Road accidents on Eid



EID is the time for joy, for friends and family to come together and celebrate the auspicious day, wear new clothes and enjoy a day of relaxation and entertainment. Eid is also a day when empty roads become virtual racetracks for drivers of all ages.

On the day of Eid, a young driver literally ran over a man trying to cross the road near Kakoli, while speeding all the way for Uttara. As the driver sped away, not bothering to stop, the man lay on the middle of the road, bloodied all over. The only sign of him being barely alive was the constant gasps of blood that he was spilling from his mouth along with his breaths. Even though his friends took the man to the nearest emergency, the man must have died, either from his deadly wounds or because of the denial by the emergency to treat him before filling in all the forms and reporting to the police, the usual hospital formalities.

The latest major accident that occurred was on January 6th, when all the Eid vacationers were on their way back from the villege. At least 41 people were killed when an overloaded bus fell into a ditch and burst into flames at Suwagazi in Comilla on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday. The overcrowded bus, belonging to SR Paribahan, a transport company, was speeding towards Chittagong when it lost control 20 kilometres from Comilla town and veered into a ditch around 1:15pm. The bus instantly burst into flames when its fuel tank ruptured and the diesel caught fire.

According to one of the few survivors, the bus, which had the capacity to carry 52 passengers, was packed with nearly 70 passengers, desperate to return to Chittagong after their Eid holidays and ahead of the blockade programme that the Awami League and its allies had called for. The bus was already at capacity when it left Dhaka but it had picked up more passengers along the way. The dead were mostly women and children.

Alongside railways and inland waterways, roads carry over 80 percent of national passenger traffic, providing the backbone of the transport sector in Bangladesh of 130 million people. Maintaining road safety, therefore, happens to be yet another major challenge that we face in the country. Although the road network in Bangladesh has been substantially expanded and improved, lack of adequate resource allocation for maintenance threatens its sustainability. Statistics reveal that the fatality rate is more than 73 deaths per 10,000 registered motor vehicles each year.

Weather Taking a Turn for the Worse

THE weather may have done little to cool down the political situation of the country but it sure is having a big impact on the common people, especially the very old and very young. More than 130 people have already died all across the country from illnesses caused directly by the sharp drop in the mercury. The lowest temperatures were recorded in Thakurgaon, Nilphamari and Sherpur districts where the mercury dipped as low as 5 degree Celsius at night.

While on Sunday sources at the meteorological office said that the situation in the northern region and elsewhere would improve from the following day, a second spell of the cold wave set in the northern regions of the country, which were the hardest hit. Temperatures fell by one to four degrees Celsius in the Rajshahi division on Monday. Besides the Rajshahi division, temperature also fell in other regions of the country including Tangail, Faridpur, Chuadanga and Jessore.

Children below the age of two thronged the many hospitals across the country with asthma, bronchiolitis, bronchitis, pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases. The prevalence of asthma among the children has also doubled in the last few days, according to sources at the Asthma Centre in Mohakhali. Besides, the lung and respiratory system becomes infection-prone due to the cold which leads to pneumonia and bronchiolitis. In addition, diarrhoeal diseases have also increased among the children due to cold-induced food poisoning. As some viruses become more active in cold weather and do not expire if the food is not boiled or heated properly, the chance of children's getting rotaviral diarrhoea increases.

The food and disaster management ministry said in a handout that it has already distributed five metric tons of warm clothes and 1,12,500 blankets to the cold affected people throughout different districts and upazilas. But there are 19,00,000 extreme poor and homeless people in the country that had been affected by the cold wave and it is beyond their reach to buy warm clothes for themselves. A united effort is needed from welfare organisations, social workers and the affluent of the society to come forward and help the cold affected people in different parts of the country.