the victims in some cases," said the letter. Most of the incidents took place in the Gulshan and Baridhara areas.

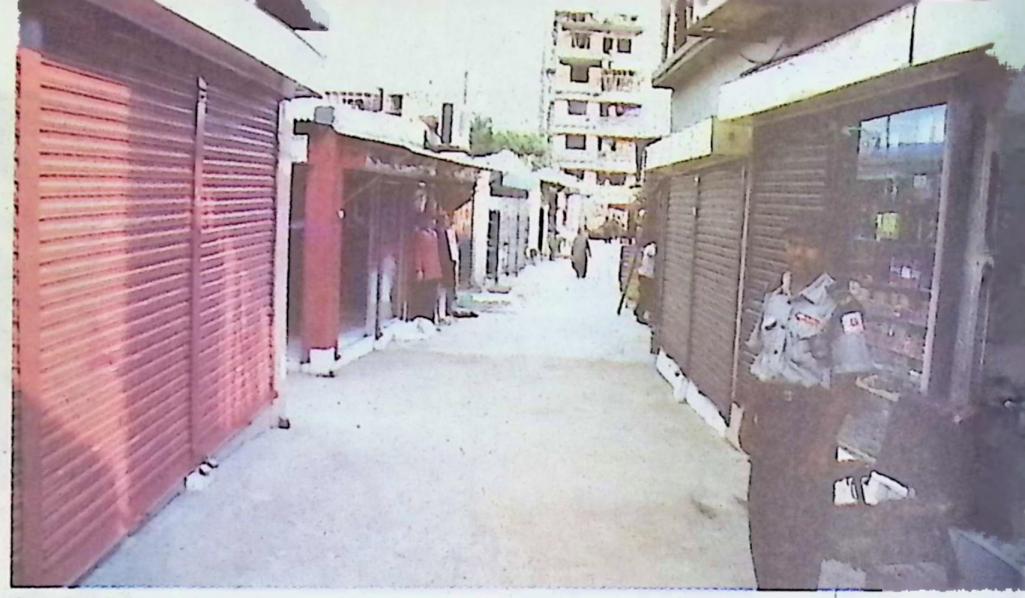
Md. Kamal Uddin, newly appointed OC of Gulshan Thana, says the police are pulling out all the stops to bring the situation under control, and are succeeding. "We have increased the number of check posts and also the number of motor cycle patrols. The situation is under control. There were 10 cases of mugging in June. In July there were only 4. Despite resource limitations, we are vigilant 24/7."

His words are echoed by S M Shiblee Noman, Officer in Charge of Ramna Thana. "We have mounted a strong operation to stop street crime. It will be conducted in 3 phases. From August 3 to August 13 we are conducting an all-out drive against street crime. This includes capture of members of Aggyan Party (groups that knock out their victims using chemicals) and Molom Party. Then we will conduct a drive against drug trafficking. Then will come a drive against certain godfathers of crime."

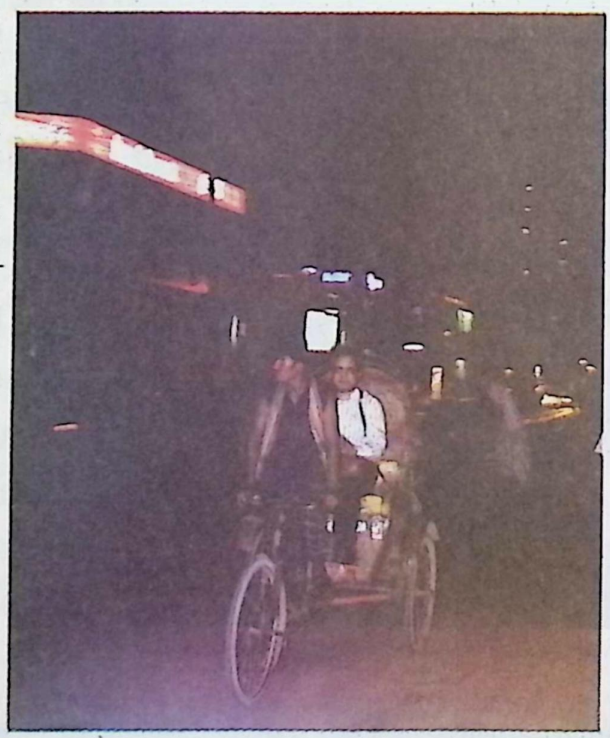
The police officers point to arrests they have made in recent days. They say severe shortages in men and vehicles are hampering their efforts.

Deputy Commissioner Monirul Islam says the police are taking initiatives such as the community police scheme which seeks to involve the community in crime fighting. He also mentions other positive steps such as dividing up the Thana into zones and assigning a team led by a Sub Inspector to oversee it.

"An SI will contain crime in his or her assigned area. The SI will also settle long-standing problems existing in the area by holding arbitrations among feuding groups or individuals. Besides, DMP is going to strengthen police patrolling, forming at least three more motorbike patrol teams in each police station. In each patrol team there will be four police personnel with two motor bikes."



Business leaders say a stable law and order situation is necessary to attract investment.



Street crime makes it dangerous for commuters at night.

He also promised proactive undercover schemes including Burqa squads where police personnel will don Burqas in an effort to nab criminals.

It remains to be seen whether such initiatives will translate into solid gains on the ground. Many critics say the police are preoccupied with high profile crimes such as murders and are not focused on fighting street crime. Too much focus on "VIP duties" is also blamed for over stretching police resources.

"It is all about the will to fight crime," says Hossain Khaled. "The mechanism is there. The police have information about the gangs. A zero tolerance approach is needed from the government."

The DMP have made it mandatory for all taxi cabs and CNGs to display Police Control Room numbers that passengers can call in an emergency. When the emergency number 01199806111 was called by the Star Magazine at 2.10 AM on August 10, it was switched off.

"Mugging incidents make us fearful of strangers and afraid to go out at night," says Absar Uddin. "They have taken away our peace of mind."

In many ways, that is the biggest loss of all.