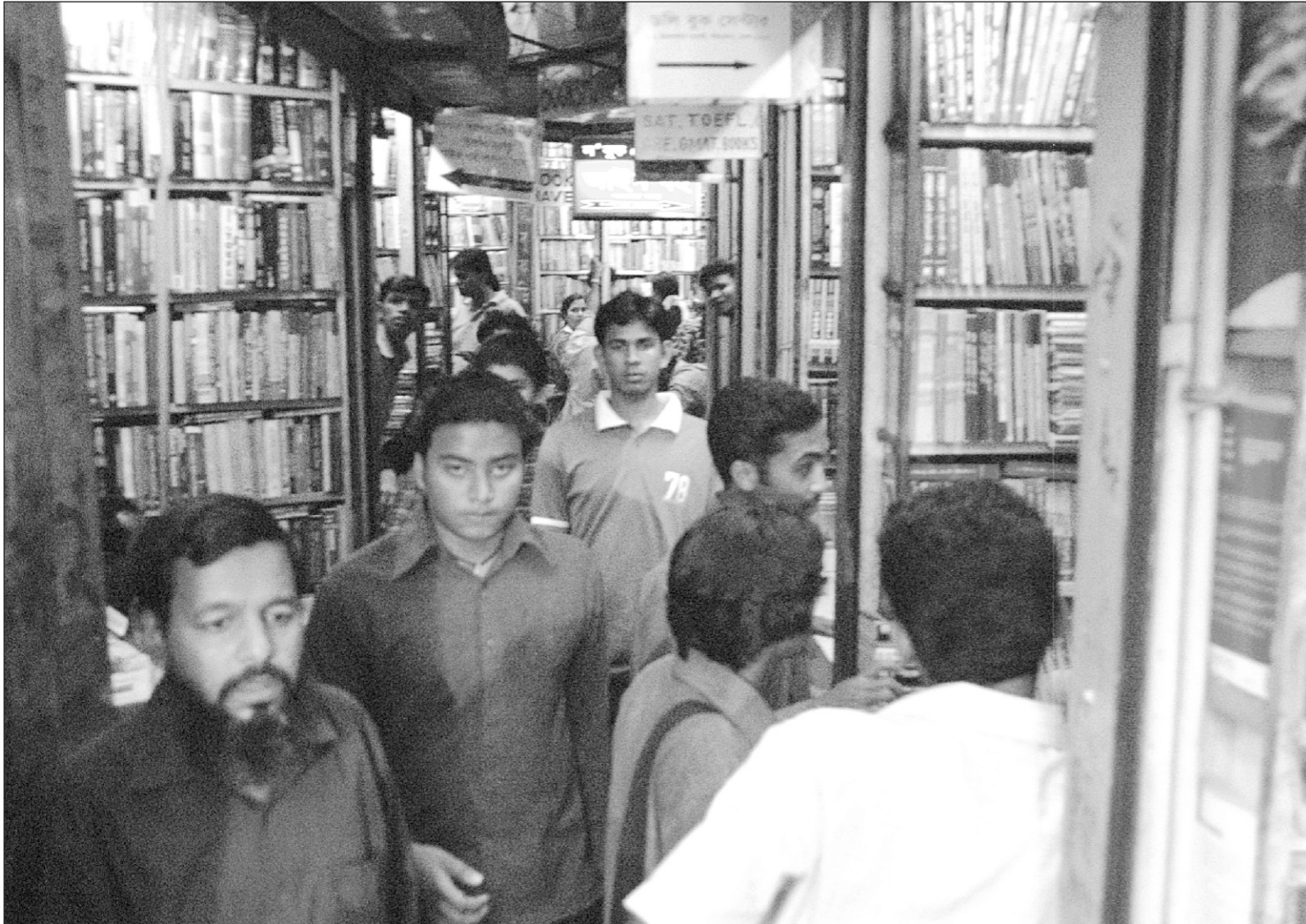


Muggers lurk around bookworms



Visitors to the Nilkhet market have to be more aware of their belongings than the purpose of their visit to the bookstores. Muggers wait for the chance to act when buyers are preoccupied in books

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Large numbers of students of Dhaka University (DU), Eden and Home Economics Colleges and other educational institutions who frequently visit the Bakushah Market at Nilkhet to purchase books and stationery, have become victims of mugging, according to the Dhanmondi police.

Victims said that youth and women are involved in these acts, and have found their bags to be opened and wallets and purses gone. The latest addition to mugging has been cellphone snatching.

An Hons final year student Tasnuva (not her real name) said that she went to Bakushah market to make a copy of her books. "Suddenly I found my bag open and my purse gone. I then realized that there had been a woman hovering around me and I am sure that she took it," she said.

Students who live on the campuses of these institutions do not file complaints with the police for fear that if the culprits find out their lives will be in danger.

"We do not want to risk our lives by complaining as we are all by ourselves. It is better for us to be tight-lipped about such incidents and bear the losses," said Shima, an Eden College student.

Passers-by sometimes get hold of

these muggers and beat them up thoroughly, without any police involvement and release them, said another student from the same college.

"A few days ago, a probable drug addict was beaten up by the local people when he snatched a gold chain of a woman on a rickshaw. Hearing screams, the people in the surrounding areas caught the culprit, beat him up severely and let him free," said Kalam, who worked at a photocopy booth.

When asked why the man was not handed over to the police, Kalam said that the police would do nothing. On the contrary, another shop owner at Nilkhet said that these culprits feel secure when they are with the police, because they know that they will be released within hours.

But police sources said if the muggers are caught on the job, they are sent to court to be tried under the speedy trial tribunal.

"However, we can't arrest them without any specific complaint. A case must be filed first," said **Sayd Foyz Ahmad**, second officer of the Dhanmondi police station.

Records show that, in the last six months, only 31 cases had been filed under the Nilkhet jurisdiction, which includes the Balaka Cinema Hall, BCS quarters, Babupura slum, Bakushah market and Institute of Cost and Management (ICMAB), but not a single

complaint had made against mugging.

The Dhanmondi police however, said they were not in a position to completely clear the area of such incidents, as they did not have sufficient manpower. "We work with only 90 officers, but there are over 100,000 people that roam the streets of Nilkhet," said Ahmad.

"People involved in mugging are mostly drug addicts, and sometimes it is risky to arrest such people. Most of them are weak and could succumb to these weaknesses. When deaths occur in our custody, it is very embarrassing for us," Ahmad added.

Even public health care centres do not open their doors to addicts, Ahmad explained. So we are left with no choice but to release these culprits if and when they are arrested, he said.

Unemployed youths from Kamrangir Char, Mohammadpur Beri Badh (embankment), Hazaribagh, Demra and other areas are involved in such activities. The Babupura slum adjacent to the market is a den of drug traders and addicts, said a resident of Mohammadpur.

A crowded alley in the Bakushah market at Nilkhet makes mugging child's play.

A busy road remains in dilapidated condition

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The road behind the New Market kitchen market that is used by hundreds of people everyday remains in a dilapidated condition for long.

This road became the only link between Azimpur and Dhanmondi for rickshaw passengers after Mirpur Road was made off-limits to rickshaws.

The narrow road beside the New Market Post Office is full of potholes. Taking a rickshaw ride on this road is so uncomfortable that most people get down from rickshaws and pass the shabby road on foot.

"This road is absolutely unusable," said Zinat Ara, a student of City College. "I have no option but to use this road twice a day."

Both sides of the road always remain full of garbage as traders at the kitchen market use it as dumping place, making it difficult for pedestrians to move on the road

Both sides of the road always remain full of garbage as traders at the kitchen market use it as dumping place, making it difficult for pedestrians to move on the road. There is no garbage container of DCC on this road.

When asked, the chief conser-

vancy officer (CCO) of DCC said they have removed the container in the face of protest from the resident students of nearby Halls of Dhaka University.

"The students beat the drivers of container carriers and put pressure on us to remove the

container from that spot," said Sohel Faruque, the CCO.

Despite all these odds, the road remains busy with rickshaws moving slowly with passengers covering their nose with handkerchiefs.

Local traders said the road has not been renovated for the last five years. They face difficulty in carrying goods in rickshaw-vans through the road.

"We suffer a lot everyday in bringing our products to New Market," said Monir Hossain, a fruit seller at the kitchen market.

When contacted, DCC officials said they would repair the road as soon as possible. "We have decided to repair this road on emergency basis," said Mozaffar Hossain, executive engineer, DCC.



The road behind the New Market is full of dirt and potholes, yet it remains busy throughout the day.

6x3

6x2

6x3