

250 'aggyan parties' active!

Awareness about these 'creative' gangs and their hotspots a must to fight back the rising crime, says a top detective

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Beware! The small mistake of drinking or eating anything offered to you by an unknown person could make you a prey of the "aggyan party", cautioned Masudur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of detective branch of police.

Aggyan parties, thus named because of their practice of robbing their victims by drugging them into unconsciousness, have recently become very active in the city.

Detective Branch of police (DB) claimed that including the pioneer of "the specific" crime, DB has arrested at least 50 members of such gangs within the last one month.

Regarding the measures to fight back against this crime in the city, the top detective said that detective branch has designated teams working specially on the issue of the aggyan parties since the first week of June. The teams are collecting information and trapping the gang members.

Masudur said that the aggyan parties are really hard to handle as they use unusual ideas and sedatives as weapons, instead of conventional arms, for robbing someone.

"DB is cleaning the gangs out from the city, but I will always say that building awareness among people about the risks of drinking or eating anything while accompanying an unknown person is the most effective way to handle aggyan party," he said. Electronic and print media should play a role on that issue, he added.

The aggyan parties are mainly active at inter-district and intercity transport terminals, as well as at



People coming from outside the capital often fall prey to 'aggyan parties' at bus launch, railway terminals.

other crowded points of the city, though day-by-day they are extending their range.

They first target a person and then with trickery use sedative on the target. The gangs mix seven to eight Lorazepam, a very strong sedative tablet imported from Pakistan, in tea, water, biscuits or other foods, including coconut water, and serve it to their targets.

Sometimes disguised as street vendors, the gang members sell these foods and drinks to their targets. Sometimes, they befriend fellow passengers on the public

transports and offer them drugged food. "The gangs always show innovativeness in their tricks," said another field level official of the detective branch.

Police often find it difficult to catch the members of such gangs with evidence, as powdered sedatives, which are the tools of their trade, can be hidden or thrown away quite easily.

Passengers, taxicab and CNG auto-rickshaw drivers, and rickshaw-pullers are usually the prime targets of the gangs.

Zia International Airport (ZIA)

has also become a hotspot for the aggyan parties. People of the working class, particularly the ones returning home from abroad, often become the victims of the gangs.

On Tuesday, an aggyan party gang took goods worth Tk10,000 from house number 114 at Dokhingao under Sabujbagh area.

Hosne Ara, owner of the house, informed that on the day of the robbery, a young man who named himself as Sumon came and asked the house owner about

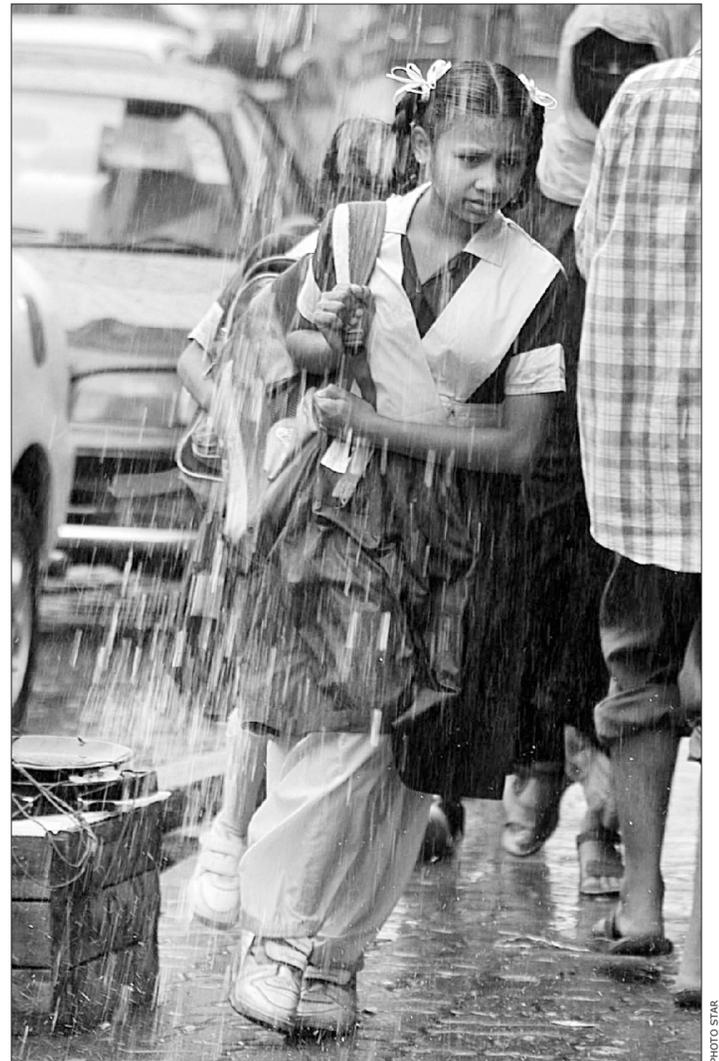
his friend Bithi. On learning that no one called Bithi lived at the house, Sumon told the house owner that Bithi had provided him this address. He said that he had brought some food and fruits for Bithi, but as she was not to be found there, he would be happy to share them with the house owner.

Hosne Ara was pleased by his cordial attitude and she offered him tea along with the food he had brought. Other family members also ate those food and fruits and fell into unconsciousness. Sumon was able to do his business smoothly.

DB claims to have arrested "the pioneer" of "Aggyan Party" recently. The man named Pundit ostensibly narrated to the law enforcers how he formed his gang 25 years ago and the way he used to run its activities.

Pundit told the police that he started in 1981-82 with six members. A few years after its inception, he got arrested and his followers split into separate gangs. Since then the activities and number of the gangs have been spreading. Now there are such gangs even outside the capital.

According to estimates of the DB police, there are approximately 250 aggyan parties operating in different areas of the city. Referring to an aggyan party's recent murder of Altair Rahman, an officer of National Security Intelligence (NSI), a police inspector of Tejgaon police station said, "No one is safe from these criminals, even the trained cops."



A girl, caught in a shower on her way to school, speeds up as she had no scope for a shelter. The city dwellers are experiencing bouts of rain and sun as a part of the monsoon.

Commuters suffer as link road plan gathers dust



Vehicles stuck in a tailback in front of Jahangir Gate of Dhaka Cantonment.

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Thousands of commuters travelling along the old Airport Road via the Chief Adviser's Office are unlikely to see an early end to their sufferings as the proposal for a link road is gathering dust.

Considering the immense agony of commuters, construction of a road linking the old Airport Road near the Jahangir Gate and Rokeya Sarani was given high priorities in the second phase of Dhaka Urban Transport Project. However, the project is yet to receive final government approval, said Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) sources.

Although a tunnel was proposed initially to connect the Airport Road at Jahangir Gate point with Rokeya Sarani, recent discussions suggested a regular road due to fund and time constraints.

"The proposal was sent to communications ministry in

2005. It is now waiting for approval of Planning Commission," said an official at DTCB requesting anonymity.

"The new road is necessary to improve the infrastructure of transportation system in the city," added the official.

While the government is sitting on the link road project proposal, thousands of helpless commuters are being compelled to put up with hours of exhausting tailbacks on Airport Road near the Chief Adviser's Office.

The situation in the area got worse after the Mohakhali "flyover" was completed ignoring multidirectional heavy traffic crossing through the intersection. The "flyover" barely works as a level crossing above the Mohakhali rail crossing as vehicles "flying" over it suddenly lands on bottlenecks created on both ends of it.

As a result, commuters from north and north-eastern parts of the city -- especially from Gulshan, Banani and Uttara --

en route to Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Farmgate, Shahbagh or Azimpur have to go through the exasperating and fatiguing experience everyday near the Jahangir Gate of Dhaka Cantonment.

"It takes over half an hour to pass this spot even under usual traffic conditions," said Daiyaan Chowdhury from Uttara.

"Traffic situation on both ends of the flyover is usually horrible. It's a disaster -- thanks to lack of foresight on part of our traffic planners," he added.

"After the opening of Mohakhali flyover, everybody expected a relief from the never-ending traffic jam in the Mohakhali and Jahangir Gate area. But instead, the traffic congestion problem has now extended upto Bijoy Sarani -- especially during the morning and evening office hours," said Zahir Hyder, a service provider at Farmgate.

"Although it is said that the departments concerned are

working on for a solution to the problem, I do not see any noticeable result," added Hyder.

To ease traffic congestion in the region, schemes were taken by authorities to build a couple of new roads. The first one was supposed to be on the southern edge of Sonargaon Hotel. The other road was supposed to link Bijoy Sarani and Tejgaon Industrial area through the site of controversial Rangs Bhaban.

Since none of these roads were constructed as intended, city dwellers now speculate that the Jahangir Gate link road might end up turning into yet another project put on ice by the authorities.

"Even though a link road connecting Mirpur with the Airport Road is desperately needed, I suppose it [the project] would end up being cancelled in the end," said Commodore (Retd) AMA Rashid from Uttara.

"This road would be vital to the transport infrastructure of the area as it would divert traffic from the Airport Road and reduce congestion in front of the Chief Adviser's Office," he added.

However, DTCB officials could not give any satisfactory answer as to when the Jahangir Gate link road project would receive final government approval.

"Since the construction of the link road would involve cooperation from a number of authorities including the army and the air force, I do not see the matter being resolved in the near future," said Sultan Uddin Ahmed, director of DTCB.

health, bus services, airlines & train timing

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