

Garlands of currency: wedding party's joy is RBI's headache

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'We issued a directive last year that currency notes should not be used in making garlands, which defaces the notes and shortens their life,' Alpana Killawala, chief general manager of the public relations division of RBI, told IANS on phone from Mumbai.

'It's part of our continuing efforts of clean notes policy. But no one seems to be paying heed as most weddings, especially in north India, keep using such garlands. We can't take any action against the public. We can only sensitise them,' she said.

For the masses, however, this directive doesn't make any sense. Alok Aggarwal, a sales executive in Delhi, said: 'The tradition of making the bridegroom wear the garland of currency notes is a symbol of shagun (good luck).

'In most cases, this garland is then carefully stacked away. So where is the question of misusing the notes?' he asked.

Owing to the demand for such garlands that are not only used in weddings but also during religious festivities, graduation ceremonies and anniversaries, they are easily available in the market.

'Currency note garlands are always in demand, specially during the wedding season. Some want garlands made of two-rupee notes, some want of 100-rupee notes,' says Mohan Lal, a shopkeeper in central Delhi.

The RBI has been trying for a while to inculcate 'good habits' among the people - so as to encourage good quality notes.

'Whatever we do, we do through the banks. One of the challenges that we had was to do away with stapled notes, a habit that often results in the note getting torn. After issuing a directive to banks, they have done away with the stapling of bundles of currency notes,' said Killawala.

'We have also asked them to tell people not to give stapled notes when they deposit such notes to the bank. Further, we made a movie in 2006 on the same subject which was telecast on Doordarshan.'

The RBI has also organised camps to educate people on how to handle currency notes.

'Our latest initiative is making a short film on the dos and don'ts of handling bank notes. People have to be discouraged from scribbling on notes and folding them. The movie will be ready for telecasting in another couple of months,' she said.

'The trend of note garlands is mainly north India centric. Therefore, we will have to devise a programme specifically for that area,' she added.

- *Azera Rahman*