

4 killed as truck falls into ditch

3 injured; driver lost control of the brick-laden vehicle on muddy road in Ashulia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Four people were killed and three others injured as a brick-laden truck fell into a 40-foot-deep ditch in Ashulia on the outskirts of Dhaka yesterday.

The accident happened around 6:00am after the driver lost control on a muddy road in Morangang area, said fire service sources.

Hearing screams, locals jumped into the water and rescued three injured. However, four others were missing, said Javed Masud, inspector (investigation) of Ashulia Police Station.

Manik-Uz-Zaman, deputy assistant director of Dhaka Fire Zone-10, said on information, teams of naval police and Uttara fire service carried out a rescue operation and later recovered four

bodies.

The dead were Mujahid, 25, Shaheen, 32, Arif, 18 and Abdul Kader, 45.

All the seven victims were workers of Meghna Brick Kiln in Ashulia. The injured were taken to hospital.

The inspector said following primary investigation they came to know that the accident happened when Mujahid, the helper of the driver, was at the wheel. However, he said they were not fully sure about it.

The bodies were handed over to the families without autopsy.

Police said they would file a case.

The Daily Star correspondent could not contact Jamir Mia, owner of the brick kiln and the truck, for comments despite repeated attempts.

The vehicle was seized.



Grief-stricken by the death of their relatives in a road crash, family members wait near the bodies in Ashulia's Morangang area yesterday. The accident left four people dead and three others injured. Inset, a crane pulls up the ill-fated truck from a roadside ditch.

PHOTO: STAR

Too unsafe to commute

FROM PAGE 1

However, the figure presented by the Nirapad Sarak Chai is significantly lower than that of Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity. The Samity on Friday said at least 7,221 people were killed and 15,466 others injured in 5,514 road crashes last year.

The official number of casualties is much lower than that was mentioned in these reports. According to the police report, 2,265 were killed and 1,659 others injured in 2,237 crashes in the first 10 months of last year.

FINDINGS

Ilias Kanchan said at least 3,699 people were killed and 7,425 injured in 3,103 road accidents. Besides, following international instances, they counted 20 percent of the injuries as death and put the total number at 4,439.

He said they have prepared the report by monitoring six national dailies, online news portals and TV channels and analysing data collected by branches of the organisation. He, however, said many accidents go unreported.

Ilias said at least 5,645 people were killed while 7,908 were injured in 3349 accidents in 2017, down from the previous year.

Different initiatives taken by his organisation to raise awareness, training given to drivers, teachers and students, and student agitation for safe road are the reasons behind the decrease, he said.

"Had the government alongside Nirapad Sarak Chai taken up same programmes, the number of road crashes could have been reduced further."

Tens of thousands of students took to the streets for safe road following the killing of two college students in a road accident in the capital on July 29 last year, prompting the authorities to

take some swift actions.

The actor-turned-road-safety-campaigner mentioned that small vehicles like van, rickshaw, nosimons and auto-rickshaws are mainly responsible for most of the accidents that took place on highways.

The local administration and highway police are not playing due role to stop operation of such vehicles, he said, adding, "It appears that local political personalities are behind the operation of such illegal vehicles."

Slow-moving three-wheelers are banned on 22 national highways.

The organisation came up with 10 recommendations including carrying out massive awareness programmes in the media, incorporating road acci-

TYPES OF ACCIDENTS	
Type	Percentage %
Run over	46
Head on collision	19
Turn turtle	8
Fall into ditch	4
Others	22

SOURCE: NIRAPAD SARAK CHAI

dent issues in text books, strict enforcement of law and proper training for drivers.

If the government implements its electoral manifesto regarding this issue sincerely, it is possible to cut road accident by 50 percent by 2020, one of the sustainable development goals, it said.

Ilias urged the prime minister to launch a war against road accident to save people from the "epidemic" immediately.

TRUCKS, COVERED VANS THE KILLERS

Ilias said trucks and covered vans were involved in 35 percent accidents

last year.

Four people died as a brick-laden truck fell into a water-filled ditch in Ashulia yesterday while nine people including two minor siblings of Dakkhin Keraniganj were killed in an accident involving trucks on Monday. Besides, 13 workers were killed when a coal-laden truck flipped over on a makeshift shed at a brick kiln in Cumilla Friday.

Ilias pointed out that 793 trucks and 119 covered vans were involved in road accidents last year.

Busers were involved in 33 percent, motorcycles in 22 percent, minibuses in three and others in seven percent accidents.

January, June and August witnessed the highest number of accidents. Dhaka, followed by Chattogram and Gazipur, tops the list while Chapainawabganj saw the lowest number of crashes after Rangamati and Khagrachhari.

Ilias mentioned that 566 drivers were killed last year. Of them, 160 were bikers, 68 bus drivers and 59 truckers.

DIFFERENCES IN CAUSALITY NUMBER

Ilias said it is not possible to determine the real number of road accidents.

The National Road Safety Council had directed police, hospitals and deputy commissioners to give accident data to the authorities concerned. But none of them provided the information and that's why there is no official statistics, he said.

As preparing an accident report is laborious and costly job, they have requested the government to set up a cell in the ministry to collect road accident data and prepare a report or help their organisation to prepare it, the campaigner added.

"But we did not get the expected response even after giving reminders."

Asked about the huge difference in the figure of road accidents provided by Jatri Kalyan Samity and his organisation, Ilias said he is unaware about how Jatri Kalyan Samity prepared its report.

He added that the Nirapad Sarak Chai has been preparing reports through its own methods since 2012.

Speaking at the programme, Prof Mahbub Alam Talukder of Accident Research Institute of Buet said there should be exact data on road accidents to understand the problem properly and also to make plans to prevent it.

Prof Mahbub, who was involved in preparing the report, recommended setting up a dedicated cell or division for developing an accident database and to do research for reducing accidents.

NO JUSTICE FOR ROAD ACCIDENT VICTIMS

Replying to a question, Ilias said, "Trial regarding road accidents is not taking place as our government is scared of associations and the workers and leaders of the transport sector."

"That's why none of the successive governments took action."

He observed that people of the country also lack patience. "Whenever they [transport owners and workers] stop operation of vehicles, leading to price hike of essentials, people become anxious and the government thinks it is going to lose power."

Talking to this newspaper later, he also said, "It is rare that victims of road accidents get justice. Accidents continue as the culprits behind road accidents rarely punished."

Terming road accidents "epidemic", Ayubur Rahman Khan, former chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, said it cannot be stopped without the government being sincere.

Dhaka protests Myanmar claim

Terms false allegations that terrorists attacked Maungdaw police outpost from Bangladesh territory

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has strongly protested Naypyidaw's allegations that terrorists recently attacked a police outpost in Myanmar from Bangladesh territory, terming those false.

"The government of Bangladesh is utterly disgruntled to notice some reports in Myanmar media based on irresponsible and false allegations by the officials of the General Administration Department of Myanmar implicating Bangladesh in a terrorist attack on a police post in Maungdaw Township near Boundary Pillar no 41 in the early hours of January 24, 2019," the foreign ministry said in a protest note.

The note was handed over to Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh U Lwin Oo, who was summoned by the ministry yesterday afternoon. M Delwar Hossain, director general of South East Asia Wing, called the envoy.

"The allegations are found to be absolutely fabricated and baseless," the DG told the ambassador, adding that there was neither any border crossing by any group from Bangladesh nor any incident of firing from the Bangladesh side towards any direction on that particular date.

The allegation is fabricated and highly derogatory to the reputation of Bangladesh, a country that persistently

strives for peace and stability all over the world, said a foreign ministry statement.

"As on previous occasions, differences in narratives of various media houses and government officials of Myanmar are clearly evident and it usually happens when stories are fabricated."

"Repetition of such serious and baseless allegations with varied versions could be construed as a deliberate attempt to malign Bangladesh and implicate a peace-loving country into the incessant internal conflicts of Myanmar," the statement added.

The Bangladesh government under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is firmly committed not to allow any dissident group to use its soil for any purpose. The high level of alertness and effective preventive measures by the law enforcing agencies of Bangladesh in line with "zero tolerance policy" of the government make it absolutely impossible to be present in the country or to launch any attack, the ministry said.

"We reaffirm that there is no existence of any terrorist group within Bangladesh. The security forces of Bangladesh alongside the border remain always vigilant and prepared to address any untoward incident that may affect peace and stability," the statement mentioned.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

British MPs back baby leave proxy voting

AFP, London

British lawmakers have approved a year-long trial of proxy voting for MPs on parental leave from yesterday.

MPs have been discussing the idea for several months but matters came to a head when one of their number postponed a Caesarian section in order to vote in Britain's long-running Brexit saga.

The motion was passed late Monday. It will allow new parents to nominate a colleague to vote on their behalf.

Currently MPs walk through two lobbies to cast their vote, effectively being counted in person.

If members cannot get to parliament to vote, they can pair up with an MP from the opposing side who likewise does not vote, so the overall outcome is unaffected.

"As a last resort, a system known as "noddling through" allows an MP's vote to be counted if they are on the parliamentary estate but cannot physically walk through the lobbies.

In the past, this has seen MPs vote by being driven through the estate in an ambulance.

Opposition Labour MP Tulip Siddiq postponed the birth of her son Raphael by Caesarian section so she could be wheeled into the chamber to vote on Brexit earlier this month.

"I believe I will be the first MP to vote by proxy," she said ahead of yesterday's crunch votes on Britain's Brexit strategy.

"Raphael and I are so grateful that I can represent my constituents in these important votes."

The long-established pairing system broke down last year when the government breached a pairing

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Bangladesh slips six notches

FROM PAGE 1

corruption based on findings by globally-reputable survey sources, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. This year's average score was 43.

Bangladesh scored a meagre 26, a little over half of the average. The country's latest position is 13th from the bottom, down from 17th in 2017.

Pakistan scored 7 points more than Bangladesh to position itself at 117, a spot 32 steps ahead of Bangladesh.

Presenting the report, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said the ACC, along with other agencies, could play a vital role in curbing corruption.

"The Anti-Corruption Commission lacks the ability to work independently, although it has been somewhat active recently. But it deals with only low and medium level corruption. It cannot play an effective role," he said.

"There is hardly any example of high-profile corrupt individual getting punished," he added.

ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmud said the report would not be acceptable if the TI failed to mention its methodology and causes of rising corruption, although the TI report mentioned both.

"I always welcome such reports. We will fix our course of action if the organisation [TI] specifies the sectors where corruption has increased," he told reporters at his office.

"Anyone can make sweeping comments about graft," he said, insisting the ACC was an "independent" body.

"No one interferes in the commission's activities. We are absolutely free and not afraid of anyone," he claimed.

Replying to Iftekharuzzaman's suggestions that the ACC spares the high-profile corrupt individuals, Iqbal said, "It's true. But how do we catch big corrupt who lives in London?"

He was perhaps referring to BNP chief Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, who lives in exile in London. Tarique faces 17 years in prison in two corruption cases and life term in the

TI CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2018

BANGLADESH'S POSITION IN SOUTH ASIA

COUNTRY	RANK FROM TOP	SCORE
Bhutan	25	68
India	78	41
Sri Lanka	89	38
Pakistan	117	33
Maldives	124	31
Nepal	124	31
Bangladesh	149	26
Afghanistan	172	16

GRAFT INDEX: TOP FIVE, BOTTOM FIVE

LEAST CORRUPT	MOST CORRUPT
Denmark	Somalia
New Zealand	Syria
Finland	South Sudan
Singapore	Yemen
Sweden	North Korea

August 21 grenade attack case.

WHERE IS BANGLADESH?

Bangladesh's latest score is 2 points lower than previous year's, and is the steepest fall in a single year since 2008, the report said.

"This is embarrassing and dissatisfactory," Iftekharuzzaman later told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh's spot is shared by two African countries -- Central African Republic and Uganda.

Among other South Asian countries, Bhutan scored 68 to rank 25th; India scored 41 to rank 78th; Sri Lanka scored 38 points to secure 89th spot; Maldives and Nepal scored 31 points and are jointly ranked 124th.

"As Bangladesh scored 26, it appears that the level of corruption in the country is still concerning," said the study.

The TI has been publishing the

annual report since 1995.

Bangladesh was included in the list in 2001. It was at the bottom of the TI index for five years from 2001 to 2005. The country started doing better in the following years with its score rising. Bangladesh stood 15th from the bottom in 2016, 13th in 2015 and 14th in 2014.

CAUSES, WAY OUT

The factors that prevent Bangladesh from doing better includes non-implementation of the commitment to act against corruption, said Iftekharuzzaman.

No high-profile corrupt person has been brought to trial, he added.

"We are not at the bottom, but still our position is weak. Our score is well below the global average," he pointed out.

Rise in money laundering, unbridled scams and corruption in banking and financial sector as well as loan default, and political control in public procurement and recruitment are some other factors why corruption prevails in Bangladesh, he added.

"According to the Global Financial Integrity, \$5.9 billion was siphoned out of Bangladesh in 2015 through trade mis-invoicing," he mentioned.

There is conflict of interest, as political and government positions are perceived as means of making wealth. Uncontrolled grabbing of land, river and waterbody, a "denial syndrome" of politicians and the lack of rule of law are also to blame, he said.

The report recommended taking up a National Anti-corruption Strategy to implement the government's stated zero tolerance policy for corruption.

It also suggested bringing the corrupt to justice irrespective of their status or identity and making institutions such as parliament, the judiciary, the ACC, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit, the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh and the National Board of Revenue more effective.

It also called for professional integrity and impartiality of public service providers, ensuring robust access to informa-

tion, and increasing space for citizens, the media, civil society and NGOs.

GLOBAL PICTURE

The three least corrupt countries in 2018 were Denmark, New Zealand and Finland with scores of 88, 87 and 85.

The bottom three countries are Somalia, Syria and South Sudan who scored just 10, 13 and 13.

None of the 180 countries surveyed scored 100, meaning corruption remains a major challenge for every country.

"With many democratic institutions under threat across the globe -- often by leaders with authoritarian or populist tendencies -- we need to do more to strengthen checks and balances and protect citizens' rights," said Patricia Moreira, managing director of the TI.

"Corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions and, in turn, weak institutions are less able to control corruption," she added in a statement.

METHODOLOGY

The CPI 2018 is a survey of surveys and the rating is based on findings by 13 international surveys -- rolling data for the period of Nov 2016 to Sept 2018.

Bangladesh's rating is based on findings by eight globally-reputable survey sources. At least three such surveys are required to be eligible for inclusion in the TI index.

No data generated by any of TI's local chapter was considered for the analysis or global rating.

The surveys used for rating Bangladesh are World Economic Forum-Executive Opinion Survey, Economist Intelligence Unit-Country Risk Assessment, World Justice Project-Rule of Law Index, Political Risk Service (PRS) International Country Risk Guide, Bertelsmann Foundation Transformation Index, Information Handling Services Global Insight Country Risk Ratings, World Bank-Country Policy and Institutional Assessment and Varieties of Democracy Project.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Implement Kofi Annan's suggestions

Unicef chief calls upon Myanmar

REUTERS, Yangon

The head of the UN children's fund urged Myanmar on Monday to implement the recommendations of a panel on the Rohingya crisis led by former UN head Kofi Annan, saying it had yet to create conditions right for the return of refugees from Bangladesh.

Speaking at a forum in the capital, Naypyitaw, Unicef executive director Henrietta Fore said children from the Rohingya Muslim minority, a persecuted and mostly stateless community from Buddhist-majority Myanmar, were living "a precarious and an almost hopeless existence" in camps in neighbouring Bangladesh.

About 730,000 Rohingya have fled Rakhine state, in western Myanmar, since a military crackdown in 2017 after Rohingya insurgents attacked security posts, UN agencies estimate. Tens of thousands remain behind in Rakhine, where they are subjected to restrictions on movement and have limited access to healthcare and education.

Fore said Myanmar's "commitment" to enacting the recommendations of Annan's committee -- which include ensuring freedom of movement and access to education -- would help mend the lives of suffering children.

"We urge the government to seize this moment and translate this potential into reality for all children," she said on the first visit by a Unicef head in decades. "Taking these steps will also go a long way towards creating the right conditions for the return of refugees from Bangladesh."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1