

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 violators.

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.

Unofficially, 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 a 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 Ibrahimabad 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 Phuldaha 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 Ibrahimabad 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 trial."

"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 invitation to Saifur-led faction had triggered a spate of controversy.

Following Thursday's informal talks with BNP factions, the EC said 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.

Later, detained BNP Chairperson filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) challenging the EC decision, and the court stayed it. The EC then suspended its November 22 talks with Saifur-led faction.

Finally, the HC discharged Khaleeda's writ petition on April 10, saying it does not have jurisdiction to resolve a political party's internal disputes.

On the day, CEC Huda said the EC would informally initiate moves to resolve differences between the two BNP factions.

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 Hatia under Salla union of Kalihati.

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 Ibrahimabad 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 Muchha Miah, 21, son of Abdul Zabbur of Khamar Hasnabad village, Mozir Hossain, 27, son of Yousuf Ali of Chruatari village, Mohammad Ibrahim, 26, son of Amzad Hossain of Hausherhat village, Shaheb 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 Khasmahal village, Anisur Rahman, 18, son of Hashem Ali, and Mostofa, 25, son of Abdul Zabbur of Sarkar Para village, Moudud Ali, 21, son of Yousuf Ali, Jahurul Islam, 35, son of Abdul Aziz, Manjurul Ala, 30, son of Mohammad Mollah, and Siddul, 25, son of Abdul Aziz of Chouripara 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.

Fazlul Kabir, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jamuna Bridge East Police Station, told The Daily Star that at least 75 passengers, most of them harvesting labourers, were travelling on the 52-seated bus and most of them were asleep when 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.

"Many injured bus passengers remained trapped inside the bus for two hours," he said.

Immediately after hearing the news of the accident, Commander of 98 Composite Brigade from Jamuna Cantonment Brigadier General Nasimul Gani and its

Brigade Major Anwar Hossain rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue operation.

Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Aziz Hasan, Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, Tangail Deputy Commissioner Akhter Ali Sarkar, Superintendent of Police Abdul Mannan and Kalihati Upazila Nirbahi Officer Saifullahel-Azim also visited the spot and the injured at the Tangail General Hospital.

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

Injured bus passenger Habibar 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 Ibrahimabad Rail Station.

Delwar

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worked out at an appropriate time in consultation within the party forum," he said alleging that the present government from the very beginning has been hatching conspiracy to split the BNP.

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

Termining 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 secretary general's attention, Brig Gen (ret) Hannan Shah, adviser to the BNP chairperson, said, "Workers of the party want programmes aimed at freeing the chairperson... Time is running out fast. We have to keep in mind that our political opponents are gaining ground."

Regarding the much-talked unification of the rival factions in the party, he said the unification of the party would be conducted as per Khaleeda Zia's directive -- not to please anyone or make room for anyone.

BNP standing committee member Dr RA Gani, Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Organising Secretary Mohammad Shahjahan and Acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed also spoke at the meeting that was presided over by Babul Chowdhury, convener of 'JCD Leaders of the '80s'.

Women, HR bodies

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Andolan will hold a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on April 25.

The decision was disclosed at a views exchange meeting titled 'Constitutional Rights of Women: in the context of the Women Development Policy' held at Dhaka Reporters Union in the capital. The meeting presided over by Prof Dr Farzana Islam of Jahangirnagar University was organised by Partnership of Women in Action (Pawa).

The participants -- eminent woman personalities and female workers from different industries in the city -- said the Women Development Policy 2008 has the components that could ensure empowerment of women in the society and the policy does not contradict the Quran.

Announcing the April 25 rally at the Central Shaheed Minar, Nasrin Mahmud, coordinator of Pawa, said, "Women will launch a movement for the implementation of the Women Development Policy."

Barrister Sara Hossain said, "We will have to launch a peaceful movement to make the government feel that the women of the country also have some strength."

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.

"The war criminals were the ones who have been trying to pressurise the government so it does not take any initiative to try the war criminals," observed Sara, adding, "Who gave them [opponents of the policy] the authority to explain the Quran? They don't want anybody to understand the Quran."

"The opponents of the policy are either telling lies about it or attempting to take the country 600 years back," she said.

Nasrin Mahmud and Lovely Yasmin presented the keynote paper that read, "Opposing equal rights for women is an anti-state and anti-constitutional act."

A number of female workers from different industries including garment factories said the ones who oppose the policy are none other than the war criminals who raped women during the Liberation War in 1971.

Many female workers said they make significant contributions to the GDP and if they were compelled to take it to the streets to press home their demand of equal rights, growth of the country would be affected considerably.

Taleya Rehman, executive director of Democracywatch, Shirin Banu Mitil, a freedom fighter, and advocate Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, among others, were present at the meeting.

Mugging suspect

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on 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 Mijimiji Painadi area in Siddhirganj, said that her husband gave Sub-Inspector (SI) Babul Akhter of Siddhirganj Police Station and police informer Nafal some money after they demanded Tk 50,000 from him.

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

After getting no answer why he was arrested, Rahela filed a petition with superintendent of police on April 15 enquiring his condition and demanding his release.

The ASP had brutally tortured her husband while he was in custody, which caused his death, Rahela alleged.

At 12:10am yesterday, some plainclothes policemen took the body in a private car of Fareast Insurance Company and attempted to leave the body on a trolley at Khanpur Hospital in Narayanganj when hospital staffs stopped them.

They declined to answer any query before ASP Zannatul Ferdous asked 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.

There 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 police officer also claimed that they have recovered a part of the mugged money in Siddhirganj from Chan's possession.

Contacted, ASP Zannatul Ferdous denied torturing Chan.

Diarrhoea

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Admitted patients are mostly suffering from watery diarrhoea, he added.

Health experts say that the poor and people from the lower income brackets are main victims of diarrhoea due to lack of awareness about safe drinking water and poor sanitation.

Most of those admitted to hospital are rickshaw pullers and day labourers. They are afflicted with the condition as they drink water from roadside sources that usually are not safe to drink, hospital sources said.

Dr Iqbal Hossain said that another factor causing diarrhoea is drinking water from drying up rivers and brooks. Such places contain high concentrations of bacteria.

ICDDR,B has put up temporary sheds at its parking space and in front of the hospital to accommodate the growing number of patients.

Auxiliary doctors, nurses and health workers have been helping out the situation. The hospital plans to mobilise more health workers from other places if the situation worsens.

Doctors advise patients to partake oral saline and green bananas if one gets diarrhoea and also take antibiotics if necessary.

Edible oil

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A salesman said due to the price spike of non-brand edible oil, distributors scaled down the supply of branded kinds, contributing to its price rise. Distributors at Karwan Bazar and Moulvibazar, however, alleged that manufacturers cut the supply of branded oil.

Wholesalers at Moulvibazar said prices of non-branded oil increased because oil refiners choked supplies.

Meantime, prices of pulses rose by Tk 2-3 per kg on the retail and wholesale markets. Traders at Rahmatganj Dal Potti said prices decreased by Tk 6-8 per kg on the wholesale market a month ago when local varieties of pulses started pouring in.

They said the prices of pulses might have increased as new letters of credit were not opened.

49 killed

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At least 12 Tigers were killed and seven others injured in clashes at East of Madhu. Thatchanamarathamadu and Suleinamarathamadu area in Vavuniya district, it said.

Security forces have killed at least 2,903 rebels since the start of January while 175 government soldiers have died in action during the same period, according to defence ministry figures.

Casualty figures cannot be verified independently as Colombo based journalists and aid workers from travelling to embattled areas. Both sides are known to offer sharply varying casualty figures.

Tens of thousands of people have died since 1972 when the LTTE launched an armed struggle to carve out an independent homeland in the Sinhalese-majority island's north and east for ethnic Tamils.

Tigers whitewash

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The 23-year-old opener, who had scores of 33, 76, 132 and 74 in the series, amassed 451 in all. It was the highest ever aggregate in a bilateral five-match one-day series, beating countryman Mohammad Yousuf's 405 against Zimbabwe in 2002.

Pakistan's previous highest total against Bangladesh was achieved in the first match of this series in Lahore when they made 322-5.

The victory gave Pakistan their 11th successive one-day win, beating the previous sequence of ten victories achieved between April and November 1990. Australia hold the record of most successive wins, with 21 in 2003.

Bangladesh never looked on course for a consolation win as they were rocked by paceman Mohammad Asif (3-35) who removed opener Zunaed Siddiqui (six), Aftab Ahmed (nought) and Shakib Al Hasan (five) in the space of five balls.

In between, Asif's pace partner Umar Gul had Tamim Iqbal (nine), caught behind by Kamran Akmal to leave Bangladesh reeling at 4-23.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful hit four boundaries in his 30 before leg-spinner Shahid Afridi forced an edge which was smartly snatched up by Misbahul Haq in the slip. Afridi finished with 3-40.

Mahmudullah topped scored with 37 and added 57 for the seventh wicket with Dhiman Ghosh (29) while Abdur Razzak made 33 but they only delayed the inevitable.

Pakistan skipper Shoaib Malik praised the team for the winning sequence.

"We have played well in this series and it feels great to achieve the new winning streak, for which the credit goes to the players," he said.

Ashraful said he hoped his team would learn from the annihilation. "Congratulations to Pakistan, they overcame us in this series. We have been trying to improve and I hope we learn more from this series," said the Bangladesh captain.

Earlier Butt, dropped on 57, set the tone for Pakistan's big total. He added a record 179 runs for the second wicket with Yousuf Khan (69) after Pakistan won the toss and decided to bat.

Butt, whose previous highest one-day score of 132 came in the third match in Lahore on Sunday, hit 14 boundaries and a six during his punishing 124-ball knock.

Butt and Yousuf steadied the innings, after they lost Kamran Akmal for ten. Butt reached his hundred in as many balls, hitting nine fours and a six off spinner Shakib Al Hasan.

Yousuf, who returned to the squad as one of three changes, miscued a pull off Shahadat Hossain to be caught by a running Farhad Reza at square-leg. Yousuf hit four boundaries and a six during his 80-ball knock.

His partnership with Butt is a new Pakistan record against Bangladesh, beating the 123-run second-wicket stand between Saeed Anwar and Rameez Raja at Colombo in 1997.

Butt too miscued a drive off spinner Abdur Razzak in the 38th over. Yousuf fell for 22 and Afridi managed just four.

Shoaib Malik (27) and Misbah (35) added a quickfire 52 for the sixth wicket before Pakistan lost four wickets in the last five overs. Among those debutant Naumanullah scored just five.

Mortaza bowled accurately to finish with 4-65.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the fifth and final day-night one-day international between Pakistan and Bangladesh at the National Stadium in Karachi on Saturday:

PAKISTAN		
Butt c Shakib b Razzak	136	
Akmal c Zunaed b Mortaza	10	
Yousuf c Reza b Shahadat	69	
Yousuf c Razzak b Mortaza	22	
Malik st Dhiman b Razzak	27	
Afridi c Mortaza b Shahadat	4	
Misbahul c Razzak b Mortaza	35	
Naumanullah b Shahadat	5	
Riaz lbw b Mortaza	3	
Gul not out	1	
Asif not out	5	
Extras: (lb-5, w-7)	12	
Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs)	329	

Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-207, 3-230, 4-251, 5-261, 6-314, 7-314, 8-319, 9-323

323				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mortaza	10	0	65	4
Shahadat	10	0	76	3
Razzak	10	0	56	2
Shakib	10	0	52	0
Mahmudullah	6	0	44	0
Reza	4	0	31	0