

# Buying back stolen motor parts at higher prices

SULTANA RAHMAN

Parvez Murshed, a resident of Mirpur, had to repurchase parts of his own car at three times higher prices than normal. The parts were stolen when the car was in his garage and later found on the black market to his surprise.

Parvez went to Dholaikhal to buy the parts back. Some workers at a workshop asked him to come back two hours later, saying: "Your stolen parts did not arrive here yet, but they will come soon."

Next day he went again and found the parts and their colour matching his car. "I knew they stole the parts from my car, but I had no option but to buy them back at high prices," Parvez said.

"Initially they asked me to pay Tk 1.20 lakh for replacements. After several rounds of talks through brokers, they agreed to sell them at Tk 80,000," he said.

Stealing and selling motor parts are not unusual and car owners know the stolen parts of their cars will be found at Dholaikhal.

Carjacking has been on the rise. According to the Police Headquarters, at least 277 cars have been snatched in the last six months with 6,952 in the last five years.

Although the police set 42 checkpoints in the city, the recovery of stolen cars is low.

Plying the streets, especially after nightfall, is dangerous, drivers say. It is widely reported that drivers are drugged and their vehicles are taken away. Hijackers killed or violently beat some drivers as they resisted them.

"Those parts are available in the market. We sell them at low prices," Sohail, a broker at Dholaikhal, said.

Up to 22 groups in the city are working in different segments of the hijacking chain. A section of hijackers is known as the 'advance party' that does the actual hijacking. Then there is the driver who drives it away and other people work for the safe passage of the car out of town.

Finally, the ringleader receives the chunk of the money on behalf of godfathers. Within six hours, the hijacked cars change into different parts. Car dealers are also suspected of involvement in carjacking.

The 'advance party' receives only a small share of the main chunk -- Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,000. There are a number of ringleaders around town.



Dholaikhal -- the place where all kinds of spares for vehicles old or new can be found.

Next come 15 to 20 brokers around Dhaka who receive a large part of the share, ranging from Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000, as they are the only ones exposed to the victims in the entire operation. Furthermore, they receive a handsome sum from the owner himself for the recovery of the vehicle.

The brokers are usually well-

known in the area they live in and are simply referred to as the dalals. They are also involved in trade related to CNG taxis, including training of drivers.

Then there are 'garages' which can be called out-of-town facilities that in a pre-arranged settlement keep the taxis for a few days. In return, they

receive a payment of Tk 2,500 to Tk 5,000.

"The police cannot or do not recover the vehicles. They are more likely to harass you and on the other hand, you are sure to lose your vehicle forever," says Monsur Ahmed, a resident of Dhanmondi.

Section 379 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, which applies to theft, makes it much easier for the criminals to obtain bail, as opposed to Section 392, which applies to the use of force, a non-bailable offence.

"Once they come to the police and if they fail to recover a vehicle, the owner stands to lose about Tk 250,000, whereas they can easily recover their vehicles for a pay of Tk 30,000 to Tk 60,000, subject to a lot of bargaining," a police official said.

With no investigation to pursue, the police have joined the private trade of recovering the vehicles as go-betweens or intermediaries between the hijackers and the victims.

"If you contact the regular brokers, they may charge you Tk 10,000 to Tk 70,000 to recover a vehicle. Some officers sitting at the front desks can recover it for you for less than Tk 30,000," says an officer-in-charge of a police station.

"We have 15 to 20 brokers all around Dhaka who work exclusively as go-betweens for the hijackers and victims," says Uzzal, a garage owner at Dholaikhal.

Once a vehicle has been hijacked, the hijackers sometimes collect the owners' phone numbers and call them. Depending on where the owner lives, he is handed the name of a person in a certain area and asked to contact him, if he wants to recover his vehicle and is warned against contacting the police.

It takes the victim nearly a day or two, or even more, to find out the person in the designated 'area,' as he is rarely given any more information than a name and an area.

In the negotiations that follow,

the broker settles on a bargain with the owner to recover the vehicle. Speaking on behalf of the thieves, the broker is known to demand anywhere from Tk 30,000 to Tk 70,000, although the usual figure is around Tk 50,000.

The owner is asked to arrive in a certain area, usually on the outskirts such as Demra, Pallabi, Tongi and Ashulia.

The hijacked car is then driven off to a garage outside the city. There are a number of such garages that are rented out to hijackers in places such as Savar, Tongi, Gazipur, Ashulia, Keraniganj and Jinjira.

As the car is being driven away, there are a number of other people who stand at different intersections to report the movement of police by mobile phone as the car drives away.

Dholaikhal, Shayampur, Demra, Azimpur, Mohammadpur and Tejgaon are the main places of the business of hijacked car.



STAR PHOTO

## city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"Distorting history is not unusual of a person like her who changes her own date of birth."



-- Sheikh Hasina

Leader of the Opposition

Commented on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on August 13 at a discussion meeting organised by Bangabandhu Parishad. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"The government did not let anyone starve to death in the last monga spell (near-famine situation). It will not let anyone starve to death during the floods either."

-- Khaleda Zia

Prime Minister

Said on August 12 while distributing relief among flood victims in Kurigram. Source: Ittefaq

"My father turned very quiet. Even then they killed him."

-- Smita Azad

Youngest daughter of Humayun Azad

Said on August 13 grieving over her father's death in Germany. Source: Prothom Alo



"Along with floods, the flood of bombs has invaded Bangladesh leaving people in insecurity."

-- Dr Kamal Hossain

President of Gono Forum

Said on August 12 at a discussion meeting with Chandpur Lawyers Association in Chandpur. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Nobody sheds tears when a bad person dies."

-- Sakhina Begum

Wife of Rakmat with a criminal past told journalists on August 11 after he died in a gunfight with the police in Narayanganj. Source: Prothom Alo

"My father is a victim of conspiracy. Those who used him are safe now."

-- Irine Akhter

Eldest daughter of Pichchi Hannan told journalists while she came to receive the body of her father at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on August 7. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

# No let-up in Buriganga encroachment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Sena Kalyan Sangstha (SKS) and at least a dozen other organisations still illegally occupy the Buriganga despite several eviction attempts and court orders to knock down all illegal structures on the channel, shore and foreshore of the river.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) officials said the SKS, which had illegally filled up 111,520 square feet area of the channel, shore and foreshore, had formally requested for 600 feet of foreshore on condition that it would let go of 97 feet of encroached river channel.

BIWTA officials said the authorities refused to allocate the SKS 600 feet of shore and foreshore of the river at Ali Bohor Char as they plan to relocate the Sadarghat launch

terminal there. Instead, it offered the SKS another location.

"The SKS agreed to shift after we assured it of allocating land near the armed forces installation at Pagla," said an official requesting anonymity.

BIWTA officials claimed that the authorities engaged their own dredgers to recover 97 feet of SKS encroachment area.

Despite the eviction, the SKS still occupies part of the river. At Ali Bohor Char near Pagla, locals said two more private companies, which filled up part of Buriganga, enjoyed immunity from the eviction drive. BIWTA officials said the owners of these installations obtained a stay order from the court on grounds that they inherited the land.

The authorities also exempted Zilla Parishad Market, a large instal-

lation encroaching on the Buriganga at Zinjira. The BIWTA eviction drives left untouched a dozen religious installations. About Zilla Parishad Market, officials said the market authorities have requested the BIWTA for allocation of the encroached land.

A high court bench ordered the BIWTA in January 2000 to remove all encroachers from the Buriganga and come up with an action plan in two months. Although the BIWTA failed to submit the action plan, it launched several eviction drives.

The first such drive demolished 443 illegal structures along the shore of the river. Between October 19 and 25, the BIWTA claimed to have demolished 576 structures from the river Buriganga. Between April 10 and 15, 2004, it demolished

289 structures. BIWTA officials said 250 encroachers have been listed against for eviction.

"We are now surveying the old Buriganga between Kamrangirchar and Rayer Bazar to ensure navigability of the river," a top BIWTA official told The Daily Star.

In October 2002, the Cabinet Division formed an 11-member taskforce to recommend measures for protecting the Buriganga and ensuring its navigability. The taskforce in its final report in January 2003, which was later approved by the government, recommended setting up of environment friendly commercial port activities on the riverbank. The recommendations also included removal of kitchen markets, religious institutions and the SKS installation.



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