



## Safety audit ignored in road projects

### Absence of such inspection in road construction and expansion to increase risk of accidents

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department is implementing most of its projects to turn two-lane highways into four-lane ones without safety audits, which, according to experts, is a major compromise on road safety.

The RHD has 12 projects to double the width of a total of 835 km of highways at a cost of Tk 64,746 crore. Safety audits were done at the design stage of only three.

The RHD itself did the audits for one project while the financiers did it for the other two.

During road construction, crucial safety measures are taken on the basis of audit findings. In the absence of that, these newly widened roads may become deadlier, said Prof Hadiuzzman, former director of Accident Research Institute of Buet.

Safety audits must be carried out by independent auditors in the



Eid holidaymakers boarded this launch, bound for Barishal, a couple of hours before its scheduled departure from Dhaka's Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday evening. With the Eid-ul-Fitr only a few days away, the rush of vacationers increased at the river terminal on the weekend.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Shab-e-Qadr tonight

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Qadr, also known as Lailatul Qadr, when the first verses of the holy Quran were revealed to Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), will be observed across the country tonight.

Muslim devotees will pass the night offering special prayers, reciting the holy Quran, seeking blessings of Allah for long life, peace and progress for themselves, their families, relatives, friends as well as the nation and the Muslim Ummah.

The next day (tomorrow) is a public holiday.

On the night, devotees usually visit graveyards to seek eternal blessings for the departed souls of their near and dear ones.

After Taraweh prayers, waz mahfil, milad, do-mahfil and special munajat will be organised at all mosques across the country, including the National Mosque.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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Road safety audit is necessary to identify potential safety risks and to reduce road crashes	Only 3 out of 12 ongoing 4-lane road projects involving Tk 64,746cr carried out with safety audit done at design stage	RHD has so far carried out safety audit on 1,055km roads, which is only 5% of 22,476km road network	Experts believe fault in road design, construction is a major reason behind road accidents in Bangladesh

design, implementation and post-construction phases, he added.

The RHD has carried out safety audits on only 1,055km roads, meaning over 95 percent of its 22,476km roads have never been audited.

Road safety audits are a systematic, formal, and thorough assessment that identifies potential risks on an existing or planned road and recommends measures aimed at reducing crashes.

The compromise on safety is happening at a time when the number of deadly crashes are rising every year.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, at least 5,024 people were killed in 5,425 crashes last year. Several road safety campaigners say the actual numbers are much higher.

Road design faults are a major cause of crashes, experts say. Road Transport Act-2018 recognises faults in road design, construction or maintenance as offences.

The RHD is updating its guideline for road safety audits. Once the preparatory work is done, the agency will launch a large-scale audit on roads, officials said.

As per the RHD Management Plan, RHD's Road Design and Safety Circle will do the audits on the national, regional, and major feeder roads and bridges.

According to Prof Hadiuzzman, widening the roads would accelerate socio-economic development, but it is unfortunate that safety audits are missing.

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## Six killed as train hits truck at level crossing

### The gateman was absent from duty, say police

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

At least six people were killed when a Chattogram-bound train rammed into a truck on a level crossing in Feni's Chhagalnaiya upazila yesterday.

As the gatekeeper was absent from his duty, the barrier was not lowered when the truck got onto the railway track at the level crossing between Fazilpur and Muhuriganj railway stations around 8:15am, police said.

The deceased were identified as Md Mizan, 32, of Barishal's Ujirpur upazila; Abul Khayer Miah, 40, and his son Ashiq, 14, of Cumilla's Laksham upazila; and Dil Mohammad, 23; Rifat, 17; and Sazzad, 18, of Cumilla's Chaudhagram upazila.

Mizan was driving the truck, while the other victims were train passengers riding on the outside of the locomotive, said Md Shah Alam, assistant sub-inspector of Feni Railway Police Camp.

Five people died on the spot while the other victim passed away while undergoing treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, he added.

"Dil, Rifat, and Sazzad, along with a few other friends, were on their way to Chattogram for Eid shopping. After the trio died on the spot, their friends took their bodies back to their village before

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## Joint drive against KNF begins today

### Police, Rab, army, BGB to take part in it; tensions run high in Thanchi after KNF-cops gunfight; 6 cases filed over bank robberies

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN and MONG SING HAI MARMA from Bandarban

Law enforcers along with army and border guards will start a joint operation against armed group Kuki-Chin National Front in Bandarban from today.

Rab and police will take part in the drive, during which the joint forces will aim to recover firearms and ammunition from the regional armed group known as KNF, Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said at a press briefing in Bandarban yesterday.

The operation comes after Thursday night's gunfights between police and members of an armed group who attacked the Thanchi Police Station.

Law enforcers say the attack and the three bank robberies were carried out by the KNF.

People of Bandarban's Thanchi upazila were gripped by fear following the gunfight, which came after armed gangs robbed three banks in Ruma and Thanchi upazilas in a span of 16 hours from Tuesday night and abducting the manager of one of the banks.

Thanchi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jasim Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday that members of the armed group have taken up position not far from the police station.

District police have added extra personnel in Ruma, Thanchi and RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

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## SOUTHERN ROUTES Bus operators charging extra ahead of Eid

### Passengers pay additional Tk 100-300 per ticket

DIPAN NANDY

Sirajul Islam, a businessman from Dhaka's Rayerbagh, was waiting for a BRTC bus in Fulbaria bus terminal area around 3:30pm yesterday. He would travel to Barishal with his wife and two sons.

He said he had to buy four tickets for Tk 800 each, up from the regular fare of Tk 600.

Like Sirajul, many other holidaymakers were seen waiting for buses in the terminal area. Many of them alleged that bus operators charged them extra fares due to the Eid rush.

Rashida Begum, who was waiting with her son and younger sister Aleya Begum, echoed Sirajul's complaint.

"I travel to Barishal every month by BRTC's air-conditioned buses for a fare of Tk 600. But today [yesterday] I had to pay an additional Tk 200 for each ticket," she said.

Asked about the complaint, Md Delwar, a ticket seller at the BRTC's Barisal bus counter, said, "We are charging passengers slightly higher fares because our buses are not having enough passengers on their return trips to Dhaka."

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## DENGUE MENACE Aedes control efforts not up to the mark

HELEMUL ALAM

The number of dengue patients will be higher this year than last year and most of the cases will be from outside Dhaka, said experts.

Last year, almost two thirds of the dengue patients were from outside Dhaka, yet steps are not adequate from the authorities concerned to control Aedes mosquitoes at the local level.

The country last year witnessed 1,705 dengue-related deaths and 3.21 lakh dengue cases, of which 2.11 lakh were from outside Dhaka.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 1,740 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country till April 4 this year and 1,135 of them were from outside Dhaka.

The trend of people being infected with dengue from outside Dhaka is high this year since the outbreak of the disease in 2000, data show.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star that the location of a patient should be identified to destroy the breeding places of Aedes mosquitoes, which would help prevent the dengue.

But it is not being followed properly outside Dhaka, said sources indifferent city corporations.

Bashar said as per their recent survey findings, the number of dengue cases is high this year and there will more cases outside Dhaka than last year.

"We are getting Aedes larvae in high densities outside Dhaka, and this is one of the main reasons that dengue cases will be at an all-time high this year."

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