

Buying back stolen motor parts at higher prices

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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 Dholakhal 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 Dholakhal.

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," Sohel, a broker at Dholakhal, 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.

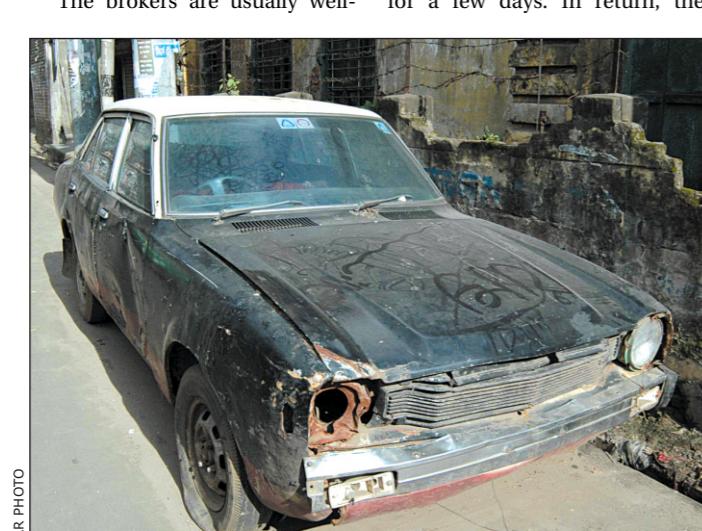
Finally, the ringleader receives the chunk of the money on behalf of godfathers. Within six hours, the hijacked cars change into different parts. Car dealers are also suspected of involvement in carjacking.

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.



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

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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 Dhamondi.

Section 379 of the Bangladeshi 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 Dholakhal.

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.

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

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

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 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

station encroaching on the Buriganga at Jinjira. 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 afresh for eviction.



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