

Drivers-muggers nexus robs autorickshaw passengers

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Several gangs, robbing passengers in CNG autorickshaws in connivance with the drivers, are active in the city.

Tejgaon police said at least six gangs from Mohakhali, Dhanmondi, Nawabpur, Bangla Motor, Farmgate, Sayedabad and from other busy places are actively operating.

Every day, an unspecified number of similar mugging incidents take place, but most victims do not bother to report to the police, police officials admitted.

According to a victim as soon as his autorickshaw arrived near Mohakhali from the direction of the airport about 6:00pm on June 27, the CNG taxi driver reduced the speed at which they were travelling.

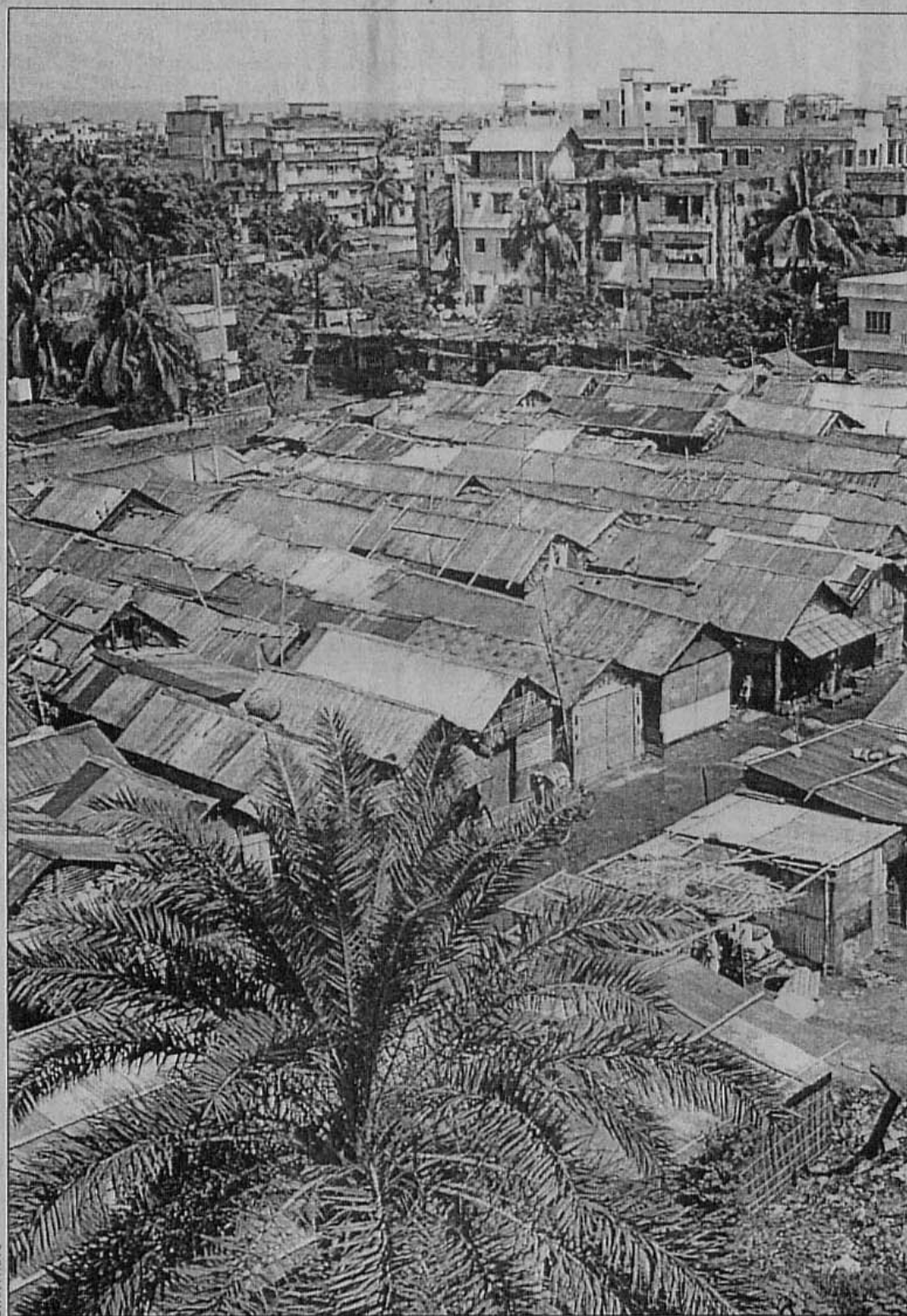
Before the unsuspecting passenger could realise what was happening, three armed young men got into the vehicle. One sat right on his lap and two others jammed the terrified passenger from both sides with a knife and a small gun.

The taxi kept moving towards Tejgaon. The muggers moved in front of on-duty policemen on the streets and took all their time to empty the pockets of the passenger. They also took away his mobile phone.

About half an hour later, the passenger felt a burning sensation and was instantly blinded as the miscreants applied an ointment on his eyes. He was then asked to get off the vehicle. The victim did not report the matter to the police.

Similar incidents of mugging are happening in the city every day. Tejgaon police said they had heard about the incidents and they were sure the gangs took advantage of single passengers.

"A single passenger should not sit on the middle of the CNG autorickshaw. This gives the miscreants a chance to board the vehicle from both sides," said a police official of Tejgaon Police Station.



Back to base -- residents of the recently evicted slum return after eight months,

Slum dwellers police wary

"There is no specific time. They may come in the evening or in the morning according to their wish and threaten indiscriminate arrests or eviction."

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

People living in the city's Kalyanpur slum have complained of constant police harassment.

The slum now houses about 5000 people most of whom have returned after being evicted from the area about eight months ago. But dwellers said that policemen often visit the slum and pick up anyone they feel like.

"There is no specific time. They may come in the evening or in the morning according to their wish and threaten indiscriminate arrests or eviction," said Kalimullah who also claimed that the law enforcers take away at least four to five persons each day.

Inhabitants of the slum alleged that on most occasions, the police could not show a valid reason for the arrests. "If we sought an explanation, they instead questioned our right to stay here," said Monwara Begum who runs a makeshift shop in the slum.

But the dwellers believe that police should not harass them for living in the area as the High Court had issued a status quo in response to their petition against

eviction filed on December 27, 2003.

The petition came following the eviction drive by the Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI) on December 21, last year. The slum then had 3000 shanties on an area of 53 acre and had a population of 20,000. Some of them had been living there for 20 years. The slum now has about 1,000 shanties, erected mostly over the last six months.

People of the slum are under no illusion that the only way to avoid harassment is to bribe the police. "We do not have any other option but to pay them. Otherwise, they will show us arrested in a robbery or any other crime," said Abdul Khalek.

"As the court has issued a status quo, the government should leave the place as it is until the court settles the case," said Kalimuddin. He also alleged that the authorities never issued any warning notice before they bulldozed the slum in December. "We were told that only 80 shanties situated in ward no. 10 will be demolished. But they levelled the entire area."

The majority of Kalyanpur slum's inhabitants come from the low-income group who had

migrated to the city having lost everything to river erosion. Most of them are day-labourers, rickshaw-pullers or domestic helps. At present they are living in total uncertainty and insecurity while waiting for a verdict from the court.

When asked about the latest status of the case, Abu Obaidur Rahman of Ain O Salis Kendra told The Daily Star that the status quo still exists. He also informed that the government had given a reply to the High Court on June 13 this year singling out the slum as a den of anti-social elements. It also said that the evicted slum people would be rehabilitated according to the National Housing Policy.

Officer in charge of Mirpur police station Intezar Rahman denied the allegations of police harassment.

"On the contrary, the slum dwellers actually beat up four of our uniformed ansars," Intezar claimed. He added that a case had been filed against the slum people for attacking the ansars.

"Police might have gone to the slum for routine inquiry for the case but never to harass them," the OCSaid.

Bakery blues!

FAIZUL A TANIM

The majority of bakeries in the capital produce low quality and hazardous food putting public health at risk. However, the authorities apparently turn a blind eye to this unhealthy business which has mushroomed over the years.

These bakeries run in unhygienic conditions and in most cases, function without any trade license from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) claimed sources.

This correspondent visited one such bakery, Ashraf Food Products in Mirpur section 10, and found the bread and biscuits they were producing and distributing under the name of 'New Bombay Bread' being prepared under extremely unhygienic conditions.

Flour bags were seen dumped on the floor with cockroaches in constant motion around them. The unclean environment made the place stink. And while a baker was making the dough with his bare hands, another worker was spotted scratching his sweaty body with a knife, then removing the dirt from it and using exactly the same knife to slice bread and biscuits.

When asked to explain such filthy

conduct, they not only refused to answer but also rudely asked this correspondent to leave.

"We are not bound to reply your queries," said another dough-maker. During this visit on June 20, neither the owner or pastry chef of the factory could be found.

"Ashraf Food products have already paid a fine of Tk 20,000 a few days ago for unhealthy environment and noxious food production. Moreover, they are still operating without a trade license". Nurul Amin, Assistant Director of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) informed when he was contacted regarding the experience at the factory.

"Whenever a factory applies for a trade license, we ask for a sample of their food and bring it over to our laboratory. If it fits the requirement, then the BSTI gives its approval. But in their case, the food quality was never hygienic enough to meet our standards," he added.

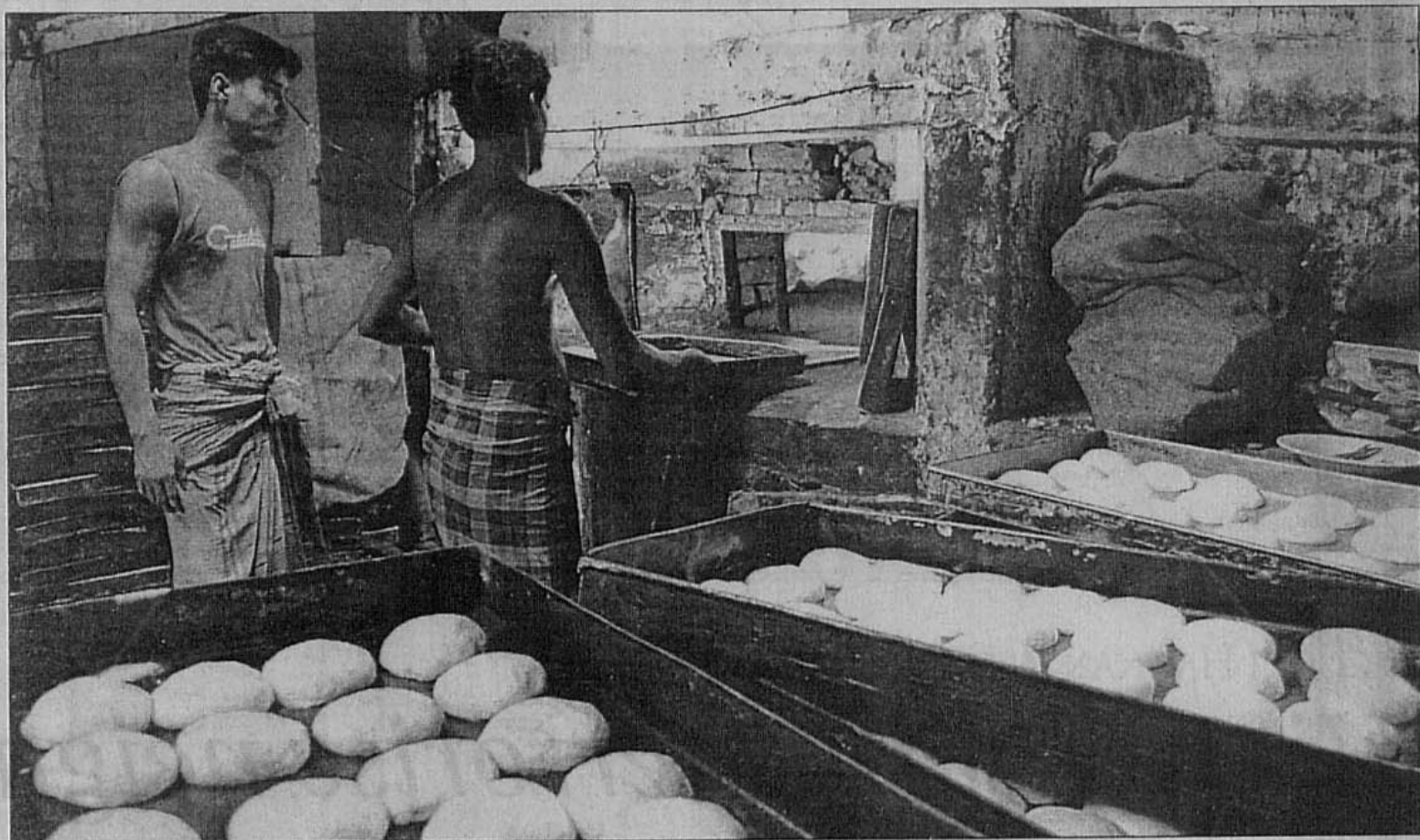
The Penal Code Clause 273 says regarding sale of noxious food or drink. Whoever sells, or offers or exposes for sale, as food or drink, any article which has been rendered or has become noxious, or is in a state unfit food or drink,

knowing or having reason to believe that the same is noxious as food or drink, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand (taka), or with both.

"We have a mobile team specifically for inspecting these bakeries. Our team operates around the city three days a week. After investigation, if we find any fault, a case is launched against the factories. Sometimes fines are also imposed on the factory's management," said Mosharrif Hossain Milon, sanitation officer of DCC.

Rashid Ahmed, a Dhaka resident who buys breads and biscuits from bakeries often said that it was practically impossible for people of low-income groups to do without cheap bakery stuff like bread rolls and cakes from makeshift shops. The middle-class is also exposed to the health threat from bakery items.

"Finding hair in cakes and bread rolls is not something new, but the presence of fingernails is amazing. The story of a lizard's tail making its way into the bread still disgusts me," he added.



Work in bakeries under unhygienic conditions continue unabated..

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH	MARKET CLOSED	TAXI CAB	LIBRARY & INFO	
Hospitals Heart National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59 Burn Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6 Cancer National Cancer Institute-8014914, 882561-65 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9 Diabetes Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50 Mother & Child Care Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62 Azimpur Mother & Child Health	Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980 Eye Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315 National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807 Dental Dental College -9002035 Orthopaedics National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150 General Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6 Rushmono General Hospital- 8317819 Holy Family Hospital- 8311731-25 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550-4, 8614545-9 Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,	Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday Elephant Road-Friday Bishal Center-Friday Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday Polwell Market-Friday BCS Computer City-Friday Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday. Rajjalmi Complex-Friday Stadium Market-Friday Bangabazar Market-Friday National Museum-Thursday Ansan 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 Muktiuddha Jadughar-Sunday Dhaka Zoo-Sunday Shishu Jadughar-Sunday	Yellow Cab Navana 9558065 Salida 9344477, 0171620881 Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191 Cab One 7113282-3 Nihon 8624741-2 Orion 9347277 Anudip 8125285 and 8127611 Capital 9352847 Union 8130485 Kool 0171826731 Black Cab Cab Ex 9358401 Cabline 8321162 JBS Cab 019364575 Sajan 018126036 Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611 Cab One 7113282-3 Palki 0171052500 Cab I 7113282 Jatri 0171540074 Nipun 9572277 R-Cab 8914782 Star Cab 9571919 Shihab 018202477 & 018228675 KGN 8620011	Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128 Shilpakala Academy- 8614673 Bangla Academy- 8619550 Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407 Nazrul Institute- 9114602 Ford Foundation- 8116133 Alliance Francaise- 8611557 British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7 Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604 Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096 The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314 Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412