

The Daily Star

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Monday, September 10, 2007 04:07 PM GMT+06:00

Published On: 2007-09-02

Star City

'Open Day' at 32 Police Stations

Taming evils by bringing police, people closer

City Correspondent

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A police officer is jotting down complaint at the service delivery centre at Dhanmondi Police Station (left) and an inaugural function on Police Open Day (right).

the neighbourhood of the city are going to be addressed with due seriousness under a new programme by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

This programme, named Police Open Day, has recently been introduced in 32 police stations (PS) in the city in order to bridge the gap between police and the people.

The initiative under police reform project (PRP), a 16 million dollar project funded by UNDP, is aimed at dispelling people's mistrust towards police and building a mutual relationship of trust and cooperation.

In a recent baseline survey conducted by the PRP, around 80 percent respondents from 11 model police station areas said that they do not go to police stations unless they face a life-threatening crime, said UNDP sources.

On the Police Open Day, each of the eight crime divisions of DMP consisting four to five police stations will organise public discussions on a particular Saturday of each month encouraging locals to assist the police in maintaining law and order.

Uttara PS, Ramna PS, Sutrapur PS and Paltan PS have already observed their first open house days. Uttara PS observed their first open day on July 7 while Sutrapur PS, Paltan PS and Ramna PS observed their first open day on August 11.

Syed Nazrul Islam, officer in charge of Uttara PS, said businessmen and elites of the area attended the open day.

"Basically, we want to know what type of service people want from police, what we can do to stop unnecessary police harassment, what kind of problems they are facing in their neighbourhoods and so on," he said.

"This is a good opportunity for us to know what kind of service is needed. We are keeping a note of the proposals and suggestions made by the discussants so that no problem or suggestion is overlooked," said Nazrul.

"The introduction of open day will improve the relationship between police and the people. The main 'weapon' of police is their relationship with the people, not firearms. Good relationship with the community can be immensely helpful in crime control," he said.

"Elites and businessmen of the area came to discuss their problems with us. We did not have enough women participation this time. Next time we are hoping for a good gender balance. We are working with Naripakkha in this regard," said Nazrul.

Ameer Hossain, sub-inspector of Sutrapur PS, said the response they received on their first open day was good as around hundred people participated in the discussion. Traffic jams and eve-teasing were identified as two of the major problems in the area.

"Businessmen and local elites participated in the discussion where traffic jam and eve-teasing came up on top of discussion topics. We discussed from 11:00am to 3:30pm, but it appeared to all that many issues are yet to be discussed. Local reporters also took part in the discussion," he said.

Jahangir, sub-inspector of Paltan PS, said in their open day discussion, main problems identified were illegal shops on alleyways and cable theft. Over 50 people took part in the discussion.

AKM Daulat Akbar, officer in charge of Ramna PS, said a cross-section of people including doctors, engineers, writers, journalists, businessmen and the local ward commissioner took part in the discussion. One of the main problems of the area was that the community security guards were having problems in performing their duties.

Reaz Ahmed, managing director of Jatri Cab, said it was a unique opportunity for him to talk with the police face to face.

"Previously, we could not even think of talking with the police in such an easy manner. We had to make appointments to talk to them. But on the open day, we talked with them freely about our problems," he said.

NBK Tripura, additional inspector general of police, said the police open day is aimed at creating a people-friendly environment in police stations in the city.

"We are trying to create a people-friendly environment in police stations. We are working on community policing, involvement of people from all walks of life in crime prevention and dispelling people's distrust towards the police," he said.

"At regular intervals, community leaders will sit with police officers in police stations and talk about existing problems of the area. For

example, they [locals] can propose increased police patrol in their area to prevent petty crime," said Tripura.

Open day was first introduced at Uttara PS in June this year with the slogan "Thanar duar khola aji, Ashite aj nahi mana" -- meaning the police station is open for all today without any obstruction.

A service delivery centre named 'Sawmitra Dev Service Delivery Centre' has also been opened there. It is named after Sawmitra Kumar Dev, project officer of PRP, killed recently in a bus robbery.