

# Road traffic accidents in Bangladesh: A top public health issue?

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## Dear Editor,

Road traffic accidents (RTAs) are the leading cause of injury-related deaths globally. The road safety crisis has become a global epidemic comparable to diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis or HIV. About 1.35 million people globally die every year in road accidents, and more than one-fourth of these fatalities are estimated to happen in South Asia<sup>1</sup>. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank have noted that, by 2020, deaths from RTAs would become a main cause of mortality in many countries<sup>2</sup>.

There has been an alarming rise in road traffic accidents in Bangladesh over the past few years, which has become a national problem. Every day about eight people die in RTAs, but the actual rate of fatality is likely to be higher<sup>3</sup>. In 2019, at least 5227 people were killed and 6953 injured in 4702 road accidents across the country<sup>4</sup>, with accompanying increased healthcare costs for Bangladesh. Moreover, there is a shortage of traffic laws in Bangladesh, which has the lowest traffic law compliance rate compared to other countries in South Asia<sup>5</sup>. Bangladesh loses 1.2 billion pounds per year due to RTAs, which is equivalent to 2% of GDP and all of the foreign aid it receives annually<sup>6</sup>. Over 70% of poor households report that their household income and food consumption decreased and 61% were forced to arrange a loan after a road death in Bangladesh<sup>7</sup>. RTAs in Bangladesh have yet to get proper attention, which is alarming and the time has arrived to confront this challenge.

A common factor to reduce RTAs is the collection and use of comprehensive data. The interpretation of these data can lead to a better understanding of operational problems, accurate diagnosis of accident problems, and

the development of remedial measures. However, there is a lack of adequate research on RTAs in Bangladesh and more research is needed to identify the actual causes and ways to reduce RTAs.

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