

# Want to eat ghorpad... no problem

## Get protected species like monitor lizards, quails for a few bucks more

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THE ghorpad may have helped Shivaji win Sindhgad fort, but it faces a losing battle when it comes to Puneites with 'adventurous' taste buds and money to pamper them. A couple of hundred rupees extra and a personal rapport with your friendly neighbourhood butcher can buy you more than just chicken and mutton.

The Monitor Lizard or ghorpad, immortalised in Maratha history, tops the forbidden meat list. Posing as customers, a *Pune Newsline* team visited several city abattoirs, only to discover that the ancient species are available in the market, though clandestinely.

Rangeing between Rs 200 to 400 per 'chank', all one needs to do is pay in advance and collect the 'delicacy' the following day. Ghorpads are not readily available because "catching them is a long and tedious process and we are only able to seize three or four of them per day," said a butcher.

And that is just the beginning of torture for this reptile whose legendary might is spent trying to free its tail and feet tightly knotted for storage and sale. "It's the only method by which we can prevent them



Victims of taste... Ghorpads kept ready for 'discerning' buyers. Pic by Shyam Sonar

from running away," said a butcher pointing to a pair stored in a small vessel.

Lizards apart, one can also buy *parwa*, which is usually quail or pigeon meat. Priced at Rs 200 to 300 per piece, butchers say that the birds are hunted on a daily basis since its meat rots easily.

Hares, another hot favourite, were readily available on demand. "*Humar abhi abhi maar ke laye* (This is freshly hunted)," said a butcher, trying to sell his product. Depending on size, hares cost from Rs 250 to Rs 300.

Asked where they obtained the meat, one answered, "We hunt them from nearby jungles and mountains."

Katraj Snake Park education officer Shrinam Shinde, expressed concern over this illegal hunting.

"Fossils prove that monitor lizards existed more than 50 million years ago. Ghorpads are known for keeping rodent, snake and insect populations in check. Found in hilly areas such as Bhimashankar and Sindhgad, their fat is believed by tribals to cure several ailments. Their killing will seriously disturb nature's balance."

### What the law says

The Monitor Lizard is protected under Part I (Amphibians and Reptiles) of Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Mountain Quails under Part II (Birds) of Schedule I, like as hares and pigeons are protected under Schedule IV of the act.

Section 8, 'Prohibition of hunting' states, "No person shall hunt any wild animal specified in Schedules I, II, III and IV."

Section 40, 'Destinations' (2) states, "No person shall, after the commencement of the act, acquire, receive, keep in his control, custody or possession, sell after for sale or otherwise transfer or transport any animal specified in Schedule I or Part I of Schedule II or any uncured trophy or meat derived from such animal."