

MUGGINGS AND MURDERS ON THE RISE AGAIN

Tales of families shattered, devastated

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Families are being devastated in the capital as criminals are again raising their heads committing the incidents of muggings, assaults and even murders.

On July 20, Dewan Rahat Karim, a North South University (NSU) teacher, was found unconscious near the Army stadium. His eyes appeared to have been gouged out and body brutalised with cuts and abrasions to his throat.

The last time anyone had heard from him was when he left the university at 8:20pm after having taken a class following an Iftar party. His family members were shattered at midnight as they finally identified his body at the Dhaka Medical College morgue.

To see the body of her son, the mother broke down sobbing, saying the whole family was planning to visit their village home, but this time they will have to visit the place with her son's body.

"What has gotten to this world and the people? Why would anybody murder my innocent son like this?" asked a visibly shaken Nazma Matin, mother of Rahat Karim.

Despite a 'state of emergency' in force in the country and the claim of law enforcers that they have been doing

everything they can to outsmart the spitefully creative muggers, the streets of Dhaka have turned into safe haven for all sorts of criminals.

Earlier, in May this year, expatriate Muktar Hossain, 39, within a few hours of his trip to his homeland after living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for roughly a decade, wound up



A file photo of Dewan Rahat Karim and wife.

dead in the hands of muggers of Dhaka.

On his way from Zia International Airport, Muktar was abducted by muggers. He was stripped of all his savings and belongings and was left for dead by Karwan Bazar underpass, some time before or after the midnight. The muggers even stole his luggage in which he had brought gifts for his loved ones.

Next morning, police discovered him and another

unconscious man near the underpass. After the police rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, he was declared dead by poisoning.

Muktar's premature death left his family of four with a sinister cloud looming over their future. His wife Rina Khanam is now struggling to look after the family with a low-

Ahmed, exhausted after a hard day, got off a bus after it reached Sayedabad.

While he was looking for transportation to his house and at the same time absent-mindedly thinking about how soon he could go home and get to bed, he was suddenly jolted back to reality only to realise that he had been pinned down by three thugs.

The thugs held Ahmed down and tried to strangle him while tying his hands. He suddenly felt his eyes burning as the crooks forced a chilli powder mix into his eyes. They left him on the pavement after taking his shoulder bag, wallet and the cellphone.

"They left me petrified and I could not believe my own voice for I was repeatedly thanking him for not injuring or stabbing me. I feel so insecure. Will this ever stop?" said Ahmed.

"We were lucky that a security guard came to the rescue and screamed out for help. We rushed to the spot soon after being informed of it," said Hafeez Ahmed, Jalil's brother.

"I immediately went to the Rab [Rapid Action Battalion] officials who were on duty nearby and told them about the incident, seeking their help. All they said was that we would have to go to a police station to file a complaint," Hafeez said with disbelief.

Jalil Ahmed, a service provider from Sayedabad was mugged during the first week of September. At around 8:15pm, Jalil Ahmed could not open

his eyes for several hours and had to spend three days in a hospital. Almost after a month, Ahmed is still traumatised by the brush with death.

Throughout the last decade, people of Dhaka have learnt to live with everyday crimes. Gone are the days of petty offences like pick pocketing, snatching jewelry or even threatening a passer-by with weapons, lamented city dwellers.

The stories that come to light nowadays are gruesome and make Dhaka residents think twice before stepping outdoors.

It was a bright sunny afternoon when Farhana Akhter (not real name), along with a friend of hers, went to Nilkhel to purchase a few books. As they were walking past Chandni Chowk market, Farhana suddenly realised that she had been surrounded by four criminals who had been skilfully going through her purse. The gang took out Tk 1,000 from her purse already and was digging through the purse for her cellphone.

Even though Farhana did not dare to yell out for help, the crooks, realising that she had found out about their mischief, put her cellphone back into the purse. They, however, did not give back the money they had stolen from her.

During the whole ordeal, Farhana was stunned to notice that everyone around her -- the vendors and customers -- were watching the commotion, but no one came to the rescue of a helpless girl!



Workers of a realtor risk their lives while painting a multi-storied building without taking any safety measures. The picture was taken from Green Road yesterday.



Flood-hit labourers who migrated to the capital recently in quest of jobs are returning to their home villages on the eve of Eid.

Locals fear a mess

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acquisition from two government agencies Water Development Board and BTTB, along the west bank of the lake for approach road to connect Banani road-11 with Gulshan road-34 with a bridge.

Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, who headed a 31-member advisory committee on Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for Dhaka, said that any agency is required to consult with Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) before undertaking any traffic related project but hardly any agency practices it.

According to (STP), a traffic infrastructure project should be based on study of traffic volume of a certain area during peak hour, he said.

"The LGED should have carried out a peak-hour traffic study of the area before construction of the bridge," he said.

A senior official of the LGRD ministry however said requesting anonymity that it is not the bridge alone, which will spoil serenity of the area.

"There are many hotels, rest houses, schools, clubs, commu-

nity centres and other commercial establishments being run within the core residential area of Gulshan, already destroying the very residential ambience," he said. "Beneficiaries of such unauthorised activities in the residential vicinity are among those who oppose the bridge today."

Former president of Gulshan Society and a resident of road-5, Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury wrote to the chief adviser on July 19, 2007 pointing out that the proposed bridge would aggravate traffic problem in the adjoining areas.

Acting president of the society Prof Roushanara Rahman and the then president Sayeeful Islam also wrote similar letters on April 18, 2007 and March 14, 2007 to the chief engineer of LGED and adviser to the LGRD ministry.

The ministry has already issued the work order for construction of the four-lane bridge will be 90 metres long and 16 metres wide. LGED is the implementing agency of the project fully financed by the government.

Benarosi Palli

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plots would be allotted to weavers of the Palli. Local influentials backed by political groups took control of the area by getting the allotment and that was the first blow to the industry. People who took control did not belong to the class to appreciate the tradition.

In the year 2000 Bangladesh Krishi Bank disbursed loans to weavers of Benarosi Palli through Tani Rin Samity, one of the field level cooperative society for weavers. The cooperative society was given the responsibilities to manage the disbursement of the credit in the area. A large segment of the weavers acquired the loan.

"First time everyone repaid the money with interest. Second time in 2001, field level workers of the samity mishandled the credit scheme. Weavers paid their dues but the samity men did not return the interest to the bank," said a weaver.

This is another blow that is still haunting the weavers and cracked the backbone of the industry. Many weavers still owe a huge amount of money to the bank that they have already paid back.

No member of the cooperative society was available for comment.

Vagabonds

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proper maintenance of the children's corner. But no step has been taken yet.

According to findings of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok (Bapa), an environmentalist group, a considerable amount of public money is wasted in the name of installing children's playing equipment in the parks and playgrounds. But the instruments are rusting away or destroyed due to lack of maintenance.

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