

Snatching on rise

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Sudden rise in the incidents of snatching in the port city of Chittagong has created feelings of insecurity in the population.

At least 15 incidents of snatching took place in the city last month (June) while many of them remained unreported as the victims were reluctant to go to police station to file case.

A gang of armed snatchers took away Tk 5 lakh from trader Mohammad Musa from in front of the Janata Bank Colonel Hat branch under Pahartali Police Station on June 23 in broad daylight.

Musa, a grocer of Colonel Hat Market, along with another trader Sohag was going to deposit the money to the bank a few yards off his shop. The miscreants stabbed Musa and Sohag before snatching the bag containing the money. They managed to escape the scene in a CNG-run autorickshaw.

Trader Shyamal Dutta of Khatungonj was robbed of Tk 3 lakh the following day. Locals caught a snatcher identified as Mrinal Das red-handed while the other members of the gang managed to flee.

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police, however, arrested five people in this connection and recovered Tk 39,500 from their possession on June 26. Police claimed the money was snatched from trader Shyamal.

Four members of a gang involved in snatching money from Musa also got arrested from West Bakolia the same day along with the autorickshaw used in the snatching.

Sources at Chittagong Metropolitan Police said the snatchers are active at different city points including SS Khaled Road, Chittagong College Road, Paltan Road, MM Ali Road, Love Lane, CRB Road and Port Connecting

Road.

The gangs, popularly known as "Tana Party" and "Malam Party", use CNG-run autorickshaws in the crimes. Their main targets are passengers of public transports. Another type of snatchers on board autorickshaws target the pedestrians in quiet places while other type of snatchers mix with the crowd in busy areas to commit the crimes.

Over 15 organised gangs of snatchers active in the port city include Dhakaiya Alamgir group, Nur Alam Group and Mithu-Saiful group, said the sources.

Some snatcher leaders released on bail from jail are blamed for reorganising their gangs and giving rise to recent incidents of mugging. Most of the snatchers' gangs are based in city outskirts where they can hide quickly after committing the crimes, said sources in different law enforcing agencies.

Most of the incidents of snatching occur between 8:00pm and 9:00pm, the time of shifting duties of police personnel, they said.

Narrating experience of falling victim to snatching, Mohammad Saidul Islam, an employee of a private organisation of Anderkilla, said the muggers attacked him in front of Rima Community Centre at SS Khaled Road at around 9:40pm on June 21 when he was returning home from his office in a rickshaw and talking over cellphone. Saidul said three snatchers equipped with firearms and dagger intercepted his rickshaw amid crowd of vehicles.

He said the miscreants took away his cellphone at gunpoint and fled the scene in a CNG-run autorickshaw parked beforehand near the spot.

Flower trader Solaiman of Jamal Khan area said three armed snatchers intercepted his rickshaw at Chittagong

College Road on June 5 when he was returning home. They took away his mobile set and other belongings after stabbing him in his back, he said.

Saidul and Solaiman blamed insufficient patrol by law enforcing agencies for the increasing number of such incidents at different points in the city.

They urged police department to take immediate step in this regard and rid the city dwellers of sense of insecurity prevailing among them.

Meanwhile, traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) has decided to launch a fresh drive against autorickshaws running without iron grill by July 10 to reduce the crimes using the vehicles.

CMP Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Faruk Ahmed said they would fine the autorickshaws that would fail to fix iron grills during the drive.

Most of the crimes are being committed using the autorickshaws, said the DC, adding that the crime will reduce to a significant extent after setting up the grill.

When contacted Rab-7 Commanding Officer Lt Col Sazzad Hussain said a special team of Rab is active to curb incidents of snatching and succeeded after arresting four members of a gang who were involved in mugging of Tk 5 lakh from trader Musa.

He said they have increased vigilance at risky areas and launched drives against the snatchers who are also involved in drug peddling.

CMP Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Majumder said a few gangs are involved in the crimes in the port city and a number of snatchers were arrested last month. "We are looking into the matter seriously and hope to bring the situation under control soon," he said.



Star Photo
Fruit markets are flooded with seasonal fruits. Of the fruits, pineapple and jackfruits topped the demand list.

Fruits in markets aplenty but dearer

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

There is an abundance of different types of seasonal fruits in the markets of the port city of Chittagong though the summer has gone past making the way for monsoon with bumper production in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Consumers, however, expressed disappointment as prices of the fruits are still high.

The city experienced a flood of different seasonal fruits like mango, jackfruit, pineapple, litchi and palm during the last two months of summer. The fruits come from different parts of the country and abroad.

The traders were satisfied with a good sale while the consumers quite happy with good quality and moderate prices of the fruits this year.

Unlike the previous years the flow of fruits is still present till the first week of July though the sale of the main batch of mango and litchi has already finished. Different types of mangoes like fazli, rupali and amropali are now available in the markets.

To meet the demand of the city dwellers jackfruit with rich food value and delicious pineapple grown at Rangamati and Khagrachhari have now grabbed the city markets.

Trucks full of these two fruits from Rangamati and Khagrachhari are arriv-

ing at different wholesale trade points of fruit like Firingibazar, BRTC, Station Road and Reazuddin Bazar everyday.

Traders said the two fruits are now plenty in the local markets due to bumper yield in the hilly region of CHT.

These fruits are coming from Subhalong, Longadu, Myani, Marishya and Burighata of Rangamati and some areas of Khagrachhari.

Sabuj, a wholesale trader in BRTC Fall Mondri (fruit storehouse), said alongside from CHT area jackfruits are still coming from Tangail, Madhupur and Panchagarh.

Rangamati supplies around 80 per cent of the pineapples while the rest come from Khagrachhari, he said.

Adequate supply of fruits, however, couldn't rein in their higher price.

During the visit to these wholesale markets on Monday, traders were found selling jackfruits at Tk 5000 to Tk 6000 per hundred while same quantity of pineapples were being sold at Tk 250 to Tk 400.

But vendors in different city streets or city markets are selling a big size of jackfruit at Tk 150 to Tk 200 while a medium one at Tk 60 to Tk 80.

Retailers are selling a pair of pineapple at Tk 10 to Tk 15.

Hasan Tarik, a bank staff, said the price should come down in this late season as there is supply in abundance in the market.

He said there is no reason for such

price since the sale of jackfruit is quite good.

Akhter, another consumer, said the sale is good since Chittagong people usually don't like taking jackfruit amidst excessive heat and the present weather is quite moderate.

He blamed the greedy desire of both the wholesale traders and retailers for making profit for the price hike of the fruits.

The traders denying the allegation blamed lack of facilities for proper preservation of these perishable items amid rain for the price hike.

Kalam, a vendor at Karnaphuli CDA Market, said he can't sell a big size of jackfruit below Tk 150 since his fruits are brought from Madhupur and their

wholesale rate is also higher.

Wholesaler Sabuj said the price of jackfruits coming from northern region is little higher than that of CHT areas.

Dulal Chandra Dey, General Secretary of Chittagong Fruits Warehouse Owners Association, said they can't preserve huge quantity of fruits due to lack of space in their godowns.

He said some traders charge higher in a bid to cover the loss they face as the fruits easily get rotten in the rainy season.

He underscored the need for setting up more warehouses in the port city with good preservation facilities.

theweekthatwas

Call to follow DAP to upgrade Chittagong city

Speakers at a roundtable in the port city on Saturday called for carrying out infrastructural development and urbanisation following the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) to upgrade Chittagong as commercial capital and ensure urban facilities.

They stressed the need for coordinated efforts by the government and non-

government organisations, involving the people through creating awareness.

Society for Social Study -- a social, economic and political research organisation -- organised the roundtable at Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) auditorium.

The speakers at the roundtable urged the authorities concerned for developing infra-

structure and urban facilities including housing, education healthcare services under short, medium and long-term projects following the master plan.

They also emphasised the need for involving the people to help manage waste, water and sewerage system and save the city from environmental degradation.

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) President Engineer Ali Ashraf, Chittagong Port former project director Sirajul Islam, CDA Chief Town Planner Shahinul Islam Khan and Chittagong City Corporation Chief Architect Rezaul Karim spoke at the roundtable.

Architect Bishwajit Barua presented the keynote paper at the roundtable with Society for Social Study President Kazi Mahmud Imam Bilu in the chair.

Photo exhibition begins

An eight-day solo photographic exhibition titled "Smile" began at Alliance Francaise, Chittagong gallery in the port city on Thursday.

As many as 36 photos of smiling faces of people of all walks of life have been displayed at the exhibition by Didarul Alam Chowdhury, an artiste of Photo Bank of Chittagong.

Alliance Francaise Chittagong Director Dr Samuel Berthet attended as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony where Photobank Gallery Director Shueb Faruquee was the special guest.

Alliance Francaise Chittagong organised the exhibition.

Didarul, who won five awards from different photographic exhibition abroad, chose the rare theme with a message for everyone to be happy and always smiling.

Training on skill development held

A programme was held on Friday providing training on industry-oriented skill development and knowledge on basic business processes of strategic procurement and procurement planning.

Chittagong Skills Development Centre (CDSC) -- an industry-driven skills training institute and Public Private Partnership -- organised the programme at Chittagong Club Guest House Complex.

Muhammad Azizur Rahman, head of procurement of Brac, conducted the programme emphasising aligning purchasing decisions with corporate objective.

The programme also provided participants with practical business tools to design and develop strategic procurement action plan and effective implementation strategy through demonstration of performance measurement techniques, including strategic maturity assessment.

Fourteen corporate trainees from MM Ispahani, PHP Group, Sunman Group, Coats Bangladesh, Lub-ref Bangladesh Ltd, UCEP, Aramit Group, Super Refinery Pvt Ltd and AKK Group participated in the programme.

Former state minister for forest and environment Jafrul Islam Chowdhury MP distributed certificates as the chief guest among the participants.

Tk 1 lakh for CEITC

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Central Committee Member Noorjahan Khan handed over a cheque for Tk 1 lakh to CEITC Managing Trustee Prof Dr Rabiul Hussain on Wednesday for setting up a bed in the name of her late husband Saifuddin A Khan, a

600 patients get free treatment

freedom fighter and social worker, at Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Complex (CEITC).

While receiving the cheque Prof Rabiul said such a donation would inspire other well-off people of the society to come forward to the aid of the distressed humanity and encourage service-oriented organisations to strengthen activities.

Robi, a leading mobile phone operator, held a health camp titled "Shustho Nari, Shustho Paribar" providing healthcare service to the underprivileged women and children in the port city on Tuesday.

Around 600 women and children were given free medical treatment -- consultancy and medicine -- at the health camp at Pahartoli College in collaboration with Marie Stopes. The patients were also enlisted and given health cards to enjoy discount in treatment at Marie Stopes clinics.

"Shustho Nari, Shustho Paribar" is a part of Robi's year-long programme under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Under the programme health camps were also held in Dhaka and Rangpur. Robi plans to reach healthcare services to all corners of the country under the programme.

Mohiuddin Babar, Head of Communication & Media Relations of Robi, MM Ershad, deputy director of Family Planning, Chittagong, Dr Mohammad Sharif, additional director of Clinical Contraception, Md Shahed Kamal, programme officer (management) of Marie Stopes, local ward councillor Md Mahfuzul Alam and female ward councillor Arju Shahabuddin were present on the occasion.



STAR PHOTO
A visitor looks at photographs displayed in an exhibition titled "Smile" by Didarul Alam Chowdhury at Alliance Francaise auditorium in the port city of Chittagong on Thursday.