

Mugging rampant ahead of Ramadan

Victims show no trust in police

TAWFIQUE ALI

Incidents of mugging in the city a few weeks ahead of Ramadan have risen at an alarming pace, but police appear deficient in tackling this 'petty' crime.

Victims are disappointed and lack trust in the police force to control the offence.

Recently many incidents of mugging have been reported every day in some part of the city or other.

"The police alone cannot prevent mugging unless the factors responsible for the crime are addressed," said Additional Commissioner Faruq Ahmed, Crime Division, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

"We have various constraints, including want of logistics, which one must consider before accusing the police of their inaction," he said.

"We need a 70,000 member force in proportion to the city's present population, but we have only a 19,000-member force," Ahmed said.

On September 15, muggers

snatched Tk 7,000, a gold chain, three gold rings and an expensive mobile phone set from Rabi Shankar Das, manager of a shipping line company.

Rabi was on his way to the Gulshan Club from Kalabagan in an air-conditioned yellow taxicab around 9:00 pm.

Having taken a right turn, the driver stopped the taxi near Jahangir Gate of the Dhaka Cantonment saying that a problem had occurred in the engine and got down to fix it.

No sooner had he opened the bonnet, a group of three to four muggers got into the taxi from both sides and the driver immediately started the engine.

The muggers had rubbed some balm like substance mixed with chilli powder on his eyes before pushing him out of the taxi at Chairmanbari on the Airport road.

They had rubbed the substance so hard that Rabi's eyes were severely hurt. A passer-by had helped him to get to the Gulshan Club.

When asked why a case was not filed, one of Rabi's relatives

said: "We were more concerned with treating his eyes first. Anyway, what good will the police bring even if a case is filed?"

In another incident, muggers snatched a gold chain with locket, a pair of gold earrings and about Tk 5-6,000 in cash from a Unicef Bangladesh staff member, Anila Ahmed while she was returning home along Circuit House Road by rickshaw around 10:00 pm. the same day.

The bag was found on Dhanmondi road no-32 around 10:30pm. A journalist, passing by, found some youths fleeing stopped and took the bag from a street urchin. The following day, he returned the bag to Unicef office, it contained Anila's identity tag.

Anila had been heading home from Kakrail along with her husband. "As soon as we approached the Circuit House Mosque, muggers in a yellow taxicab (Indica model) intercepted us, snatched my handbag and fled," Anila said.

"We thought of filing a case but refrained as it would not bring any positive outcome," she said.

In a third incident, a Dhanmondi road no 11/Resident, Syed Abdul Matin was returning home from Islami Bank, Dhanmondi branch with Tk 50,000 in a rickshaw around 2:30 pm.

Some youths on three motorbikes, intercepted the rickshaw and snatched the cash at gunpoint near to Matin's house and fled.

Matin filed a case with Dhanmondi police in this connection.

"In most cases, we cannot live up to people's expectations. We face many constraints, especially with manpower," said Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge, Dhanmondi Police Station. "An investigation officer has to deal with many cases at a time, along with routine duty related to law and order," he said.

"If the muggers are identified in any particular case, we nab them and recover lost goods and money," Rahman added.

Regarding lack of people's trust in the police, Ahmed said that it is the general scenario in developing countries.

"Rate of crime like mugging in

our country is far less compared to that of Tokyo, Delhi and New York," he added.

The additional commissioner said that the DMP will increase the number of plain-clothed policemen from 40 to 60, mobile patrol teams from 153 to 250 and check posts from 24 to 40, in order to address the law and order situation.

"As part of enhanced security measures, we have identified 70 crime-prone points in the city. We will open a crime control room and introduce police vigilance equipped with 200 motorbikes," he further said.

Another top police officer said seeking anonymity that reasons behind up trend of crimes in the city include massive unemployment, political instability, absence of industrialisation, price hike, labour unrest and a huge floating population.

"Crimes like mugging take place out of need, not out of greed," he said.

the city that was

After the capital was shifted from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1715-16, Murshid Quli Khan became the subedar of Bengal and created the position of Nayeb Nazim to rule the eastern part of Bengal from Dhaka. The Nayeb Nazims ruled Dhaka for 50 years from 1715 to 1765 before the East Indian Company got diwani from Mughals.

e-mail: starcity@thecitythatwas.com



LIBERATION WAR MARTYRS FROM DU

Names sparkle on white marble

WAHIDA MITU

A Dhaka University (DU) student initiated and built a white marble plaque with the names of the martyrs engraved on it at the DU students' central union (Dacsu's) collection centre, with little or no contribution from DU authorities.

The plaque contained the names of the martyrs of the 1971 Independence War accurately and chronologically engraved.

Although there are several plaques in the DU campus, the ones near the house of the vice chancellor and in front of the Arts faculty building, which is covered with plants. Another zinc plaque lies outside Madhu's canteen.

"Dacsu has many visitors, but it did not have a plaque containing the names of the martyrs. Outside Madhu's canteen there is a nameplate of tin with lots of spelling mistakes. I thought there should be one at the Dacsu and shared my idea with Gopal Da," said Sheikh Hafizur Rahman Sajal, a 4th year student of the English department, who initiated the idea and also raised funds to build the present plaque.

"Even the other plaques in the DU campus are not in proper order and has many spelling mistakes," Sajal said. "Being the son of a freedom fighter, I took the initiative to make a plaque with accurate details," he added.

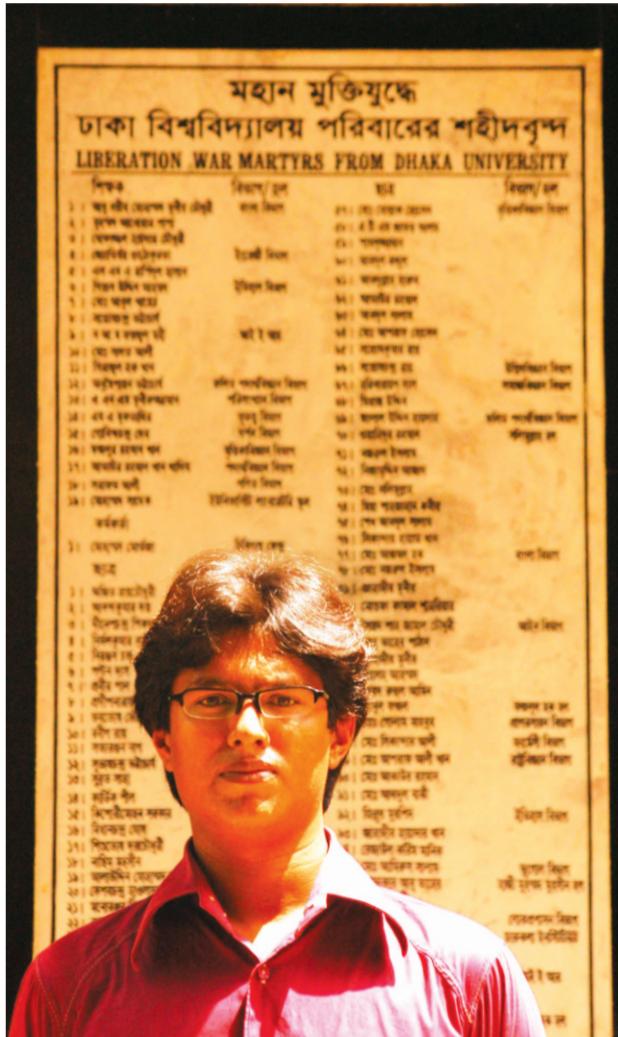
Costing around Tk one Lakh, the plaque is 5 feet long and 2 feet wide, and was completed in just six and a half months. It displays the name of the martyrs, including teachers, officials and students, and is presented in accordance with department and dormitory.

Engraved here are the names of 19 teachers at the top, followed by the name of one official and the name of 101 students.

Assisted by Dr Kaiser Hamidul Huq in giving it a heading in English, and Dr Zeenat Imtiaz, professor of Linguistic department, in spelling and format, the plaque has a bilingual heading, Sajal said.

Gopal Das, an official photographer of Dacsu collection centre assisted in collecting much information regarding the martyrs' names.

"I used a chart from the collection centre, which I had compiled in 1995, along with information from various places and sources. I used the chart and various information received to check and



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recheck the names of the martyrs," said Gopal Das.

"I am happy that something good has come out of this labour after a long time," he added.

Professor Dr Belayet Hossain, Dacsu treasurer, was involved in constructing the plaque from the very beginning with Sajal.

"He supervised the work and guided me along the way," said Sajal.

"All the work done earlier regarding the names of the martyrs was plugged in with several errors including their names and designations. The present work is an effort to rectify these mistakes," said Hossain.

"It was a good idea and the effort put in by Sajal was

exceptional. That is why I supported him to make it permanent by putting it on white stone from a sheet of paper," he added.

All visitors were satisfied with the plaque.

"We should all do our best to pay tribute to Liberation War martyrs and preserve history. If such things are not available in the DU campus then the name of the martyrs will be forgotten," said Arifur Rahman, an ex-DU student who visits the campus regularly.

"It is imperative that the DU authorities preserve our history and showcase the invaluable contribution and glory of the institution to the country," he added.



An artisan is busy moulding the idol of Goddess Durga at Shankhari Bazar. Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community, will begin from the 29th of this month.

Second unit of Sayedabad Water Treatment Plant still in limbo

Wasa hopes to begin the project by June 2007

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

supply comes from underground.

Soon after the commissioning of the first unit, the Danish International Development Agency (Danida) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) shown their interest in funding the project. Danida and Sida promised to provide Tk 400 crore and Tk 147 crore respectively for the project with an estimated cost of Tk 800 crore.

But in the last four years the government could not start the project as negotiations are still going on for funds. An official of Dhaka Wasa said the negotia-

tion is taking time as the donors set a number of conditions which might go against the government policy.

The official however did not disclose the conditions.

"We are determined to start the tender process for the project in December even if the funding authorities do not respond positively. The government will set up the plant by its own fund in case of any more delay from the funding authorities," said the Wasa official.

The Wasa officials however are hopeful to reach a concrete decision within a month.

"A joint team from the funding

authorities will be visiting Bangladesh on September 20 and we are hopeful that meetings with them will take the project close to reality," said Hedayet Ullah Al-Mamun, acting managing director, Dhaka Wasa.

The acting MD is hopeful of starting the project within June 2007. The project will take two years to be completed.

The second phase of Sayedabad water treatment plant will have the same capacity of supplying 22.5 crore litres of water every day as its phase-I has. A new intact point would be set up at the upstream of the River Shitalakkhya at Machhina in Rupganj in Narayanganj for

the phase-II to ensure supply of quality water.

The Wasa officials stressed the need for immediate implementation of the project to solve the water crisis in the city and lessen the pressure on groundwater that is depleting at an alarming rate of 3 metres per year on average.

"We should reduce the dependency on groundwater for the environmental balance and using the surface water is the only solution. That is why we should establish the water treatment plants as soon as possible"

has a plan to implement the phase III and IV of the project. These phases of the project will have capacity of supplying 90 crore litres of water every day.

Wasa supplies 165 crore litres of water against a demand of 210 crore litres every day in the city 85 percent of which is collected from groundwater using 437 deep tube-wells.

"Gradually we want to come out of using the groundwater, collecting water from this source is becoming expensive and risky as well due to sharp fall of groundwater level," said the chief engineer of Wasa.