

| ROAD SAFETY |

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“I think I have more nails in my leg than bones at the moment,” smiles Zubin Faisal while staring at his right leg, which only two weeks ago seemed to be in pieces—with each part of the bone protruding through his skin from a different angle.

“It’s a lot better now,” he claims. “Before the surgery my doctor wasn’t sure if I would be able to walk again. Now he says I can do that in a year’s time if everything goes well,” he adds with a grin while swiping through the photos of the accident on his mobile that had almost taken his life.

On the evening of July 2, Zubin, a 30-year-old HR Manager, was on his way to his friend’s house in Paltan when an SUV, owned by a high court judge, travelling on the wrong side of the road rammed into his bike and sent him flying.

As a result, his thigh bone was fractured into three pieces; his knee cap was, as he puts it, ‘smashed to smithereens’ and there’s a chance that he might need an artificial kneecap; his calf bone and his ankle suffered from multiple fractures; and his metatarsal, or the five bones on his foot, are yet to recover. The doctors might also have to amputate one of his toes. Soon after the accident, police detained the driver, who was the only one in the vehicle.

According to Zubin, the driver’s impatience caused the accident. “After I took a turn, I did notice a jeep travelling on the wrong side near the island on the right side of the road. That is something very common and so I went to the left side of the road, like a normal biker.

“A few seconds later, I noticed that the jeep was speeding towards the left side of the road. I think what happened was the cars behind me were given the signal to go and the jeep wanted to come to the left and wait till all the cars would go,” he recalls.

“I think it just took him three seconds to come towards me. He was going at 60 and hammered my bike. I flew over the jeep and almost somersaulted twice before rolling on the floor. My teeth were shaking and I could feel the jarring of my helmet at that point of time. A few seconds after that someone picked me up, put me in a CNG and sent me to a hospital.

“By the time I reached the PG hospital, I had lost three bags of blood and the doctors were scared. I called my family, got blood and then I got transferred to Square [Hospitals]. I think I was lucky that I flew off the bike. Because had I been on it, I would have gone underneath the car along with the bike,” he adds.

### A surgery without anaesthesia

Zubin’s agony did not just end there. Once he reached the hospital, the doctor had to immediately start working on his right leg, since they did not have any time to lose. And because of that they could not wait for the anaesthesia to kick in. As a result, the first surgery had to be conducted without any anaesthesia.

“I don’t think I ever shouted like that in my life. Those who were standing outside the room later told me that my

# AFTER THE CARNAGE

The *Star Weekend* speaks to victims who have been affected due to vehicles travelling on the wrong side of the road.

NAIMUL KARIM



PHOTO: STAR FILE

It is a common scenario to witness double decker buses travel on the wrong side of the road (above). When sergeant Kausar Hamid tried to stop one bus on Tuesday, he was threatened by a group of 20 to 25 passengers (right).

screams made them feel as though the doctor was sacrificing some animal,” says Zubin.

After a second surgery in the morning, which lasted for eight hours, Zubin finally seemed stable. He, however, has a long way to go. He is likely to take six months to merely get on his two feet and a year to start walking.

Despite the travails, Zubin, who used to be a professional cricketer as a youngster, looks towards the brighter side of life. “I shouldn’t have been alive. But here I am, hoping to recover completely in some time. All I can do is thank God,” he says.

### No remorse

He, however, still finds it hard to understand why the driver of the jeep behaved the way he did.

“It’s not just that he came the wrong way. He did not even care about driving slowly. He seemed to take pride in doing



PHOTO COURTESY: PROTHOM ALO

something illegal. My doctors later told me that the driver apparently got out of the car and said, ‘Do whatever you want, I am a judge’s driver.’

“This is the kind of world we live in.

Someone who almost ended my life comes out of the car and shows absolutely no remorse. That’s unbelievable,” an emotional Zubin says.

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## AFTER THE CARNAGE

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Two days after getting detained, the driver, Kamal Hossain, was issued a show-cause notice by the International Crimes Tribunal.

‘I could not control myself’

Kausar Hamid a sergeant from the Ramna thana was prepared to face a tough week at work at the Bangla Motor crossing. After all, the hustle and bustle on that part of the road seldom fails to provide action. However, the issue that he had to deal with last Monday was staggering even by his own standards.

On Monday evening, Kausar noticed three double-decker buses, belonging to a public university, driving on the wrong side of the road. A baffled Kausar



Zubin Faisal

stopped the first bus and tried to reason out the situation with one of them. Video footages later showed how Kausar was pushed around by a group of individuals from the bus.

“Generally when we see these double-decker buses [from an educational institution] drive on the wrong side, we ignore them because we know how unruly the passengers can get. But on Monday, I could not control myself because the right side of the road was empty. There wasn’t any traffic jam. They could have taken the normal route,” explains Kausar.

“There were around 20 or 25 of them. Three or four of them started pushing me and that’s when some of the more sensible passengers intervened and took them away,” adds Kausar.

On Tuesday, Kausar, who suffered a few bruises, filed two cases against the bus drivers.



PHOTOS: STAR FILE

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wait and they end up taking the wrong lane. VIPs should be aware of this matter. If we ask the general public to follow particular laws, then we should do it ourselves,” he had said.

But, of course, this isn’t the first time that driving on the wrong lane has become an issue. In fact, Obaidul, who is also the Road Transport and Bridges Minister, had given ministers a similar warning exactly a year ago. Even the High Court, in May 2016, had issued a rule upon authorities to explain why they should not be directed to stop vehicles running on the wrong side of the road.

The repeated warnings just go to show how important this issue is and how nobody seems to pay any attention to the warnings.

And that’s also perhaps why the number of deaths caused by road accidents in Bangladesh has been on the increase. According to a survey conducted by the Bangladesh Health Injury Survey in 2016, on an average 64

people die every day from injuries suffered in traffic accidents.

According to a report published by the National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR), at least 2,297 people were killed and 5,480 injured in road accidents in the first six months of 2017.

The organisation, which campaigns for safety in the transport sector, prepared its report based on news published in the media, and many fear that the actual number is a lot higher, since there are many cases that often don’t get reported in the media. The report further states that in June alone 333 people were killed and 632 injured in 265 accidents.

While the numbers have been rising, there does not seem to be a change in attitude. And until that happens, people like Zubeen will always be in danger of losing their limbs; people like Kausar will always think twice before attempting to stop a vehicle on the wrong side of the road. ■