

Beware of Aggyan Party traps

MIZANUR KHAN

Beware of the 'Aggyan' Party! You can be a victim of this gang of criminals any time.

The party has become very active in doping and robbing passengers of their belongings at Sayedabad, Gabtoli and Mohakhali inter-district bus terminals, Kamalapur railway station and Sadarghat launch terminal. They are also active in bus stoppages. "Who knows may be next time when you travel by a CNG three-wheeler or a taxicab or take a bus, might fall prey to the gang," said Ashraful Haq, a Mohammadpur resident who became a target of the notorious criminals last month. He was treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Ashraful said as he waited at Gabtoli terminal for a Lalmonirhat-bound bus he met a young man who offered him cold drinks after a little chat. He cannot recall what happened after being entertained and found himself lying at the DMCH.

Mamun Rahman, a university student, was also trapped by the party last week.

He was returning to his dorm on the university campus by a CNG autorickshaw from Rampura. As the vehicle stopped at Matsya Bhaban intersection a gang of three



Two victims of the Aggyan Party doped with drugs lie unconscious on the floor of the emergency department of DMCH.

suddenly boarded the autorickshaw and took away his belongings.

"One of them put his hand over my mouth while the others started to punch me. That was the last scene I can remember. When I gained my sense, I

found myself lying in a bed at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital," Mamun said.

On average, 50 people, mostly bus passengers, in the city are drugged by the Aggyan party a day, police said. "They fall prey while they are in the

vehicles and terminals," said an on-duty police officer at Gabtoli bus terminal.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) sources said the number of these incidents has recently gone up. Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman

told Star City that the police department is also aware of the incidents and they have taken measures to curb the crime.

"First of all we have to create awareness among the common people so that they do not take food or drink from

unknown people," said the commissioner.

The victims, most of them are from low-income group such as rickshawpullers who accept food from unknown person easily, and even a journey from Mirpur to Gulistan could make somebody a target of the gang.

But passengers waiting at terminals blame the police for the ever-increasing doping and robbing incidents. Many said the policemen are aware of the incidents but remain inactive as they get share of the looted money.

"Criminals active in all bus stations are known to the police but they turn blind eyes into this crime. Every day we find people are being made senseless and robbed," said Rafiq, a bus company staff who has been working at Gabtoli for the last seven years.

Police officers denied the allegation and blamed passengers, CNG or taxi cab drivers for the incidents. "People should be aware of taking food from unknown persons. We do not understand why do they take food from people unknown to them," said a duty officer at Tejgaon Police Station asking not to be named.

"Criminals make people unconscious and take away their belongings with the help of autorickshaw drivers and cabbies," he added.

Some commuters are also dubbed CNG drivers as criminals. "All of a sudden the driver stops his vehicle on a deserted or unlit road pretending that the engine needs fixing. Then the miscreants appear and disappear in the same vehicle after robbing the passenger of his belongings," said a victim.

But CNG and taxicab drivers said they also fall prey to the gang quite often. Around 10 CNG autorickshaws are hijacked by the criminals a day, said a DMP official. Drivers said miscreants offer drinks or food to them and take over their vehicles.

"This is why we do not go everywhere. We cannot move on the streets safely. Some times criminals use women as decoys to hijack our vehicles," said Abdul Baten, an autorickshaw driver in Mirpur. He said that it takes around Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 to get an autorickshaw back from the criminals' gang.

Sources at the DMCH said the hospital gives treatment to 25 to 30 people who are cheated by the Aggyan party a day in the city.

For treatment of these patients there is a special ward in the hospital, but sometimes it can not accommodate all the patients. "Sometimes the number is so high that they are sent to other wards," said an on-duty

doctor.

DMCH sources said more than 600 victims were given treatment in July at DMCH. Police officials estimate the number at more than a thousand per month.

Moshiul Alam, a duty doctor at the emergency ward of DMCH, said they receive on average 10 cases during the daytime and the number increases at night.

"They use chloroform and sometimes inject morphine and pethidine into the body to make people unconscious," said the doctor. "The miscreants also use thorn apple (dhutra) powder. As the powder has no taste, colour or smell, it is very easy to use."

"A small dose is enough to make a person senseless for 5 to 10 minutes," he added.

The criminals put poisonous substances in cigarettes, betel leaves and tea to offer to their preys. Some of them also throw chilli powder and rub hazardous pastes into the eyes of the passengers. Most of the time victims are released after receiving primary treatment but in few cases they have to stay at hospital for long.

Sales go down at Ghee Potti following raids, newspaper reports

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Sale of ghee, creamless mawa and yogurt has fallen significantly at the decades old Ghee Potti at Patuatuli in Old Dhaka.

Businessmen and traders blamed recent newspaper reports that ghee and other products sold in the area were mostly adulterated, for their sufferings.

"The rumor is frustrating for most honest traders here who try to make a clean living," said Ramendro Ghosh, a businessman.

A mobile court visited Ghee Potti last month and the team led by a magistrate had inspected different shops and confiscated products that were being kept in an unclean environment. According to the magistrate, some of the products being sold were

not BSTI (Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute) approved.

"We did not protest and rather co-operated with the drive," said a trader.

"The mobile court also did not find any illegal factories where dubious stuff were being produced," claimed Moazzem Hossain Khan, a ghee trader. But later, some national dailies reported that some of the traders at Ghee Potti were fined for making ghee with potato and animal fat.

"We do not produce or refine products which arrive from greater Faridpur district and other parts of the country everyday," added Khan.

"Honest people, who have inherited the skill from their forefathers, produce the ghee we sell," said Ghosh who was extremely concerned about the future of thousands of ghee producers following the newspaper reports.

"The journalists in question never

bothered to test our products before writing their reports. If they had only examined, then could have been certain about the originality of the ghee and other stuff," said Ghosh.

"We sell our ghee at Tk 320 per kilogram whereas the price of factory-made ghee is much less. Despite the higher price, the traders here have managed to do business as city dwellers have shown total trust in the quality of the products sold at Ghee Potti," added Ghosh.

"These unsubstantiated reports have ruined our image," said a trader who owns one of the 20 shops that does business in the area.

"Our major customers were the professional cooks and community centers. They bought our products to cook for thousands of people at wedding ceremonies, birthdays and other occasions. But we have even

lost some of our regular customers after the publication of the reports.

"But we are still trying to survive this rough period. We have not compromised with the price or the quality of our products because of the low demand and sale," said Khan.

The price of mawa is Tk 180 per kg and cream-less yogurt is sold at Tk 20 per kg at these shops.

Ghee Potti has been in operation since the British rule, according to elders of the area. "I had inherited this trade from my grandfather and father. The case is the same with some of the other traders here also," said Ghosh. "But due to current crisis, some traders are even pondering shifting to some other business."



Ghee traders at Patuatuli anxiously await customers as sales dropped.

Cybergames competition ends today, finals in November

CITY CORRESPONDENT

World Cybergames 2005 Bangladesh Championship, a three-day computer-game competition have more than 500 participants competing to win tickets to participate in the finals due to be held in Singapore in November this year.

The local segment of the competition organised by F1 Management Ltd kicked off last Friday at Bashundhara City and will end today.

"The place was bustling with participants, their parents, curious visitors, cyber game lovers, sponsors and volunteers in last two days," said Hossain Ali Tareque, a volunteer.

Around 50 volunteers and referees were appointed to ensure a healthy competitive atmosphere for participants at



Participants at the Cybergame competition deeply engrossed in the tournament.

various levels.

But the inaugural day did not go without complaints of delays in starting the competitions.

"We had to wait for over two hours before the first round could begin," said Sharjil Hassan Khan, a participant of the FIFA 2005 game.

Organisers admitted delays in setting up computers and stalls.

"Games were scheduled to inaugurate at 09.30 but we had to start the competition at 11.00 with 50 personal computers powered by Sparkle GE Force FX series advanced 3D graphics engine," said Irfan Hussain, Director, Information Technology, of F1 Management Limited.

Despite the organisers' hopes of registering 500 participants for each category - Need For Speed Underground 2 and FIFA 2005 - the actual numbers of participants for both games

were only 50 percent.

"Lack of communication with interested participants and the unprecedented August 17 bomb blast across the country probably discouraged most enthusiastic participants to register for the tournament," said Fuad Awal Chowdhury, Managing Director, F1 Management Limited.

On the first day 224 participants competed in FIFA 2005 and 300 in the NFS U2 games.

"We received a large crowd on the first day as most family members accompanied each participant," said Chowdhury.

He also said that some shoppers at Bashundhara City were lured into the tournament spot because of crowds and the music.

Despite sponsors, organisers, volunteers and referees efforts to have smooth competitions, some participants com-

plained about the performances of the computers. "Most of the computers stalled from time to time and it needed to be restarted," said Barshan Khondoker, another participant. "This gave an advantage to some participants who were not faced with the problem," he added.

Other participants complained about the rules and regulations of the tournament.

"Participants are supposed to play with international teams like Brazil, Argentina in the FIFA 2005 category," said a participant.

But the organisers opted to let participants play club level matches in the FIFA 2005 category.

"As a result, most of us, who practiced the International level at home, had slim chances of winning the club level matches," said the participant.

But the organisers, however,

denied the allegation.

"We can change the rules and regulations of each game to be played in the tournament and have authority delegated by World Cyber Games authorities in this regard," said Irfan Hussain clarifying the allegations.

Hussain also said that five computers were kept as backup for the 50 being used in the tournament.

"Minor glitches and power failures can always cause computers to act otherwise. Some of these computers were either restarted or replaced with backups within a few minutes," said Hussain.

"We will hopefully have the finals and crown the two champions today," he said.

Djuice is the official sponsor of the event while Bashundhara Group sponsors the venue.