

Roads replete

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or owners for unfit vehicles is usually Tk 700, and the amount doubles if a traffic sergeant or mobile court gives the sentence.

On the other hand, if a driver is held without a licence or with fake documents, the fine is only Tk 200.

Another reason for accidents is not obeying the speed limit on the highways as hardly any drivers follow the roadside commands.

The authorities slap on drivers a fine of Tk 500 for crossing speed limit in the metropolis, but there is hardly any equipment or government agency to catch the offenders.

Ironically, the only speed meter seen in use in the capital is on the Cantonment roads, where drivers are always found to be extra cautious.

Experts from BRTA and Buet say over-loading, ignorance of road users, hazardous roads and road environment, lack of training, and poor enforcement of traffic rules and regulations are other causes of accidents.

Statistics of the Police Headquarters show 3,749 people were killed and 3,273 injured in 4,869 road accidents across the country last year.

The number of the dead and injured was 3,193 and 2,409 in 3,794 accidents in 2006 and 3,187 and 2,754 in 3,954 accidents in 2005.

Experts believe the true figures are at least three times higher, as the system for reporting and recording accidents and casualties is very poor. The police also don't record deaths of those who succumb to their injuries at hospitals.

Unfortunately, about 15,000 people suffered injuries last year and many of them ended up being physically disabled and eventually jobless, say BRTA sources.

PUNISHMENT
A reckless driver pushing passen-

ger(s) to death through an accident is prosecutable under section 279 of the penal code.

If the accident kills a few persons, the offender will face prosecution under section 304 (B) of the penal code. On the other hand, causing grievous hurt by reckless driving is punishable under section 338 (A).

If any driver is convicted under section 279, they will have to serve up to three years in prison or a fine up to Tk 5,000 or both.

The punishment under section 304 (B) is up to three years of imprisonment, or a fine, or both, and under section 338 (A) is up to two years of imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

This lenient view on accidents encourages the offenders to commit the same crime again and again," said top official of the Traffic Department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

INITIATIVE TO ENACT MOTOR VEHICLE ORDINANCE, 2007
The proposed ordinance will recommend increasing minimum fine of Tk 50 for violation of motor vehicle rules to Tk 500 and the highest fine to Tk 10,000 from Tk 5,000 for changing vehicle structure.

"Now cases are being filed for traffic rule violation, but it's not acting as a deterrent to the violation as the fine is minimal," BRTA Chairman Bose told The Daily Star.

In the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983 the government had tried to make a law with the provision of no bail and capital punishment if a driver's negligence or reckless driving causes death to a pedestrian. But the government had to abandon the move in the wake of non-stop transport strike.

BRTA sources say the proposed ordinance might recommend imprisonment for 15 years and making it a non-bailable offence.

Maj Gen Monir

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instructional and staff appointments like commanding officer of the East Bengal Regiment, general staff officer first grade of an infantry division, commander of an infantry brigade, directing staff and senior instructor of Defence Services Command and Staff College, chief of protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and general officer commanding of an infantry division.

He served in Iraq in the UN mission in 1988-1989.

Maj Gen Monir has made official visits to a number of countries. He holds a Master's in Defence Studies from National University of Bangladesh, Master's in Defence and Strategic Studies from Madras University of India and Master's in Business Administration from Trinity University of the USA.

He graduated from National Defence College at Mirpur in 2007.

Cop's quick

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near Ibrahimbabad Railway Station.

Constable Khalilur Rahman was hoisting the national flag at the police station at dawn yesterday when he saw the Dinajpur-Dhaka intercity Ekata Express was leaving the station which is 7km away from the accident spot.

Khalilur immediately ran to the train tracks with the national flag and waved the red portion of it to stop the train.

Seeing the signal, the driver stopped the train.

Hailing from Phulda village under Sarishabari upazila of Jamalpur, Constable Khalilur Rahman, 45, told The Daily Star that he knew about the bus accident and that the damaged bus was still lying on the tracks with its injured passengers.

"Panic gripped me when I saw the train speeding up. I thought if I do not stop it, no one else would notice it was going towards the spot... I have only performed my duty," he said.

"Many passengers trapped inside the wreckage of the ill-fated bus would have been killed if Khalilur had not stopped the train timely," said Fazlul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Jamuna Bridge East Police Station.

The Ekata Express was stranded at Ibrahimbabad Railway Station while train communications remained suspended for four hours until the wreckage of the bus was removed from the railway line, he added.

Ulema body's

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Abdus Samad, Ajay Roy, Ziaul Hasan, among others.

The speakers criticised the caretaker government for their soft approach towards radical Islamist organisations that had staged violent protests against the National Women Development Policy.

They warned that Bangladesh would be reverting to the dark ages if demands of such radical outfits were heeded. No development can take place in the country if such radical forces are not dealt with a strong hand, they added.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said, "Some identified opportunists are conducting this propaganda against the women development policy by trying to say that this policy goes against Islam."

The radical outfits are talking against the women development policy at a time when the demand for trial of war criminals is gaining momentum in the country," he said adding, "they are doing so to divert the people's attention from the accident occurred.

Quoting injured passengers, he said the bus started its journey to Dhaka from Bhurungamari upazila in Kurigram around 8:00pm on Friday and the driver was driving the bus at a very high speed despite objections from the passengers.

"It's part of their strategy to save their own lives," Selim pointed out.

Selim also added that all recommendations made by the ulema committee go against the constitution.

Syed Abul Maksud expressed hope that the government will not bow to radical forces.

Speakers pointed out that radical forces are trying to turn the Baitul Mukarram mosque into a place like the Red Mosque in Pakistan. Speakers also called on all to organise counter movements against the Islamist forces and thus resist them.

Poll reforms

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electoral reform talks as its earlier

At the EC, the EC wants to sit with a united BNP.

A senior leader of pro-reform BNP said they would not object if the EC wraps up electoral reform talks now without sitting with them since it is necessary to have the reform proposals as laws soon.

The EC on November 5 last year invited Saifur-led BNP faction, ignoring objections from Delwar-led faction, which claimed to be the mainstream BNP.

Rab activists asked the Lal Pataka to surrender but the outlaws opened fire on the law enforcers prompting them to retaliate.

Hira was killed in the shootout while his cohorts managed to flee.

Rab recovered a shutter gun, a pipe gun, a rifle and three bullets from the spot.

Hira had been accused in several cases on different charges including murder, Rab sources said.

Another Tangail tragedy

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most of whom were cloth traders.

This time most of the dead and injured bus passengers are harvesting labourers from Nageswari and Bhurungamari upazilas of Kurigram.

The rescued passengers said the accident occurred around 5:45am when the driver of the Karnaphuli Paribahan bus lost control of the steering and the bus skidded off the road onto the roadside train lines at Hati under Salla union of Kurigram.

Sixteen passengers died on the spot while others were trapped inside the badly damaged vehicle that was lying upside down across the railway line.

Following the accident train communications between Jamuna Bridge and Dhaka remained suspended for four hours from 6:00am and the Dhaka-bound intercity train Ekata Express from Dinajpur was stranded at Ibrahimbabad Rail Station.

Train communications resumed after the wreckage of the bus was removed from the railway.

Locals and police from the Jamuna Bridge East Police Station immediately started a rescue operation. The fire brigade, an army team of 98 Composite Brigade from Jamuna Cantonment, and another team of Margaret One, the company responsible for operation and maintenance of Jamuna Bridge, later joined the rescue operation.

They rescued 51 injured passengers, 10 of them in a critical condition, and sent them to Tangail General Hospital where two more bus passengers succumbed to their injuries.

Of the dead, 16 were identified as harvesting labourers Abdus Sattar, 26, son of Javed Ali, and Muzhia Miah, 21, son of Abdul Zabbar of Khamar Hasnabad village, Moiz Hossain, 27, son of Yousuf Ali of Chruatari village, Mohammad Ibrahim, 26, son of Amzad Hossain of Hausherhat village, Shahab Ali, 28, son of Bellal Munshi, Jahan Uddin (one), 45, son of Abu Sama, his younger brother Shabuddin, 16, Jahan Uddin (two), 30, son of Shamsher Ali, and Joad Ali, 35, son of Rahman of Khasmaha village, Anisur Rahman, 18, son of Hashem Ali, and Mostofa, 25, son of Abdul Zabbar of Sarkar Para village, Moudud Ali, 21, son of Yousuf Ali, Jahurul Islam, 35, son of Abdul Aziz, Manjurul Ala, 30, son of Mohammad Molla, and Saldul, 25, son of Abdul Aziz of Chouriapara village, and Nurul Islam, 32, son of Inta Ali of Char Berubari village of Nageswari upazila in Kurigram district.

Identities of the two other victims could not be known immediately.

Of the injured, three were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and another to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, hospital sources said.

They warned that Bangladesh would be reverting to the dark ages if demands of such radical outfits were heeded. No development can take place in the country if such radical forces are not dealt with a strong hand, they added.

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Rab activists asked the Lal Pataka to surrender but the outlaws opened fire on the law enforcers prompting them to retaliate.

Abu Abbas was killed on the spot while his associates managed to escape.

A Pakistan-made rifle and five rounds of bullet were recovered from the scene.

Police said Abbas was accused in 16 cases on different charges including murder.

Meanwhile, acting on information, members of Rab 5 cordoned off a house at Bhatkali village in Naogaon where members of Lal Pataka, a faction of outlawed BPC-ML led by Hira were holding a meeting at about 12:30am.

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On the day, CEC Huda said the EC would informally initiate moves to resolve a political party's internal disputes.

Even though "the Muslim Inheritance Law is included in the Women Development Policy, a quarter, through misinterpretation, was misguiding the people to secure their interest," she added.

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Mugging suspect

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injuries he suffered when he tried to escape.

The family of Chan, a transport worker, alleged that police tortured him for bribe.

Chan's wife Rahela Begum, who lives in Mijmiji Painadi area in Siddhiganj, said that her husband gave Sub-Inspector (SI) Babul Akhter of Siddhiganj Police Station and police informer Nafal Mahmudullah six money after they demanded Tk 50,000 from him.

On April 12, police arrested Chan in Sylhet. He was first taken to Siddhiganj Police Station, then to Narayanganj Model Thana and finally to the office of district Detective Branch (DB) of police where ASP Zannat Ferdous interrogated him.

The dead bodies were handed over to Tofazzul Hossain, a magistrate from Kurigram, without autopsy. Tangail district administration provided vehicles to transport the dead bodies.

Injured bus passenger Habibur Rahman, 35, of Hausherhat village, told The Daily Star that he along with other passengers remained trapped in the wreckage for two hours.

Another injured, Rafiqul Islam, 35, of Char Berubari village, said some 37 passengers were from Nageswari upazila alone. "Most of us are harvesting labourers and we were going to Tongi in Gazipur for work," he added.

A case was filed with Government Railway Police Station in Dhaka in this regard. Jamuna Bridge East Police Station OC Fazlul Kabir said.

Meanwhile, presence of mind of a constable of Jamuna Bridge East Police Station saved the lives of many injured passengers trapped inside the wreckage of the bus when he saw a train was coming towards the accident spot from Ibrahimbabad Rail Station.

They declined to answer any query before ASP Zannat Ferdous reached there.

The ASP asked the doctors to prepare a document saying that Chan had died after admitting to the hospital, but he left the scene when the correspondent of a private television channel got there.

They were blood clots in the legs, wrists, cheeks and neck of the body, sources at the hospital said. Besides, there were four-inch-deep wound on the right knee and injuries in the head.

On-duty doctor Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury told The Daily Star that Chan was brought to the hospital dead and there were injuries in his body.

Contacted, district police public relations officer claimed that Chan was injured when he attempted to flee on his way to the police station Friday night. Later during interrogation at district DB office, he complained of chest pain and when he was taken to the hospital, the doctors declared him dead, he added.

The party will not back down from its stand on the freedom of Khaleda Zia and her two sons, said Delwar.

Terminating the interim administration "failed and irregular", he said they [the advisers and other high-ups in the government] should go back to their respective positions after releasing the two former premiers and holding a free, fair and acceptable election.

The BNP had handed over power peacefully on October 28, 2006, but later the pre-1/11 situation was orchestrated carefully, Delwar said reasoning, "The security forces are controlling everything now, but why couldn't they do it at that time?"

Drawing the