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NMC squad demolishes shops at Cotton Market

NAGPUR: Every day, when people from the city go to the Cotton [Market](#) in the morning, they expect to find fresh vegetables. However, what greeted them on Monday morning was a row of closed shutters and the visibly agitated owners of these shops. For almost the entire day, most of the shops at the Cotton Market remained closed and opened for trade only towards the evening.

The reason for the anger was because the anti-encroachment squad of the Nagpur Municipal Corporation on Saturday evening had razed the tin shades many of them had built as an extension to their shops. The squad had reportedly been accompanied by the police.

Speaking to TOI, Mohan Kartar, one of those who had had their wares forcibly carted off on Saturday, said, "I have been working here all my life, and our shop is 60 years old! My father had started his shop and never once has anything of this sort taken place."

Hemant Khanorkar, another shopkeeper, lamented that the police had been a bit too harsh with them. "All our merchandize was seized and carted away without notice and we could do nothing but watch. We were then asked to pay up a few thousand rupees in order to get our goods released. How can someone, who profits barely a hundred rupees a day, pay that kind of money?"

Leeladhar Hole, yet another shopkeeper, has more accusations to heap on the policemen. "The police were so rough that even when my 10-year-old son tried to pack the weighing scales in the workshop, they beat him and snatched away the scales! I can't understand why they are so worried about encroachments here. Why can't they concentrate on other parts of the city, where encroachments have made life a living hell for the residents?"

The most astonishing allegation is that of one Shubhashchandra Shahu who claimed that he had a legal document from the court which ordered a stay on any kind of demolition of his shop. But the policemen as well as the personnel from the anti-encroachment squad refused to take heed to it.

Sheikh Rafique Sheikh Rasool, another shopkeeper, reasons, "Where is the traffic hazard here? The road which leads into the market is not exactly a thoroughfare which connects two parts of the city. What harm would a little bit of extending our shops have done? And besides, we pay taxes regularly, but the Cotton Market is seldom cleaned properly. Who is to answer for that?"

Meanwhile, the customers who buy vegetables from the Cotton Market on a daily basis seemed

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to be the most inconvenienced.