



## Importance of car safety belts



TASNIM MEHBUBA BANDHAN

**T**he most significant development in motor vehicle crash safety to reduce deaths worldwide has been the installation and proper use of adult seatbelts and child restraint systems inside cars.

Road crashes are the 8th leading cause of death worldwide. The Global Status Report on Road Safety published by the World Health Organization in 2018 estimates that 1.35 million people die in traffic crashes each year and 20 to 50 million sustain



non-fatal injuries. 90% of deaths from road crashes, which are one of the major causes of mortality for people between the ages of 5 and 29, take place in low- and middle-income countries. The World Health Organization reports that every year, road crashes in Bangladesh result in the deaths of roughly 25,000 individuals; even more people develop disabilities. By taking precise actions, the number of fatalities and traffic crashes can be significantly decreased.

There are several reasons for the occurrence of road crashes. One of them is that not all car passengers are required to wear seat belts by law in Bangladesh.

Pedestrian negligence and the ability of the law to be enforced are other factors that contribute to road crashes. Being totally ejected from a car almost consistently results in death, yet being restrained during a collision may keep one safe and secure inside the car from fatal injuries. The seat belt could commonly prevent this from happening.

Without a seat belt, passengers run the risk of being thrown around the vehicle or out of it altogether. Seat belts, when worn properly, reduce the risk of death for front-seat passengers by 45% to 50% and the risk of minor and serious injuries by 20% and 40%, respectively, according to data from the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP). The study also demonstrates that rear seat belts have a 25% chance of preventing fatal and serious injuries and a 75% chance of preventing minor injuries for passengers in the back seats of a vehicle during an accident.

It should be emphasized that victims in more than half of all fatal car accidents don't seem to be properly restrained. Furthermore, when adults in the car buckle up their kids, it appears that they are doing so in 92% of the situations, but only in 72% of the cases when they don't. 22,215 passengers died in 2019, and 47% of them were not using seat belts. An estimated 14,955 lives were saved by seat belts in 2017 alone, and an additional 2,549 lives might have been saved if they had been buckled up. Naturally, seatbelts cannot avert a collision. However, they do make a considerable difference in reducing the severity of the inju-

ries incurred by drivers and passengers in crashes.

The passengers must respect the prescribed provisions for seatbelt fastening, according to sub-section (Kha) of the second half of section 49 of the current "Road Transport Act 2018" of Bangladesh. While seatbelt use is mandated in this section, the term "passenger" only applies to the person sitting in the front seat. However, backseat passengers sustain more injuries in road crashes. This is a serious issue that might put people in a far more vulnerable position. However, it is strongly recommended that this rule ensure that all drivers, including front- and rear-seat passengers, wear proper seatbelts. The driver and all other passengers must be held legally accountable if any passenger is not properly restrained by a seat belt. In 57% of the countries studied, laws requiring the wearing of seat belts by all passengers are in place, according to WHO research. Even more alarming is the fact that the percentage for low-income countries is substantially lower (only 38%). Additionally, child restraints are required for young children in high-income countries; only 20% of low-income countries have them (such as Bangladesh and Malaysia). In certain cars in lower-income countries, there aren't even passenger seat belts.

In conclusion, it is clear that a life with a disability cannot be sought if one is injured or unintentionally killed in a car crashes.

The seatbelt is an efficient safety device that not only saves lives but also considerably lessens the severity of any injuries that drivers and passengers of vehicles could have suffered had they not been restrained. To improve public understanding and compliance with seatbelt use across the country, more education is required. The competent authorities shall facilitate the use of suitable seatbelts and bring to light a child restraint system that is safe for use in motor vehicles.

*Dr Tasnim Mehbuba Bandhan, Advocacy Officer (Policy), Health Sector, Dhaka Ahsania Mission*