

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS

209 killed in last 6 months

Says report by journalists' platform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poor maintenance of level crossings and railway bridges by the authorities, among other issues, contributed to the rise in rail accidents that claimed 209 lives across the country in the last six months, says a report of a journalists' platform.

Shipping and Communication Reporters Forum (SCRF) prepared the report based on news published in 22 national dailies, 10 regional newspapers and eight online news portals and news agencies, said a press release issued on Wednesday.

Between January 1 and June 30 this year, at least 202 rail accidents happened, the report said. Of the victims, 47 were women and 21 children. Besides, 146 others were injured.

The SCRF identified five major reasons behind the rise in rail accidents -- use of mobile phones by pedestrians while crossing rail lines, lack of pedestrians' awareness, negligence of railway employees, poor maintenance of level crossings, and poor maintenance of rail lines and bridges.

According to the report, 46 accidents took place in February

alone, in which 43 people were killed and 22 others wounded.

One of the most fatal accidents was on June 23 when five people were killed and 67 others hurt as six carriages of Dhaka-bound "Upaban Express" from Sylhet went off lines at Baramchal in Moulvibazar's Kultura upazila.

Quoting media reports, SCRF President Ashis Kumar Dey said at least 13 rail bridges with "Dead Stop" signs are being used over 179km on Sylhet-Akhaura route, leaving thousands of passengers vulnerable to accidents.

The authorities have already put up "Dead Stop" signs at rail bridges instructing trains to stop first before crossing it and then run at a speed of only five km per hour, he added.

Earlier an AFP report on June 27, quoting rail police said at least 535 people were killed since 2010 after being hit by trains while wearing headphones on the rail lines in and around Dhaka.

The mostly unfenced railways of the South Asian country are notoriously dangerous, with around 1,000 fatal accidents or suicides every year, the report added.



Students of class-V having a warm meal at a classroom of Ruhita Govt Primary School in Bamna upazila of Barguna. The World Food Programme and local NGO Shushilan are implementing a project under which children of the poverty-stricken area get a meal in class.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh makes

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Goal-1: No Poverty.

Eight countries saw a significant reduction in their MPI values and a combined drop in the number of poor people from 1.1 billion to 782 million.

"The fastest absolute reductions in MPI value were in Bangladesh, India, and Cambodia, followed by Ethiopia and Haiti," the report said.

Ethiopia, India, and Peru significantly reduced deprivations in all 10 indicators, each in different ways.

Ethiopia made improvements in nutrition, school attendance, drinking water, and assets. India strongly improved assets, cooking fuel, sanitation, and nutrition. And Peru developed clean energy, electricity, housing, and assets.

Bangladesh and Cambodia reduced deprivations in nine indicators, Haiti reduced deprivations in eight and Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan reduced deprivations in

six indicators.

"In all 10 countries, rural areas are poorer than urban areas," it said. In Bangladesh and Democratic Republic of the Congo poverty fell at the same speed in rural and urban areas, it added.

"To fight poverty, one needs to know where the poor people live. They are not evenly spread across a country, not even within a household," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner.

Child poverty fell faster than adult poverty in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, India and Peru. But children fell further behind in Ethiopia, and their progress -- together with that of adults -- stalled in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan, the report said.

The MPI was developed in 2010 by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford and the Human Development Report Office of the UNDP for the flagship human development report.

Hunger pangs go, schools now fun

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combating micronutrient deficiency. Having meals at school must be a good attraction for the children."

HOW IT WORKS

Students get meals cooked at the school.

Cooks and class teachers serve the food twice if there are two shifts -- one around 11:45am at the end of first shift and another at 1:30pm during the tiffin period. In case of single shift, school meal is served once in tiffin period.

The project engages the local community, especially women, who cook food as well as monitor hygiene and supply vegetables needed for cooking khichuri.

A committee comprised of teachers, guardians, school managing committee members and representatives from NGO monitors the project.

Under the project, WFP is also financing salary of cooks -- one for every 60 students.

Maksuda Khanom, a cook at Ruhita

Government Primary School, said they start preparations for cooking khichuri for students at a kitchen on the school premises at 7:00am daily.

During a visit to the school on June 26, this correspondent found a clean kitchen.

"We always keep the kitchen neat and clean. They are our children. Their health is our first priority," she added.

A son of Maksuda studies at the school.

Students receive vegetable khichuri on four days, khichuri with egg one day and fortified biscuits on Thursday, when it's only half-day school.

WFP officials said students receive around 535 kilocalories from vegetable khichuri, around 640 kilocalories from khichuri with egg and about 340 from fortified biscuits.

"Because of the school meal programme, the attendance rate has increased and dropout rate decreased significantly at all 68 primary schools in Bamna where cooked food is served," Mofazzal Hossain, primary

education officer of Bamna, told The Daily Star.

The overall attendance rate in the upazila was 87 percent in 2013 and it increased to 96 percent last year. And the dropout rate came down to 1 percent last year, said Monirul Islam, project coordinator of Shushilan.

Abul Kalam Azad, vice president of Ruhita school management committee, said guardians and other locals now frequently visit the school to monitor the meal programme.

As part of the project, 30 to 40 designated female growers provide vegetables for the meal.

Rameda, one of the growers, said she earns about Tk 1,200 per month supplying vegetables to the school.

PROJECT TO EXPAND

Taking lesson from the pilot project, the government plans to expand the cooked meal programme to 16 upazilas of 15 districts from September, said Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain.

Over 4.10 lakh students of 2,100

primary schools will be benefited from the programme. These meals would be provided to students as part of the government-run School Feeding Programme, he said.

Project officials said they will provide khichuri on three days and fortified biscuits on other days for ensuring variety of foods.

Currently, the government provides fortified biscuits to students of primary schools in 104 upazila.

"We have a plan to provide cooked meals for all students in future," Akram-Al-Hossain added.

Education officials, however, said there are some challenges for introducing the meal programme across the country. Each school would need separate kitchen and storage capacity.

"Appointing cook for each school will be another issue," said an official.

Ruhul Amin Khan, project coordinator of School Feeding Programme, said they are aware of the challenges. "We will sit with NGOs to get a solution."

A miraculous rescue!

Bangladeshi vessel saves Indian fisherman floating in the Bay for 4 days

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

After being afloat for four days in the Bay, an Indian fisherman was rescued by a Bangladeshi cargo vessel on Wednesday.

Rabindranath Das, 25, had been afloat with the help of a piece of bamboo and jerrycans tied together.

"All the time while trying to survive amid heavy waves I kept praying but saw no ship or trawler around. Once I started losing my hope and then out of nowhere, I found a life jacket thrown by the crew of this ship and I got a second life," he narrated his ordeal in Chattogram yesterday afternoon.

Talking to reporters, Das, son of Madhu Mandal Das of Narayanpur village in South 24 Parganas' Kakdwip, said he, along with 14 others, left Kedua in fishing trawler FV Nayan-1 on the night of July 5 and was caught up in heavy storm the following morning. The trawler capsized.

He added that they all managed to keep afloat holding a bamboo that had 14 jerrycans tied to it for two or three days. But 13 of them were either washed away or had died one after another.

"I held my nephew Swapan until Wednesday morning but he was washed away only three hours before I was rescued by the crew of MV Jawad." Das could not hold back his tears.

The vessel, carrying 52,000 tonnes of cement clinker, arrived at the outer anchorage of Chattogram Port yesterday morning and later the fisherman was brought to Marine Academy jetty by a lighter vessel.

He was handed over to Patenga Police Station after health check-up. He would be sent to India after completing required procedures, said Meherul Karim, chief operating officer of KSRM Group that owns the vessel.

MV Jawad was on its way to Chattogram Port from Dhamra Port in India. The captain spotted the fisherman floating around 50 nautical miles off Kutubdia around 11:00am on Wednesday, Meherul added.

Captain SM Nasiruddin said, "The man had nothing but shorts on. His skin was completely pale bearing marks of fish bites."

'England must block out the noise'

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final appearance in 1992, when they lost against Imran Khan's Pakistan in Melbourne.

"We had a chat in the changing room (at Edgbaston) afterwards and realised we have not won anything yet," Bayliss told BBC radio.

"There is going to be a lot of noise around 'you guys are now the favourites', and all this type of thing -- we can't listen to any of that."

"We have just got to concentrate on the way we have gone about our

cricket over the past four years and what has got us to this point and go through our process."

After Australia were all out for 223 in 49 overs, England opener Jason Roy struck a superb 85 from 65 balls as he put on yet another big stand with Jonny Bairstow to break the back of the run chase.

Roy was fined for showing dissent at the umpire's decision after he was wrongly given out caught behind. Bayliss, though, feels the 28-year-old can soon put the incident behind him.

Heavy rain disrupts life in capital

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of places, the water receded in the afternoon when rain stopped.

At places, buses, cars and three-wheelers haphazardly inched forward throughout the day. Many of the vehicles broke down being stuck in water.

Traffic policemen, who were manning some important intersections, seemed helpless.

The sufferings of the people worsened due to road renovation and construction works of different projects, including Metro Rail, in different parts of the city.

On the other hand, rickshaw-puller charged high even for a very short distance, cashing in on the

situation.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rahman Mia, a service holder, said failing to get any bus, he hired a CNG-run auto-rickshaw from Mirpur-10 to attend a wedding in Dhanmondi.

However, the auto-rickshaw broke down in Kazipara area after the vehicle remained stranded in water for some time.

"I got down in the murky water and hired a rickshaw which took me to Agargaon. From there, I hired another auto-rickshaw and reached the wedding venue in that. I had to spend Tk 500 in total," he said, adding that the usual fare would be Tk 200-250.

Many city dwellers, using Rokeya

"I think it shows the passion Jason has got for the game, and it is such a big game as well, when he was on the verge of scoring a hundred," the England head coach said.

"He will learn from that and go on to bigger and better things, I am sure."

The Surrey batsman is expected to be in contention for a place in the Ashes squad but Bayliss was giving little away, keeping his focus on the one-day format.

Bayliss said the return of live international cricket to traditional

free-to-air television for the first time since the 2005 Ashes was "an opportunity to influence another generation of young cricketers."

The 56-year-old is set to step down at the end of his current deal in September, no matter what the summer brings.

"I have always been a believer that four or five years is long enough, whether you are doing well or not," he said. "It is time for a new voice for the boys, to hopefully take them to another level."

for an emergency work. "The water stinks. The roads are flooded whenever it rains for a while," he said.

Many shop-keepers said their businesses were hit hard by the waterlogging.

"Customers don't come unless it's an absolute emergency," said Akib Javed, who owns a grocery shop in Indira Road area.

Amzad Hossain, a resident of Nazimuddin Road, said, "We've been facing the problem [waterlogging] during monsoon every year. The authorities had promised us of solving it, but it has not happened yet."

"We want a solution. We can't bear it anymore," he added.

BSTI tests well below par

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"We tested milk against 19 parameters while the BSTI against only nine. In developed nations, milk is examined against 23 to 30 parameters," said Prof ABM Faroque, director of Biomedical Research Centre at Dhaka University.

The BSTI last set its standards for testing pasteurised milk 17 years ago in 2002 and that of powder milk 11 years ago in 2008, according to its officials.

Prof Faroque, also former dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, said the BSTI standards should be updated regularly because unscrupulous businesses always

tried to take advantage of loopholes.

Unveiling their research findings on June 25, he said the consequences of food contamination would be very costly.

Their study also found that nine other food items manufactured and marketed by some of the top brands in the country do not meet the BSTI standards. These items -- ghee, fruit drinks, turmeric powder, dry chilli powder, palm oil, mustard oil and soybean oil -- also contain ingredients harmful to human health.

The sample turmeric powders and fruit drinks, for example, contain

substances that can cause cancer.

Contacted, BSTI Director SM Ishaque Ali admitted they did not check the presence of antibiotics and pesticides in food items at the moment.

But the institution is gradually trying to bring the 72 compulsory food items in safety parameters that included toxic elements, antibiotics and heavy metals.

"We first have to incorporate safety parameters to detect antibiotics and pesticides in food items. After that we have to purchase some equipment to detect presence of those agents in

food," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Antibiotics in food items are a relatively new menace in Bangladesh and the BSTI is trying to address it, the official said.

"Often, the problem is not in the finished products. It's in the entire production process of milk. The livestock department has some role to play here."

Hireh Ranjan Bhowmik, director general of livestock services, said they had been campaigning to raise awareness among farmers of the consequences of applying excessive antibiotics on cattle and poultry.

Pakistan hosts

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kilometres (42 to 58 miles) plus a shorter time trial -- are much shorter than many other cycling events.

But there is one fundamental difference: the Pakistani Tour starts at 1,500 metres above sea level, and never stops climbing.

The final day of this year's event sums up the challenge.

Starting at 2,800 metres -- higher than the Iseran Pass, the summit of the Tour de France -- it ends at 4,700 metres, just over 100 metres short of Mont Blanc, Europe's highest mountain.

The Khunjerab Tour must become "an attraction... for the most daring and adventurous cyclists in the world", said Usman Ahmed, the top official for the northern Gilgit region, home to some of the planet's tallest peaks and where the race was held.

The cyclists' tyres swallow up the asphalt of the Karakoram Highway, one of the highest paved roads in the world.

Named after the Karakoram mountain range -- just one of the ranges in Gilgit -- the road passes through an extraordinary landscape.

Soaring, jagged peaks contrast with vertiginous ravines, glaciers driving a chill wind, and tumbling aquamarine rivers. Landslides are common.

Guardrails are a flimsy suggestion of protection from steep falls of hundreds of feet.

"There is no place in the world that offers all these things," said Ahmed.

"No doubt it is the toughest cycle race in the world. We are aiming to make it our trademark," said Haroon General, president of the Pakistan Cycling Federation.

"The most difficult part of the race is the final stage where cyclists face shortage of oxygen and there is risk of heart issues... At such an altitude a person falls down (faints) after running for 200 metres, but our cyclists travelled for almost 59 kilometres," he said.

Five ambulances were on standby in case of emergencies in the final stage, he said, adding: "A majority of the cyclists made it but the support staff needed ambulances."