

# City dwellers on edge as mugging runs rampant

Beefed-up patrolling hardly making any difference

RAFIUL ISLAM

A young man slips between vehicles stuck in traffic at night and snatches a phone through an open car window with astonishing swiftness at the capital's Asad Gate.

As he steals the phone, two other men, one of them holding a machete, stand nearby. And the three of them disappear within seconds.

Video footage of the incident on December 16, filmed by someone in a nearby car, went viral on social media.

According to police, incidents of mugging and snatching have significantly increased in recent months, with commuters feeling concerned about their safety.

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali have ordered increasing patrols and setting up checkpoints. But these measures are hardly making an impact.

According to the police database, at least 22 cases were filed with Dhaka metropolitan police stations over mugging in September, 43 in

**At least 11 people have been killed allegedly by muggers since August 5.**



Cars torched at the Department of Disaster Management during the July uprising lie abandoned on the Mohakhali-Gulshan Road, obstructing vehicular and pedestrian movements. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Police listing extortionists, planning drive against them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali has said the police are making a list of extortionists and will soon launch drives to arrest them.

He made the announcement during a meeting with police

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# No place for Islamic extremism in Bangladesh

Says Yunus in an interview with The Economist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamic extremism will never find a place in Bangladesh again, said Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus recently.

"I can assure that's not taking place at all. These are very enthusiastic young people -- they are very neutral about their religion," Yunus told the weekly British magazine The Economist's foreign editor Patrick Foulis in an interview recently.

Yunus's response came when Foulis mentioned both American and Indian officials have warned that there is some risk of Islamic extremism coming back in Bangladesh.

The interview was taken on the occasion of Bangladesh being selected as The Economist's country of the year for 2024, an accolade that the influential magazine hands out every year to a country it deems to be the most improved country in the world.

"But for toppling a despot and taking strides towards a more liberal government, Bangladesh is our country of the year," The Economist said.

In response, Yunus said: "Oh, we are delighted. We feel very proud that we made a big change because of the student uprising that took place. And from then on, we are saying we are creating a new Bangladesh."

The youth want to build a new Bangladesh, he said.

"Young people can change the whole world. It's not about changing one country or another country. What Bangladesh has done is one example of how powerful this young generation is. Let's pay attention to the young people."

He said particular attention must be given to the young women.

"Young girls played a very important role in the Bangladeshi uprising. They were on the frontline just like any other young person in the country. We should be paying attention to the young girls, young boys and make sure they can fulfil their dreams. If they have the opportunity, they have the capacity to do that."



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# Top officials face off over promotions

BAHARAM KHAN

Top government officials are at odds over promotions, positions and associated privileges, with a section announcing a pen-down strike to press home their demands.

Yesterday, officers from the 25 cadres announced a pen-down strike for December 24 from 11:00am to 12:00pm and also planned a rally in Dhaka on January 4.

Although the administration cadre has not announced any formal programme yet, their junior officers are pressing for tougher measures, including work abstention.

Meanwhile, District Commissioners (DCs) from all 64 districts have issued statements opposing the movement.

Administrative experts, however, argue that such actions are against the conduct rules for government employees.

"Government employees cannot stage pen-down or work stoppage programme -- such actions, especially during a national crisis, are unacceptable," said AKM Abdul Awal Mazumder, a former secretary.

The reality is that actions by admin cadre employees following political changes in the past have set problematic precedents, including physical altercations and sit-ins, even at the highest levels, he said.

In the past, the discriminatory quota system meant many top scorers in the BCS exams were unable to secure their desired cadres.

"Hence, the 25 percent quota for other cadres in the Deputy Secretary post was logical. However, with

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# Has IMF experiment delivered?

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

Two years after Bangladesh turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$4.7 billion bailout to address its worsening macroeconomic pressures, the nation stands at a crossroads. While the programme has provided some respite, the question remains: Has it steered the country away from the brink of financial crisis, or merely postponed a reckoning?

The economic turbulence began in earnest after the Covid-19 pandemic when the Russia-Ukraine war sent shockwaves through global markets. Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves began to deplete rapidly, and inflation surged, squeezing

millions of low- and fixed-income households. As regional neighbours Sri Lanka and Pakistan raced to the IMF for assistance, Bangladesh initially resisted. In July 2022, AHM Mustafa Kamal, the then-finance minister, dismissed the need for an IMF bailout. Yet, within days, he reversed course, appealing to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva for emergency financial support.

By January 2023, Bangladesh had formally entered the IMF's loan programme, committing to a series of structural reforms. Two years later, the depletion of foreign exchange reserves slowed and eventually stabilised at around \$20 billion, yet the country's

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- ➔ Bangladesh stabilises foreign reserves around \$20b
- ➔ Continues to grapple with inflation
- ➔ Progress in transitioning to market-driven interest rates
- ➔ Broader tax reforms remain inadequate

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