

SHOPS HIT BY GANGS

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Crime is so rife in the Grey Street area that businesses and residents are seeking help from big companies, writes Graeme Hosken.

Residents and business owners in Durban's Grey Street area are going all out to stop crime, after a dozen shops were "hit" by marauding gangs last weekend.

Shop owners, who have given up on the police protecting them, are now approaching big businesses, such as Spornet and several other big companies, to help them bring down the crime rate.

Mr. Sayed-Iqbal Mohamed, director of the Organisation of Civic Rights, said the crime rate had spiralled out of control.

"One of our main areas of concern is the flimsy fence running along the railway line next to Leopold Street and Cross Street."

"Time and time again criminals use the holes in the fence to launch attacks against shop owners, and then escape after they have cleared out the shops," said Mohamed.

Mohamed said because the fence was on South African Rail Commuter Corporation (SARCC) property, the problem now involves them too.

Mr. Johan Else, of Intersite Property Management Services which represents SARCC, said: "We will have Metro Rail replace the broken fence with a concrete wall, so that criminals can not longer use it as an escape route."

Mr. Mohammed Adam, owner of Fatima's Wholesalers, said his shop had been robbed too many times for him to remember.

"Last Sunday, I was off-loading goods when three men ran through the broken fence, put a gun to my brother's head and to the security guard's head, and demanded the keys to the van. They made off with the van and R20 000 worth of goods."

Adam said fortunately his van was recovered, but the goods had been carted away by the time they recovered the vehicle.