

Highway becoming death trap

Fatal accidents on increase on road between Mirzapur and Bangabandhu Bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Around 1,500 people have been killed and three thousand others injured in nearly 1,200 road accidents on the highway between Mirzapur and Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge since opening of the bridge in 1998.

Over one thousand of the injured have become physically disabled, said sources at Tangail police superintendent's office referring to the causality data.

Number of casualties on the highway is on rise as reckless driving and traffic rule violation has become commonplace on the two-way road which is too inadequate for the large number of vehicles plying the highway, said experts.

Risky bridges, absence of patrol by law enforcers and lack of trauma and medical emergency facilities add to the casualties, they said.

The highway has to take load of a large number of passenger and goods carrying vehicles that ply 16

routes of northern region and five routes of south-western region, said sources in traffic department.

In 1998, the inauguration of Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge and the two-lane highway helped direct road communication between the capital and northern districts of the country.

Further development of road communications between the south-western region and Dhaka via the Bangabandhu Bridge led to heavy traffic on this highway.

Tremendous increase in traffic over the years leads to increased number of head-on collision on the highway, said observers.

Besides, frequent traffic rule violations including reckless driving, crossing speed limits, overloading of goods carrying vehicles, carrying passengers on the roof of buses and plying of unfit vehicles contribute to the rising trend in accidents on the highway, said sources at local road transport authority office.

A section of callous drivers hardly care for traffic

rules on the highway as their crimes always go unpunished, said several locals adding that highway patrol police do not perform their duty properly.

Abdur Rouf Sandesh, former president of Tangail District Bus-Coach Owners' Association, admitted that reckless driving is the main cause of frequent casualties on this highway.

Several dilapidated bridges on different locations of the highway make the road even more risky.

Passengers who frequent this road demanded that the authorities ensure safety of passengers by taking stern action against the unruly drivers while the drivers stressed the need for increased lanes for safer operation of vehicles on the highway.

"The authorities are concerned about the rise of accidents on the highway. There should be two more lanes to check accidents on the busy road. The matter was discussed in the meeting of Dhaka Division in the capital last week," said Tangail Deputy Commissioner M Bazul Karim Chowdhury.



PHOTO: STAR

Shortage of classroom compels students of Panchahar Jalal Uddin Registered Primay School in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh district to attend class under a tree on the school premises.

Study under open sky as storm blows away school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Students of Panchahar Jalal Uddin Registered Primary School at remote Panchahar village in Tangaboo union under Gafargaon upazila attend their classes under the trees as the schoolhouse, blown away by a storm seven years ago, is yet to be re-constructed.

The school established in 1973 got registration in 1991.

The schoolhouse was damaged several times and later re-constructed with the help from local people.

Lastly a storm destroyed it in 2003 and the teachers continued school activities under the shade of trees and at the local community centre. With their own initia-

tive, the schoolteachers aided by local people constructed a tin-shed house comprising two rooms last year.

Now the school with 143 students in five classes can run two classes at a time in a congested situation while others have to take their lessons regularly sitting under trees on the school premises.

The school also suffers from want of necessary furniture. As there are only 10 benches in two classrooms, most of the students have to sit on the floor covering it with papers and sacks.

"We need a building with sufficient rooms and furniture immediately for smooth continuation of the activities of the only school in this remote village. The students of class three have to take lessons under the tree and their classes remain

suspended during foul weather," said school headmaster Md Zakir Hossain Khan.

"After the school building was damaged seven years ago, we knocked every possible door for financial support to rebuild it but the response has been scanty," he said.

All the candidates from the school passed in the last Primary Terminal Examination, teachers said.

There is no primary school within two kilometres of the school, locals said.

Local union parishad Chairman Abdul Quddus said he knew nothing about the pitiable condition of the school.

Gafargaon Upazila Primary Education Officer Binoy Chandra Sharma could not be contacted after repeated attempts.

Arrest Faruk's killers, demands rally at RU

A RU Correspondent

The newly formed Secular Democratic Students' Action Council in Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday demanded the government bring the killers of Faruk Hossain to justice.

Addressing a protest rally in front of the central library on RU campus, the leaders and activists of the council called upon the government to root out fundamentalism from the country.

Earlier, the council led by its convener Awal Kabir Joy, also the RU unit president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), brought out a procession on the campus in protest against the killing of Faruk and attack of Shibir cadres on February 9.

On Thursday, Chhatra League, Jasad Chhatra League, Chhatra Moitree and Chhatra Union of the university formed the secular council with a view to resist Shibir on the campus.

Meanwhile, 301 RU teachers under the banner of Progressive Teachers' Society yesterday called upon the government and the university authorities to ban the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami and its associated student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir.

In a statement, the RU teachers said Jamaat and Shibir cadres are trying to destabilise the country as the government is going to try the war criminals.

The progressive teachers also demanded suspension of pro-Jamaat teachers and employees from the university who were recruited by the previous BNP-Jamaat government.

The signatories include Prof Antazul M Haque, Prof Mizan Uddin, Prof Chitta Ranjan Saha Mishra, Prof Maloy Kumar Bhowmik, Prof Shamsuddin Elias, Prof Dulal Chandra Biswas, Prof Ananda Kumar Saha, Mustak Ahmed and Hasibul Alam Prodhan.



PHOTO: STAR

Part of the 2300-year-old wall found during the ongoing excavation at Mahasthangarh archaeological site in Bogra district by a Bangladesh-France joint team.

MAHASTHANGARH SITE

Another brick built wall, more objects dug out

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The archaeologists of Bangladesh-France joint excavation team have dug out more brick built ancient structures including a wall of Mauryan period at Mahasthangarh site in Bogra recently.

"The very ancient brick built wall was constructed about 2300 years ago during the period of Mauryan dynasty. We have also found a part of an ancient brick built road along with four copper coins of Mauryan dynasty

during the ongoing excavation," Dr Barbara Faticoni, a member of the France team, told The Daily Star on Saturday.

The six-metre-long wall was found in the south-eastern area of the site. Earlier the France team found an ancient gate and an observation tower in the south-west area.

Bangladesh team found many old brick built walls in the south-west corner of Mahasthangarh site.

Archaeologists presume that most of the bricks and stone pieces were re-used for

construction of Buddhist temples.

"We have found a brick built structure of a Buddhist temple in the south-west corner of the site along with other objects," said Bangladesh team leader Nahid Sultana.

About three years ago, Bangladesh team found another Buddhist temple in the same area along with a wider brick paved floor between two Buddhist temples. The width of the recently found walls are from one metre to 1.35m, she added.

Bombs recovered, outlaws arrested

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Police on Saturday arrested two outlaws and recovered seven bombs in Kushtia and seized five bombs from a house in Satkhira.

Our Correspondent in Kushtia reports: Detective Branch of police arrested two outlaws and recovered seven bombs from Gobindapur village in Mirpur upazila Saturday night.

Arrestees Abdur Rahim Joardar, 45, and Monirul Islam, 50, of Gobindapur village, were identified by police as cadres of outlawed

Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF). Rahim is father-in-law of GMF second-in-command Sahin Rumi, who is now absconding in India, police said.

A DB team, led by Inspector Faruq Hossain, raided the house of Monirul at the village at about 8:30pm and captured him.

Following a confession by Monirul, the law enforcers raided Rahim's house at the same village around midnight and arrested him and also recovered seven bombs digging the cowshed at the house.

Police said the GMF cadres often used Rahim's house as a shelter.

According to police, Faruqzaman John, another top GMF cadre also a top smuggler brought the bombs. Police are looking for John.

A Kushtia court yesterday sent the GMF cadres to jail after police produced them before it. Police filed a case with Mirpur Police Station accusing four people including Faruqzaman John.

Our Correspondent in Satkhira reports: Police on Saturday recovered five live bombs from a house in Dhebukhali shrimp enclosure area in Debhata upazila.

But they failed to nab anybody as the culprits fled away sensing the presence of police.

Acting on a secret information police raided the house, locals said.

Police said a group of land grabbers led by one Akram Dakat, Ziad Ali and Salek of Dhebukhali occupied a shrimp enclosure owned by Kalinkar Kumar Ghosh of Jagannathpur in the same upazila on November 15 last year.

Since then they have been staying at the shrimp enclosure making a makeshift house there and threatening the owner, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

A woman cooks with biogas fire at Jagannathpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, right, a biogas plant at Kaharpara village in the same upazila.

Biogas plant gaining popularity in north

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon.

Biogas plant is gaining popularity among the people of two upazilas in Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts for producing environment-friendly fuel for cooking and power generation.

About 213 households have set up biogas plants in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila while 274 in Birganj upazila of Dinajpur district.

Youth and sports ministry is implementing the scheme (installation of biogas plant) in collaboration with youth development directorate under innovative management of resources for poverty alleviation through comprehensive technology (IMPACT) project.

Only Tk 20,000 is needed for installing a biogas plant. The government provides a loan of Tk 15,000 to a person for installing biogas plant. After installing the

plant, IMPACT gives Tk 5000 as subsidy to the beneficiary to inspire others.

Biogas plant installation started formally in 10 upazilas of the country on April 1, 2007, official sources said. The upazilas are Birganj in Dinajpur, Bagatipara in Nator, Shahajanpur in Bogra, Mohadebpur in Naogaon, Senbag in Noakhali, Sonargaon in Narayanganj, Sadar upazila in Thakurgaon, Ramganj in Laxipur, Kumarkhali in Kushtia and Mehediganj in Barishal.

Biogas, the most popular technology for generating energy, is a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide produced by feeding cow dung, human waste and water into an airtight underground tank known as 'digester'. Experts said biogas can be used for running an internal combustion engine to produce electricity.

For running a biogas plant 10kg

cow dung is needed every day. If there is a shortage of cow dung, human waste can be used, IMPACT upazila biogas sub-assistant engineer Moynul Islam Sarcar said.

Anil Chandra Roy, lecturer of geography department of Abdur Rashid Degree College in Thakurgaon, said biogas has enormous potential in Bangladesh where nearly 85 percent of the total population live in rural areas and dependent on firewood for cooking.

While visiting Jagannathpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila recently, Amira Begum, wife of Zakirul Islam, told this correspondent that it is very comfortable to cook with biogas as it is clean and safe.

"Now we don't have to inhale smoke while cooking," she said. Amira has been using biogas for cooking for about two years.

Dr Khirul Kabir, a consultant at

Thakurgaon Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic and president of Thakurgaon Doctors' Association, told the correspondent that smoke-filled kitchen helped develop respiratory tract infection and asthma.

Slurry from biogas plant, which is a good organic fertiliser, can be used to maintain soil fertility and increase crop production. It can also be used to feed fish, officials said.

Nasir Uddin, a farmer of Shingpara village in Sadar upazila of Thakurgaon said he has three acres of land where he cultivates different types of crops including vegetables.

He bought biogas plant two years ago and has been using the slurry as fertiliser to increase fertility of soil.

An official of agriculture extension department in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila said the slurry is excellent organic manure as it destroys the harmful bacteria while producing biogas.

'Jiner Badsha' caught

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Lawenforcers arrested a so-called 'Jiner Badsha' (king of genies) in Nilphamari and two criminal gang members in Magura yesterday and the day before.

The arrestees are Aminur Rahman, the so-called 'Jiner Badsha', and Hasan and Shahjahan, members of the gang. Aminur hails from Dakkhin Chandokhana village under Domar upazila of Nilphamari district while Hasan and Shahjahan from Maria village in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha district.

Sujon, son of Abdul Khaleque of Dakkhin Chandokhana village of Domar upazila, went missing on October 9, 2009. Abul Hossain, one of the accomplices 'Jiner Badsha' Aminur, went to Khaleque's house and assured him of rescuing his son with the help of the 'Jiner Badsha', reports our correspondent.

Accordingly, Abul Hossain took Abdul Khaleque to the 'Jiner Badsha' at a nearby Indian enclave. The 'Jiner Badsha' told Abdul Khaleque to give him Tk 8.22 lakh in four installments to build a temple and sacrifice a goat to appease the other 'jines' who took his son to Bhutan.

The helpless father sold his land and other belongings to meet the demand. After giving him about Tk 2 lakh in two installments, the so-called 'Jiner Badsha' and his accomplices produced Sujon before his father, saying that he

would be freed after payment of the full amount.

Seeing his father, Sujon started crying and asked him (father) to take him back home. He told his father that the men abducted him and confined to a house in the enclave.

Abdul Khaleque came to Domar Police Station to file a case. But the officer-in-charge did not record the case. As Khaleque informed the locals under the matter, they became agitated and pressed the OC to file a case against the cheats.

The OC of Domar Police Station recorded the case on February 20 and arrested Aminur yesterday morning. The other accomplices of the so-called 'Jiner badshahad gone into hiding.

Police said they will pro-

duce the Jiner Badsha' Badsha' in a court today and seek remand for him.

Our Magura correspondent reported that locals caught Hasan and Shahjahan, two representatives of a 'Jiner Badsha', when they were trying to realise money, tricking a woman at Barishat village in Sreepur upazila of the district on Saturday.

They beat up the two severely and later handed them over to the police.

The told police that they came from Maria village under Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha district to realise money from Momtaj Begum following a directive from 'Jiner Badsha' Mahub Hossain.



PHOTO: STAR

Police arrests Hasan and Shahjahan, representatives of fraud group 'Jiner badsha', with a statue at Barishat village in Sreepur upazila of Magura district yesterday.