

Crime brings fear to Old Dhaka

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Businesspeople and residents in the old part of the city are living in constant fear as mugging, abduction, killing and drug peddling go on unabated there.

Locals in Sutrapur, Kotwali and Lalbagh alleged that criminals, most of whom are reportedly activists of the ruling BNP and its front organisations, were responsible for extortion, kidnapping and murders of a number of businessmen in Old Dhaka. According to them at least 15 people have lost their lives this year alone.

The grisly murders of fabric trader Shamsul Haq and his son Russell Sheikh, who had been sliced into over 200 pieces, watch trader of Patuatuli Rezaul Karim Selim and owners of Siraji Home and Overseas Machinery Shariful Haque Siraji have sent shockwaves among the business community in Old Dhaka.

In the latest such incident Belal Hossain, a fruit seller was gunned down by extortionists in Sutrapur after being kidnapped on May 31.

Residents and entrepreneurs said that local criminals who are activists of BNP's front organisations, collect illegal tolls from trucks loaded with various goods at Nayabazar, Katpatti at Badamtoli and Showarighat.

They also pressurise businessmen at Mitford wholesale Medicine Market, Nayabazar, Patuatuli, and paper traders in Sutrapur into

paying them.

In Nayabazar, Tk 5,000 to 7,000 is allegedly collected in illegal tolls for each truck laden with duplex board (a kind of thick paper). Businessmen at Katpatti and Showarighat pay Tk 2,500 to 3,000 for every truck carrying timber. Fish traders at Showarighat complained that Tk 100 to 150 is extorted for each truck of fish while the toll for wholesale fish markets (*arai*) range from Tk 500 to 1,000.

"We are victims of silent extortion. Criminals demand money on phone and threaten us of dire consequences if we reveal their identities or refuse to oblige them," said a paper trader of Nayabazar requesting not to be named. "We never dare to go to the police station as the extortionists are activists of the local BNP," he added.

Many others in Old Dhaka's business community echoed the same grievances.

However Member of Parliament from Dhaka-8 (Lalbagh, Hazaribagh and Kamrangirchar) constituency Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu flatly refuted the allegations.

"There is no extortion in my area," he said.

Despite the lawmaker's claim, residents complained that drug peddling was directly linked to a surge in criminal activities in the old quarters and was one of the main reasons behind the extortion menace.

Sources said that contraband drug trade was rampant at Dayaganj, Yousuf Market in

Nayabazar, Raishaheb Bazar, Sadarghat Launch Terminal area, Nawab Katra, Dholakhal, Malitola, Mouli Bazar, Dania, Dholaipar and Kellar Mor. The drug dealers allegedly maintain good ties with the police, members of intelligence agencies, narcotics control officials and local political high-ups.

On April 18, Kotwali police arrested a suspected criminal on charges of abduction and attempted blackmailing of paper trader Abdul Kuddus. Kuddus' kidnappers had demanded Tk 5 lakh for his release.

Last Tuesday, hoodlums looted medicine worth Tk 2.5 lakh from two businessmen from Chittagong at gunpoint while they were on their way to Armanitola. A couple of months earlier, another gang had stolen medicine amounting around Tk 10 lakh at Bakshi Bazar Lane.

Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Asraful Huda said that he had met with representatives of Old Dhaka's businessmen about a month ago and had urged them to contact him whenever they felt insecure.

"It is tough for us to go on action if nobody informs us about extortion," Huda said, adding that he had already geared up police vigilance in Old Dhaka.

Regarding drug peddling the DMP commissioner said he had ordered raids on certain spots in Lalbagh.

DMCH emergency flood centre sits idle



PHOTO STAR

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) authorities have launched a 25-bed day care centre to treat flood-hit people suffering from waterborne diseases, but patients are hard to come.

The turnover has been slack. People are not aware of such a centre, said a doctor. Only four patients came to the centre since its inception on August 2.

"The DMCH authorities opened the centre as directed by the health ministry, fearing an epidemic after recession of floodwaters," said Asif Masud Chowdhury, an on-duty doctor at the centre.

The DMCH has named its flood emergency ward 'Day-care Centre for the Flood-hit' and tagged it with ward number 41. Located on the 1st floor of the emergency section of the hospital, it is staffed with eight doctors and five nurses and is open from 8:00 am to 2:30 pm.

The centre only takes care of patients afflicted with waterborne diseases, as the general and emergency wards of the DMCH are crowded with thousands of patients. The authorities have instructed its outdoor and emergency sections to refer the patients to the centre.

"The patients, mostly the children, are suffering most from diarrhoea," the on-duty doctor told The Daily Star. "We immediately try to treat dehydration and give patients preliminary treatment."

"Doctors are instructed to observe critical patients for a day and refer them to the concerned sections," he said.

But there are hardly any patients at the centre. During a visit on Saturday, this correspondent found the doctors and nurses sitting idle, as not a single patient arrived in two days.

On August 2, only two patients came to the centre and two more on August 5. They left the hospital after treatment.

However, around a thousand people are affected with diarrhoea and skin diseases in the capital every day as the floodwaters recede. The drugstores too, have run out of water purifying tablets and oral saline.

The health ministry and the DMCH authorities should take some initiatives to make people aware of the day care centre, said a another doctor.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

DCC plans link roads to streamline traffic

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) plans to construct four major link roads at a cost of Tk 4.83 billion in an effort to cut traffic jam.

The project concept paper (PCP) on the link roads in Mirpur was sent to Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB). To construct the roads, the DCC needs to acquire 27.55 acres at a cost of Tk 49.4 million and will have to provide Tk 84 million in compensation to the affected landowners.

"Traffic congestion will be reduced significantly after the roads are constructed," DCC Chief Engineer Idris Mias said.

The PCP has proposed to construct the link roads 3.66 kilometres long and 100 feet wide including footpaths from Mirpur Darus Salam Ansar camp to Kachukhet via Paikpara, Pirerbagh, Shevrupara, Begum Rokeya Sarani and Ibrahimpur.

"We sent the PCP in July for inspection and it will be sent to the Local Government Engineering Division (LGED) shortly," said a DCC official of the engineering division. The official expects that the LGED may send the PCP to the Planning Commission this month for approval.

The densely populated Mirpur area faces huge traffic congestion due to lack of a road network. The link roads were proposed in Dhaka Metropolitan Development Master Plan (DMDP) in 1994 that explains the urgency of the link roads to streamline traffic.

"Now all vehicles use only Mirpur Road which is one of the major thoroughfares in Dhaka. We need to construct the link roads to minimise pressure on the main road," the DCC chief engineer said.

The roads will run from Mirpur Darus Salam near Ansar Camp to Kachukhet to Mirpur section-2 near Grameen Bank to Agargaon Road and Mirpur section-12 to the Airport Road.

near Zia Colony.

"Around 3,600 vehicles will run on Darus Salam-Kochukhet Road and about 2,400 will ply Mirpur-2-Agargaon Road an hour," Idris Mias said.

Although hundreds of houses have been constructed on both sides of Begum Rokeya Sarani, after the road was constructed in 1984, no link roads from Mirpur to Rokeya Sarani and Rokeya Sarani to Kachukhet were constructed.

"Despite identifying the link roads, many residents have occupied land and constructed buildings on it, which might create a problem in implementing the project," a DCC official said, asking not be named.

However, there was a provision in the then DIT for construction of a 30-foot wide road from Rokeya Sarani to Mirpur Road to facilitate the movement of vehicles and pedestrians from Shevrupara.

A 15-foot wide road was constructed in 1984 instead and house

owners adjacent to the road occupied the rest of the land.

Sources said Hazaribagh-Klunagar Road along the flood control embankment would also be built by 2007 under the new project.

The road from Mirpur section-2 to Agargaon, via Barabagh, Monipur and Piferbagh, will be 3.63 kilometres long and around 60 feet wide.

The DCC estimated that Tk 764.60 million would be needed to construct Darus Salam-Kachukhet Road, with Tk 292.60 million for setting up a box culvert as there is no major drainage system in the area.

Around Tk 629 million will be needed to construct Mirpur-2 to Agargaon Road including Tk 290 million for setting up a 3.6km box culvert.

The road from Mirpur section-12 to the Airport Road touching Bounia and Bhashantek will be 6.30km long and 60 feet wide with four lanes.

Education, commodity fairs begin at Sheraton Wednesday

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A three-day exhibition on education will be held at Sheraton Hotel from Wednesday with the view to providing information to Bangladeshi students regarding some foreign and local universities.

Apart from Bangladesh, 28 universities and Information

Technology institutes of the UK, Australia and Canada will take part in the fair and provide information on admission.

Advisor to the commerce ministry Barkat Ullah Bulu will inaugurate the exhibition organised by Conference and Exhibition Management Services Ltd. (CEMS).

"The exhibition will give an opportunity to the local guardians

and students to have extensive information on foreign universities. This will help them get admission," said Managing Director of CEMS Meherun N Islam at a press conference yesterday.

She also said an exhibition of different commodities like food, drinks, cosmetics, utensils and services like airlines will simultaneously be held alongside the

education fair at the same venue.

This would bring buyers and sellers together under the same umbrella and customers will gain information on diverse products, Meherun added. Twenty-nine companies will take part in the commodity and services exhibition.

The exhibition will remain open from 10:00am to 8:00pm every day.

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Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

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Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 919315

National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807

Dental

Dental College -9002035

Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangu)

Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6

Rushmoni General Hospital- 8317819

Holy Family Hospital-

83111731-25

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9

Diabetes

Diabetic Research Hospital

(BIRDIM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50

Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62

Azimpur Mother & Child Health

Shamrata Hospital- 9131901

Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69

Salimullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6

Cholera Research Hospital

(ICDDR,B)- 8811751-60

Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563

Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040

Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,

7310061,7319022

Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-

8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-

8614040

Ambulances For

Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail)

9336611, Gondaria 7319808,

7318166,

Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday

Elephant Road-Friday

Bishal Center-Friday

Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday

Polwell Market-Friday

BCS Computer City-Friday

Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday

Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday

Stadium Market-Friday