to be built from avenue 3 to road number 33.

"Without the two water bodies, the whole area would suffer water crisis for daily use or during fire accidents. On the other hand, if the main drainage canal gets blocked, the whole sewerage system of the area would collapse," the engineer cautioned.

Dress as you like!

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fonts and sizes," said Humayan Rashid, operations manager of BRTA.

According to the rules, licence plates must have the number in Bangla, painted on flat steel or aluminium, following a specific colour code based on the manner of the vehicle.

The licence plates of normal cars should have the number written in white characters over a black background, for the vehicles of state-run corporations it is white characters on blue background and for foreign nationals' cars, it is black on yellow background.

The regulations specify black characters on white background for buses and taxis, while motorbikes are obliged to have white numbers over black backdrop on a smaller plate.

However, a large number of car owners tend to have their licence number written in English, another big segment tend to decorate their licence plates with metallic chained borders and other decorations to make them look better.

Many car owners tend to illuminate the number plate borders with neon lights. This practice is illegal and makes it difficult to see the licence number at night.

A number of business organisations and car showrooms have a tendency to use their company logo in the licence plate, which is a gross violation of the rules. However, most of the blame would fall on the car owners who ignore the law.

Mudassir Asif Khan (not real name), a car owner who has a number plate with licence number written in English along with a metallic border told this correspondent that he was

not aware of the regulations.

"I was not aware that such rules exist and installed that number plate because it looks attractive and goes well with the car," said Khan.

BRTA officials said they have little control over the metal and engineering shops where the number plates are made. But the car owners are primarily responsible for such violation of rules, they said.

Although regulations oblige car owners to fix number plates of 524mm x 112mm size, Jahangir Alam who works at a workshop in Bangla Motors said he makes licence plates of any size and with any font. He does not know the rules.

"Each category of car has a specific size of licence plate that would be appropriate for it. But we can make it bigger or smaller, if the customer wants," said Alam. "I can add patterns and designs to the border if the customer wants."

Buses, CNG-run autorickshaws and human haulers should have their licence numbers inscribed with black paint over white background, but the tattered and dilapidated bodies of most of these vehicles make it difficult for anyone to notice the numbers.

"Some people intentionally distort the number plates and violate the rules. They use non-standard fonts, ornaments and what not, despite knowing that all these things are illegal," said Humayun Rashid, operations manager of BRTA.

"We are planning to take appropriate measures to create awareness among people about number plates, but we are stuck in dealing with other issues like CNG fare. However, we will take initiatives to bring discipline soon," he added.

Advertising, Bank & market timing

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- Indian Cultural Center**
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- Cezanne Art Gallery**
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cezanne@bangla.net
- Drik Gallery**

- House 58, Road 15A(New),
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- Gallery Chittrak**
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- National Art Gallery**
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
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- Shilpa Rag**
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Email: shilparg @vasdigital.com
- Shilpangan**
House-25, Road-5,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
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- Tivoli Art Gallery**
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Gulshan-2 (North), Dhaka, Tel: 9895903

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- Uttara Bank Ltd**
9561438, 9551162-3,
Fax: 8613529
- United Commercial Bank Ltd**
9561580, Fax: 88-02-9560587

MARKET CLOSED

- Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
- Elephant Road-Friday
- Bishal Center-Friday
- Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
- Powell Market-Friday
- BCS Computer City-Friday
- Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
- Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
- Stadium Market-Friday
- Bangabazar Market-Friday
- National Museum-Thursday
- Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
- New Market-Tuesday
- Gausia Market-Tuesday
- Mouchak Market-Sunday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Eastern Plaza-Sunday
- Farmview Super Market-Sunday
- Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
- Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
- Shishu Jadughar-Sunday