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Down to Earth

When Road Accidents are Made to Happen

By A S M Nurunnabi

Road accidents have increasingly become so frequent that it seems there is no point in considering them as casual or scattered events. The sad feature of these road accidents is that they kill and the rate at which they do is stunningly high. There is hardly any day when our newspapers do not carry news of road disasters and their casualties. For the observers the conclusion seems inescapable that roads and highways have turned into death traps and the engines of death include buses, trucks and more particularly the drivers.

The readily identifiable causes of road accidents have now assumed a hackneyed character through ceaseless repetition in different media, so much so that a sort of pessimistic fatalism has gripped the public mind. Yet it seems there are some glaring loopholes in road administration system which can perhaps be plugged if the authorities concerned become serious about effecting improvements in that sphere.

The basic drawback of the system appears to be the question of issue of automobile fitness certificate. At present, in the metropolis, such certificates are issued by only one particular office of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). An applicant knows, through severely bitter experience, what a grueling process it

is to get a fitness certificate after completing all necessary formalities. The inordinately heavy rush and the long queues of the applicants are such a fearful scene that to make a fruitful getting around, it requires the obvious strategy: The adoption of dubious practice. One may readily label it as corruption. But to many this is the only short-cut way to get anything done, according to the prevailing predominant culture of quid pro quo. But undoubtedly things can be made a lot easier if the BRTA divides the city into four to five zones and opens an equal number of small offices for issuing fitness certificates at convenient locations in each zone. Whatever be the additional cost involved in setting up such branch offices, in the opinion of observers, this may be compensated in a large measure by way of savings of time, energy and loss of working hours of vehicle owners, apart from corruption syndrome.

It is further noted by observers that the opening of a few additional offices in this purpose will hardly solve many other serious problems. Under the existing system, anybody can obtain a fitness certificate for any vehicle whatever be its condition. This is amply evident from the thousands of vintage, ram-shackle and wobbling buses, trucks, minibuses, coasters, scooters and many other

types of motorised vehicles plying on the streets of the metropolis. The black smoke emitted by the numerous defective vehicles which are most certainly not roadworthy is one of the main contributory factors for environmental pollution in the city. These defective vehicles are also responsible for road accidents.

Knowledgeable observers have suggested some effective measures to deal with the many ills prevailing under the existing system. As per practices followed in many advanced countries, fitness certificate may be issued by well-known garages nominated by authorities concerned. The authorities may issue guidelines and standard instructions to the nominated garages on the requirements of fitness certificates, and in return for a prescribed fee, and the nominated garages may issue necessary fitness certificates. Under the proposed system, there may be no scope for the adoption of corrupt practices by any quarter, since a fitness certificate held by a defective vehicle can be easily traced to the garage which issued the certificate and instant action may be taken against that garage. This may largely wipe out corrupt practices which afflict an important part of the road transport sector and ensure transparency in the matter of issuing fitness certificates for motorised vehicles.

BB suggests steps

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that the foreign banks could be given risk coverage against currency market volatility to encourage them to bring in funds from abroad, official sources said.

On the other hand, the government is also seriously considering raising the interest rate on wage earners' bond by another two per cent and issuing dollar denominated government development bond for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs).

These two steps, the government thinks, would encourage the NRBs to invest their money in Bangladeshi bonds instead of keeping those in foreign banks.

The prospect of more devaluation to jack up the sapping reserve is also being explored, sources said.

During 1991 to 1997, Indian and Pakistani rupees were devalued by 46.13 per cent and 44.22 per cent respectively. But during the same period, taka has been devalued by only 18.01 per cent.

Despite this gap in devaluation rate, BB now feels that a sudden adjustment of taka against dollar to keep it at par

with the currencies of India and Pakistan would not be wise. There is, however, a scope for devaluation by some percentage points. On the other hand, the IMF's Real Effective Exchange Rate (RER) that calculates the strength of taka in comparison with trade basket of currencies of 15 countries, finds that taka is now 4.5 per cent appreciated.

Identifying five reasons behind the depletion of reserve, BB said import payment in cash foreign exchange has increased significantly, causing a rapid drop in forex reserve. This is mainly because if importers open cash Letters of Credit (LCs) and pay exporters in cash, they get concessions on price. This facility cannot be availed through deferred payment LCs.

According to figures, the total import in cash foreign currency was 2076 million dollars in 1990-91, which was 59 per cent of the total import payment. But in 1996-97 this amount had gone up to 80.76 per cent.

US Open
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last January. But he had been improving with the passage of time. His temperament and determination coupled with his tremendous ground strokes would take him to the pinnacle of success in near future. The 21-year-old from Santiago had come a long way and he had miles to go. "I don't usually go into a Grand Slam as the favourite. To be honest with you, the pressure did get to me a little bit. I was thinking I might win in three sets or four sets. But he hung tough. He didn't give me anything. Before I knew it, we were in the fifth set. It was extremely close. A lot of prayers were answered today," said Chang. The quiet Chilean said after the match, "I think he is a tough guy, tough guy to beat. He should win it all. He's playing great." Chang will meet the serve and volleyer Patrick Rafter in the semis.

Hasina
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ernment. The two leaders also discussed the functioning of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77.
Sheikh Hasina today paid her respects by laying a wreath at the Kalibata National Heroes' Cemetery here.
On arrival at the cemetery, she was received by commander of the Jakarta garrison Major General Sutiyoso.
Sheikh Hasina stood in solemn silence in front of the altar while a human was played by the military band. She also signed the visitors book there.
Later the Prime Minister visited the Purna Bhakti Pertiwi museum and the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesian in miniature park).

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Air transport accord with Jakarta signed

JAKARTA, Sept 5: Bangladesh and Indonesia today signed an air transport agreement under which the capitals of the two countries will be air linked by the national airlines of Indonesia and Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The agreement was signed this morning following the official talks between Bangladesh and Indonesia.
State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas signed the agreement on behalf of their respective countries.

High officials of both the countries were present at the signing in ceremony held at the state guest house 'Wisma Negara' in Jakarta.

Dhaka, Jakarta to set up joint business council
JAKARTA, Sept 5: The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) today signed an agreement to enhance cooperation among business people, reports BSS.

The agreement was signed by the leader of the visiting 18-member businessmen's delegation and FBCCI chief Yusuf Abdullah Harun and Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Aburizal Bakrie at Borobudur International Hotel.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina witnessed the signing ceremony of the agreement. The two chambers, under the agreement, expressed their commitment to adhere to the basic understanding as to increase the present volume of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Single country fair would be arranged in each other's country and there will be exchanges of trade and economic delegations, the agreement said.

A Bangladesh-Indonesia business council will be set up by the Bangladesh and Indonesian chambers in their respective countries with a view to increasing bilateral trade and economic cooperation.
The meeting of business council will take place on a regular basis, the agreement said.

Woman raped in city

A young woman was violated by two men at her residence at Mohammadpur in the city on Thursday evening, hospital sources said, reports UNB.
She was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. Mohammadpur police, however, could not confirm the incident as no case was filed with the thana.
Hospital sources said, two people came to the victim's house on Thursday evening and identified them as friends of her elder brother.
At one stage, they made the woman unconscious and raped her repeatedly. Her brother took her to the hospital after returning home in the night.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROTEST: Saiful Islam Khan, in his thirties tried to stay with his family. But he alleges, they did not accept him because he married against their will. In desperation he started a hunger strike in front of the flat at Ahmedabad in the city where his brothers and sisters live. After staying there for nearly the whole day he was driven out late Thursday night after this picture was taken. Saiful went on fasting leaving a hand written note addressed to the authorities, accusing his family of not allowing him to stay with them. He is the youngest among four brothers and sisters. The three are still unmarried. He also accused his brothers and sisters of taking all the money he sent from Saudi Arabia where he worked for a decade. But they deny the allegations and dismissed him as a mentally deranged person.
— Star photo: Sheikh Enamul Huq.

Mother Teresa dead

From Page 1 have said about her, particularly those who have acclaimed her as a living saint.

Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu on August 26, 1910 in Skopje of Albanian parents, she left home at the age of 18 to join the institute of the blessed virgin Mary in Dublin and was later sent on to India.

In 1948, the year she became an Indian citizen, she left her convent and began work on her own, a move which did not impress Calcutta archbishop Monsignor Ferdinand Perier.
"I know this woman, she is a novice who would not even know how to light a candle in chapel... how can she create a congregation?" he said.

Alone and without a base, sister Agnes became Teresa. She donned a blue-trimmed white sari, which became the uniform of her missionaries of charity when it was formally founded on October 7, 1950.

The missionary brothers of charity followed, established in 1963.
Ever since, the organisation has focused on one central aim — serving the poor and the dying.

Some criticism of Mother Teresa has surfaced in recent years, centred on her strictly orthodox views. One British television film, which criticised her order for accepting money from dubious sources, was entitled 'Hell's angel: Mother Teresa'.

She has angered feminists by opposing all methods of modern contraception, while orthodox Hindus have been suspicious of her real motives, accusing her of trying to win converts.

In recent years, the caring

mother Teresa has increasingly needed to be cared for.
She was fitted with a pacemaker after a heart attack in 1989 and underwent operations for blocked arteries in 1991 and 1993.

At the end of last year, she had to survive heart failure — her heart stopped beating for almost two minutes — and a heart attack complicated by Malaria and Pneumonia.
Mother Teresa had met Princess Diana four times, and today an aide in Calcutta said she intended to offer special prayers on Saturday, the day of the funeral of the Princess of Wales.

Mother Teresa was an outstanding humanitarian, the chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Francis Sejerstad, said.

Expressing his sadness at the news of her death Sejerstad told AFP the committee remained proud to have selected her for the prestigious prize.

Truckers block road in Khulna
KHULNA, Sept 5: Traffic movement was disrupted in the city today as the truckers put up barricades at various points of Khan-e-Sabur road protesting the attack on a colleague, reports UNB.

The six-hour long blockade created a huge traffic congestion on two sides of the road.
The vehicular movement became normal when the barricades were lifted at noon following a consensus reached between the Khulna Metropolitan Police and the truck union leaders.

are women. This includes skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled categories.
In order to create a stable environment for economic activities, Hasina said her government has made it a priority to bury the culture of confrontation politics in the country. "We want to develop policies in a spirit of consensus."

She said opposition groups are consulted on a regular basis and major issues are discussed in parliament so that important policies have the underpinning of a broad social and political support.

"Our two chambers are going to sign a Memorandum of Understanding," she said and hoped that as a sequel to that some specific achievable targets of cooperation can be charted.
"I take this opportunity to thank the Indonesian Chambers of Commerce and Industry for arranging this luncheon for me and members of my delegation," Hasina said.

"KADIN has played an important role in Indonesia's spectacular progress," she said and hoped that the meeting today would help launch a new chapter in economic relations between Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Speaking on the occasion, KADIN President Aburizal Bakrie said the total international trade of both Indonesia and Bangladesh in 1995 had reached 100 million US dollars and in 1996 it was 127 million

US dollars — a 25 per cent rise.
He said, "With the respective markets of 200 million people in Indonesia and 120 million people in Bangladesh, I am sure that there are still many opportunities which can be developed by entrepreneurs." He called for involving the small and medium-scale enterprises including the supporting industries.
Referring to the signing of an agreement between the two chambers, Bakrie said that a committee of business council would be established in Indonesia and Bangladesh to carry out programmes and activities to develop economic, trade, industry, investment and cooperation.
FBCCI president Yusuf Abdullah Harun said that Bangladesh has been pursuing a development strategy of private sector-led growth.
He highlighted the vast potential of investment in the textile sector where Indonesian investors may come in a big way. "There is a captive demand of about two billion metres of fabrics being imported by Bangladesh to meet the increasing demand for export-oriented ready-made garment industries."

He said because of upcoming phasing out of the MFN under the WTO system, Bangladesh was now trying to set up backward linkage industries to produce fabric locally to feed its ready-made garment export.



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things better
PHILIPS

Diana's funeral today

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"We have all been trying to our different ways to cope. It is not easy to express a sense of loss, since the initial shock is often succeeded by a mixture of other feelings: Disbelief, incomprehension, anger — and concern for those who remain."

"We have all felt those emotions in these last few days," she said.

Diana was an 'exceptional and gifted human being... in good times and bad, she never lost her capacity to smile and laugh, nor to inspire others with her warmth and kindness.'

"I admired and respected her — for her energy and commitment to others, and especially for her devotion to her two boys," she said.

The Queen answered the criticism that she and the Royal family appeared to have been isolated from the general outpouring of mourning across the nation.

She said, "This week at Balmoral, we have all been trying to help William and Harry come to terms with the devastating loss that they and the rest of us have suffered."

The Queen notably failed to mention by name Dodi al-Fayed, Diana's new companion, who died with her in the crash on Sunday in Paris, or the driver Henri Paul.

"Our thoughts are also with Diana's family and the families of those who died with her. I know that they too have drawn strength from what has happened since last weekend, as they seek to heal their sorrow and then to face the future without a loved one," she said.

"No-one who knew Diana will ever forget her. Millions of others who never met her, but felt they knew her, will remember her."

"For one believe that there are lessons to be drawn from her life and from the extraordinary and moving reaction to her death."

"I share in your determination to cherish her memory," she added.

Meanwhile, close to 1,900 people from all walks of life will pay their last respects to Diana at Westminster Abbey tomorrow alongside the Spencer family and the British

monarchy.
A large bulk of the congregation will be made up of the 533 representatives from the 106 charities and other organisations with which Diana worked. They will also take part in the funeral procession from Kensington Palace to the Abbey and have been told they are not expected to dress formally."

Only a few members of other European monarchies have been asked, with the accent on those who knew Diana personally more than those related by blood.

A local hotel named after Diana will arrange it in the evening.
The hotel will also remain closed for customers tomorrow.

"Hotel Diana likes to share the grief with millions around the world and will arrange a destitute feeding in memory of the Princess of Wales," the hotel owners said over microphone last night.

Most notable among those attending are the Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, sister of queen Beatrix, Queen Noor of Jordan and her son Prince Hamzah al Hussein, and Pilar Borbon of Spain, sister of King Juan Carlos.

Among the foreign dignitaries, US First Lady Hillary Clinton, Bernadette Chirac, the wife of the French President, and Suzanne Mubarak, wife of Egyptian President Hosni, will attend in their husbands' places.

Ireland will be represented by Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and President Mary Robinson, Canada and Australia are sending their foreign ministers.

From Britain, only a few leading figures from the world of politics have been invited, including all the previous prime ministers from Edward Heath's time, but just four members of the present government — Prime Minister Tony Blair, his deputy John Prescott, Justice Minister (Lord Chancellor), Lord Irvine of Lairg, and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who publicly supported Diana's campaign against landmines.

Among Diana's friends will be the Pakistani cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, his wife Jemima, daughter of the late Franco-British billionaire Sir James Goldsmith, and the wife of the Brazilian ambassador to Washington Lucia Flecha de Lima, one of Diana's closest confidantes.

The world of art and music will be represented by the opera singer Luciano Pavarotti, the pop singers Elton John, who will sign during the service, Sting and Phil Collins, and Donatella and Santo Versace, sister and brother of the late designer Gianni.

Finally Mohammed al-Fayed and his wife, parents of Dodi, who died in the same accident as Diana and with whom Diana had begun what was believed to have been her first serious liaison since her divorce a year ago, have also been invited.

Diana will be buried on an island in the grounds of the Spencer family's stately home instead of in the nearby village church where 20 generations of her ancestors lie, her brother said today.

The switch of plan reflected fears that Great Brington, a hamlet of 200 people where the Church of St. Mary the Virgin is located, would be turned into a sort of shrine, overrun by sight-seers.

The island, where Diana will be interred privately tomorrow after her funeral at Westminster Abbey, is in the middle of an ornamental lake in the grounds of Althorp Park, the Spencer stately home, 100 km northwest of London.

It has been decided to bury Diana, Princess of Wales, in the grounds of Althorp Park, where her grave can be properly looked after by her family and visited in privacy by her sons, her brother, the 9th Earl Spencer, said in a statement.

32 killed in Paraguay stadium collapse

ASUNCION, Paraguay, Sept 5: A portion of a sports stadium in eastern Paraguay collapsed during a political rally by local members of the ruling Colorado Party, killing at least 32 people, news reports said today, reports AP.

At least 100 people were injured, some seriously, when a metallic section of the stadium caved in last night in the border town of Ciudad del Este, 180 miles (290 kilometres) east of Asuncion, the capital, according to newspaper and radio reports.

It wasn't clear what caused the collapse which occurred shortly after midnight. But Colorado Party members said powerful winds — possibly a tornado — damaged the structure, according to the capital radio stations Cardinal and Nanduti.

Williams Kneas, a meteorologist at the US national weather service, said satellite imagery suggested there had been a heavy thunderstorm in the area during the night.

DU student

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rickshaw from behind.
Auto rickshaw passenger Mohammad Shahjahan, 45, and its driver (unidentified) aged about 40, died on the spot. The injured passenger Chanchal, 35, was taken to DMCH in a critical condition.

In the city, one Zakir Hossain, 22, was run over by a private car near Bahadur Shah park at 5 am.
Wahidul Islam, 16, was injured when a bus hit him at Shampur under Demra police station at 8 am. He was taken to DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries.

All the bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Formal talks

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agreements shortly.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury said Bangladesh is deeply committed to the cause of global peace and security. Bangladesh believes in the further democratisation of the UN systems, he said.

Dhaka and Jakarta further agreed to cooperate with each other in the various international fora like UN, NAM and D-8.

In his introductory remarks, Chowdhury referred to Indonesia's contribution in our Liberation War. "We are grateful that Indonesia gave us moral support during the war."

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has launched an arduous struggle to establish people's right to vote and economic emancipation.
The Bangladesh team leader also referred to the various incentives given by Bangladesh government to foreign investors for setting up industries in Bangladesh.

He appreciated the 12 per cent annual growth rate in manufacturing sector and seven per cent GDP growth rate of Indonesia.

He said that Bangladesh has concluded a long-term water sharing agreement with India. Besides, he said, ADB and Japan are showing interest in the construction of the Ganga barrage.

The Bangladesh side included Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan, Press Secretary Jawadul Karim, Chief of Protocol A K M Farooq, Bangladesh Ambassador to Indonesia Ziaul Shams Chowdhury, Director General (South East Asia) Mohammed Farooq, Ms Nasima Haider, Counsellor, R A M Bahadur Muktadir, Mr A F M Bahadur Nasim.

The Indonesian side included Moerdiono, Minister, State Secretary Nana Sutrisna, Special Ambassador for NAM Affairs, and Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh Soemardjo.

At the end, the video showed Diana waiting inside the hotel's rear entrance. Dodi's arm around her waist. When the Mercedes Benz limo arrived, they got in the back seat and the limo drove off slowly, with no sign of pursuing photographers.

Footage from a security camera at the front of the hotel showed a posse of figures then racing toward motorcycles.
The video also contained footage of the French chauffeur, Henri Paul, talking to other staff at the hotel. He did not appear drunk.

Schoolboy drowns in city

A schoolboy drowned when a boat capsized in Madhubagh jheel at Magbazar in the city yesterday, reports UNB.
He was identified as Jewel, 12, son of Ali Ashraf, a resident of Noyatola at Magbazar.

Police said the accident occurred at around 12 noon. Two other boys who were travelling with Jewel in the same boat managed to swim ashore.

On receiving information, divers rushed to the spot and recovered his body at about 6 pm.

Search continues

From Page 1
ment over the pontoon bridge resumed today as the water level in the river went down today.

People were using the railway bridge as an alternative to the nearby pontoon bridge on which traffic movement was suspended due to rise in water level of the Khowai.

Railway sources alleged that they were not informed of suspension of traffic movement on the pontoon bridge before the accident took place.

"The district administration should have informed us about their decision of suspension of traffic movement on the pontoon bridge to avert any accident," said a highly placed Railway official.

"We were informed after the accident."

Meanwhile, the Railway authorities have instructed drivers to slow down the trains while crossing the railway bridge on the Khowai river at Shayestaganj in Habiganj district, according to official sources.

Earlier, a four-member departmental inquiry team from Dhaka reached the spot on Thursday night and began investigation into the incident.

Last gifts

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car crash early Sunday.

"What that ring meant, we shall probably never know," said Michael Cole, spokesman for Mohammed Al Fayed, the Egyptian-born billionaire whose eldest son was Diana's new beau.

At a news conference, Cole also showed reporters a security video containing shots of Diana and Dodi's last hours at the Ritz Hotel in Paris.

At the end, the video showed Diana waiting inside the hotel's rear entrance. Dodi's arm around her waist. When the Mercedes Benz limo arrived, they got in the back seat and the limo drove off slowly, with no sign of pursuing photographers.

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