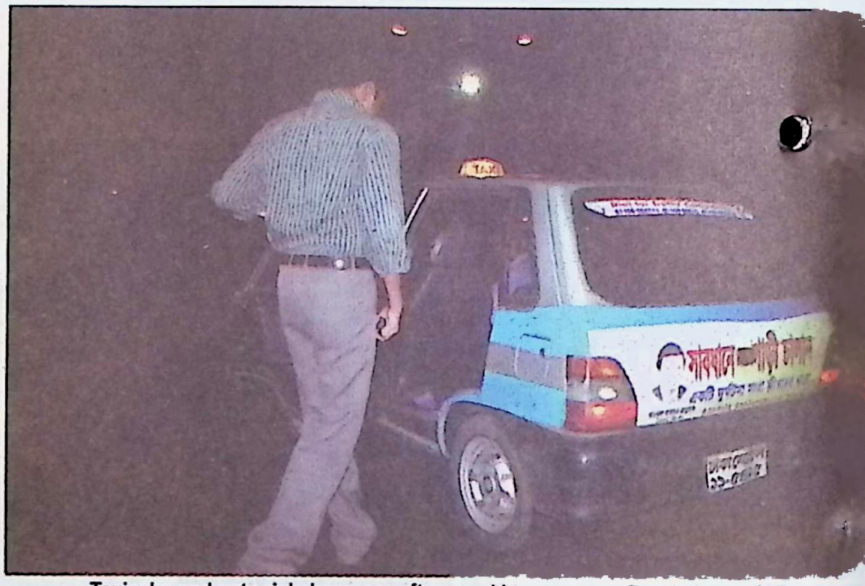


Many streets become a mugger's paradise at night.



The police are increasing patrols and check posts in an effort to combat spiralling street crime.



Taxicabs and auto rickshaws are often used by muggers after darkness falls.

May and June. Observers suggest the actual figure could be several times as high. In most cases, the hapless victims do not bother going to the police.

In the early hours of August 5, Siraj Syed arrived at Dhaka's Sayedabad bus terminal on a bus from Comilla. He got into a CNG auto rickshaw in order to get to his house in Mirpur. Halfway there, the auto rickshaw suddenly stopped at a secluded spot. The driver started to gun the engine, but the vehicle would not move.

"As soon as the CNG stopped, I knew something was wrong," says Syed. "I wanted to get out, but before I could make a move, three men piled in. Two of them held knives at the ready. I didn't stand a chance. As soon as the muggers got in, the driver started the engine and the CNG sped away."

One of the men got on Syed's lap, pinning him against the seat. The muggers took away his wallet, mobile phone and PDA. He was pushed out of the auto rickshaw near Bijoy Sarani.

"I lost things worth quite a bit of money," says Syed, "but in a way I am thankful. They didn't harm me physically."

Absar Uddin, a 35-year-old trader in Banani, wasn't so lucky. He had just drawn some money from an ATM on Road 11 in Banani when a black taxicab stopped in front of him.

"I asked him if he wanted to go to Uttara," recalls Absar. "Normally they don't want to go, or haggle about the fare. But this guy just said, get in!"

"I was talking to a friend on my mobile and was a little preoccupied. After we had passed Hotel Radisson, the taxi suddenly stopped. The driver said he wanted to relieve himself by the roadside."

Soon the inevitable happened. Three men entered the taxicab. Absar, desperate to escape, tried to push his way out. But one of the muggers stabbed him in the thigh.

"I felt the blade cut through my jeans," says Absar. "Strangely I didn't feel too much pain. It was like a sharp