

Other Man made Disasters

Introduction

Man made disasters cover a wide range of events created largely due to accidents, negligence or sometimes even by human design, which result in huge loss of lives and property every year in South Asia. These include road, rail, river, marine and aviation accidents, oil spill, building and bridge collapse, bomb blast, industrial and chemical accidents etc. These also include the threats of nuclear, biological and chemical disasters.

At present there is no organized system for collecting data on man made disasters. EM-DAT does collect data on some technological disasters, but these do not cover the complete range of information on man made disasters. As per EM-DAT sources a total of only 21 technological disasters had affected the countries of South Asia killing 569 people, but road accidents alone had reportedly killed more than 135,000 people which is several times more than the total number of persons killed due to natural disasters.

Table 12.1 Technological disasters in South Asia in 2007 (Appendix-VI).

Country	Number of incidents	Number of Persons Killed
Afghanistan	1	40
Bangladesh	1	41
India	13	362
Nepal	3	61
Pakistan	2	65
Sri Lanka	1	
Total	21	569

Source: EM-DAT, The CRED International Disaster Database

As per estimate by World Health Organisation (WHO) by 2020 the road crash injuries will be the third highest threat to public health, outranking other serious public health problems such as tuberculosis, diarrhoeal diseases, HIV/AIDS and lower respiratory infections. In South Asia alone, road traffic fatalities are expected to increase from 135,000 in 2000 to 330,000 in 2020. 85 percent of the world's road deaths occur in developing countries - South Asia region has one fifth share in these fatalities.

South Asia has 20,000 km of rail length which is also vulnerable to different levels of rail accidents due to several technical and human causes. Although there were no major rail accidents in South Asia in 2007 except one in Pakistan which killed over 50 persons, there were sporadic occurrences of such accidents across South Asia which took a heavy toll of lives. Boat capsizes and drowning

cases, although few in 2007, are reminder of the fact that they can be avoided with very basic general awareness. Building and bridge collapses bring out the low standards of construction, engineering failure, lack of maintenance and lack of enforcement of law.

Bhopal gas tragedy is a grim reminder of the colossal damages that a single industrial and chemical disasters can bring to life and society. Although recurrence of such mega disasters has been prevented, minor accidents in manufacturing and transportation of hazardous materials do occur, which collectively take a heavy toll of lives in South Asia.

In the recent years serial bomb blasts in thickly populated urban areas by terrorist outfits have emerged as new and potent man made disasters that have claimed human lives and disrupted normal social and economic lives in several South Asian countries.

National governments of none of the South Asian countries publish such data on various man made disasters on a regular basis. Therefore it is very difficult to present a consolidated authentic information on man made disasters. A brief account of some of the man made disasters in the countries of South Asia in 2007 is presented in the following paragraphs.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is going through a transition period and its march towards normalcy is marked by a number of terrorist attacks claiming lives of several civilian and security forces. In one of the deadliest suicide strikes to hit Afghanistan since the Taliban were ousted in 2001, a Taliban bomber blew up a police bus in the heart of Kabul on 17 June 2007, killing 24 people. The blast tore apart a bus, inflicted injury on dozens of bystanders, and wrecked several other vehicles. In another incident on 6 November schoolchildren were among at least 40 people killed in a suicide attack in Baghlan, northern Afghanistan.

Pakistan

Road accidents

At least five people, including a woman, were killed and 16 others injured on 20 April 2007 when a passenger bus they were travelling in veered off the narrow hilly road and plunged into a ravine, near Balgran village, some 45 kilometres from Muzaffarabad. This was mainly due to negligence of the driver who was also killed in the accident. According to witness, many passengers were tossed out of the ill fated vehicle before it finally struck the ravine, hundreds of feet down the hilly road. On 15 June 2007, at least 13 passengers were killed when a bus fell into a deep ravine in northwest Pakistan near Jandola town, in the tribal district of South Waziristan, on the Afghan border. On 23 August, six passengers were killed while 15 others sustained serious injuries in collision between a bus and a wagon on GT Road near Glaxo Factory in Renala Khurd. Reports said that the Lahore-bound bus crashed into the wagon heading towards Okara while saving a motorcyclist.

Rail accidents

In a major train accident on 19 December 2007, at least 50 people died and more than 100 people were injured when a passenger train, packed with holiday travellers, ploughed off the tracks

between Karachi and Lahore in Pakistan. Hours after the accident, victims were said to be still trapped in at least three of the 15 coaches that hurtled off the track. Doctors and aid workers struggled to cope with the large numbers of casualties. Local people came in hundreds to help, carrying the injured away on rickshaws, motor-scooters and donkey carts. Police said rescuers were fighting darkness and bitter cold and did not have sophisticated tools to cut open the carriages or sufficient torches to help them work. The incident has highlighted the inadequacy of response mechanism, which was believed to be much better due to government initiatives after Kashmir earthquake of 2005.

In another avoidable incident, at least eight persons have been killed and over 30 injured in a train accident in southern Pakistan on Sunday (28 January 2007), while going to attend a religious congregation at Rohri. They were electrocuted by live wires while travelling on the rooftop of a passenger train coming from Rawalpindi. This accident occurred near Shikarpur town, 414 km (259 miles) from Hyderabad city. Such travelling on rooftop of crowded train and bus are common in Indian sub-continent and in many occasion lead to fatal accidents.

Bomb explosions

The year 2007 has been one of political unrest, gun battle and suicide bomb blast in Pakistan. Numerous lives have been lost, including that of Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister in widespread violence across the country. There has been increase in violence resulting in the death of thirty people in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the tribal region due to suicide bombings, roadside explosions, ambushes and rocket attacks since July 3 — the day the Lal Masjid operation began. Twenty-four soldiers were killed and 26 others wounded in North Waziristan on 14 July 2007 after a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-packed car into a convoy of the Frontier Constabulary.

At least 49 people, 28 of them law-enforcement agencies' personnel, were killed and 96 others injured in a string of suicide bombings in Swat and Dera Ismail Khan districts on 15 July 2007. Two suicide bombers struck two localities in the high-security zone in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on 4 September, killing 27 people and injuring more than 80 others.

Over 125 participants of a procession led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto upon her return to the country lost their lives on the night of 18 October after two powerful blasts rocked the slow-moving motorcade edging its way past the Karsaz bridge, on Sharea Faisal. At least 100 people were injured in explosions.

In a most tragic incident in 2007 in South Asia, an assassin's bullet killed Benazir Bhutto on 27 December in what the government described as a gun-and-bomb suicide attack immediately after the former Prime Minister had addressed an election rally of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) at Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh park. The attack targeted Pakistan's most prominent Opposition leader and killed at least 21 other people and wounded about 60.

Nepal

Road Accidents

Road accidents in Nepal take hundreds of lives each year. These are mainly bus accidents, blamed mostly on careless driving and overcrowding in buses. Accidents in Nepal are also due to poorly maintained vehicles, bad roads condition and non compliance of traffic rules. Most of the roads in the mountainous areas are narrow, have no guard rails or any other protection. It is important to note that in most of the accidents professional drivers are involved; therefore, general awareness and simple adherence to road safety measures can reduce such accidents to a great extent.

At least 13 people were killed on 27 February when a passenger bus fell off a mountain highway and plunged into a river in south-western Nepal. The bus, on its way from Kathmandu to Birjung on the Indian border, fell about 30 metres into Trishuli River at Dahakhani village, about 100 km south of the capital. At least 25 others were injured in the accident, 12 of them seriously. The cause of the accident remained unclear but it was suspected that the driver was travelling too fast on the narrow mountain highway.

Eight persons died when a bus plunged into the icy Bhote Koshi river on 16 August after the driver lost control of the bus when its suspension failed. The bus was on its way to Kathmandu from the Nepal-Tibet border town of Tatopani. At least 17 people died and many others were reported missing in two separate road accidents in central and western Nepal on 17 August. According to the police, nine people died when a bus skidded off a mountain highway in Gulmi district, about 350 km west of the Nepalese capital Kathmandu.

On 20 August, a crowded bus veered off a mountainous road in western Nepal, killing at least 19 people, near Deurali village, about 200 km west of the capital, Kathmandu. The bus was overcrowded and the rural mountain road on which it was travelling was slippery after two days of rain. It rolled about 200 metres from the road before coming to a halt at the bottom of the mountain.

Boat and Bridge accidents

On 5 September, a boat carrying about 40 people capsized in a river in western Nepal, near the Indian border, causing confirmed drowning of three persons and 25 missing after the accident in the Banke district. The accident occurred when the crowded boat was crossing the Rapti river, which had been swollen by monsoon rains, near Nepalgunj.

At least 15 people were killed and hundreds missing feared dead on 25 December after the collapse of a suspension bridge due to excess weight across Bheri River, near Chunchu village in western Nepal, when 300-400 local people crowded on to it on their way to a religious festival. Rescuers helped about 40 people swim to safety and about 150 others managed to reach the shore on their own. The Nepalese Army, Armed Police Force, Nepal Police and Nepal Red Cross Society were mobilised, along with several helicopters to search for survivors. The remote location of the bridge, about 240 miles from the capital, Kathmandu, delayed some of the relief efforts.

Bomb explosions

At least nine people, including five from a family died in a bomb explosion at Bhutuke village, Kothari VDC in Palpa on 29 May. According to the police, the bomb is believed to be one among the many others hidden inside the houses from the time of the decade-long Maoist insurgency. Serial bomb blasts at 5 different locations occurred on 2 September in Kathmandu, killing 2 persons and injuring 25 persons. This occurred when students were returning from the school and many office-goers were returning from office, and all these blasts occurred in crowded locations.

India

Road Accidents and Stampede

Road accidents are common in India due to reckless driving, untrained drivers and poor maintenance of roads and vehicles. According to Lifeline Foundation, the Ahmedabad based organization working for road safety, India accounts for 13 per cent of road accident fatalities worldwide. With 130,000 deaths in 2007, India tops in the number of people killed in road accidents, surpassing China's 90,000. Most of these deaths occurred due to bad road designs and lack of proper traffic management systems to separate different streams of traffic. The following are some of the major accidents that occurred in 2007 across the country as reported by media.

On 1 February 2007, twelve persons, including 11 women were killed and 17 others injured in a head-on collision between a truck and a tanker on the Rewari-Mahendergarh, Rewari, Haryana. On 26 February 2007, 13 Army persons and 4 civilians were killed when a bus fell into a ditch, 12 km from Udhampur. On 12 March 2007, at least 18 people were killed and 28 injured when a bus carrying a marriage party fell into a deep pit at Nauliband area while coming from Ghaingharkhaal village, Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand.

Tragedy struck a 20-member group of quarry workers from Jagadapur in Chhattisgarh on 15 April when the sand-laden lorry in which they were travelling skidded off the road at Nagulachervu village near Chandragiri, killing five on the spot. Another worker succumbed to injuries shortly after admission to the Government General Hospital, Tirupati.

In a tragic incident, 29 persons were killed and 14 others were injured in an accident due to collision of a state transport bus and a chemical tanker in Anand district, Gujarat on 14 May. Eleven schoolchildren sustained injuries in two separate road accidents in New Delhi on 17 July. In Hyderabad, a 16-year-old boy was among five persons killed when a lorry collided with the tractor in which they were travelling at VNR College in Dundigal on the night of 16 April. Over 15 others suffered injuries.

At least 22 members of a wedding party were killed when their vehicle crashed into a truck in India's southern state of Andhra Pradesh on 14 May. In a major and gory road accident, eight persons, including three children were killed when a lorry laden with glass scrap overturned and fell into a roadside ditch at Ulindakonda, 25 km from Kurnool town on 2 September.

Villages in Rajasthan's Rajsamand district are in a state of shock after 85 people from the district were killed in a road accident while they were on a pilgrimage. The accident occurred on 7 September 2007, when a truck carrying about 150 pilgrims, mostly from poor families, fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge in Desuri, about 150 km from Udaipur in southern Rajasthan.

Stampede

On 14 October, at least 20 people were killed and over 20 injured in a stampede at the famous Durga temple in Gujarat's Panchmahal district during the heavy rush of pilgrims for the Navaratri festival. The stampede occurred early morning at the hilltop Mahakali temple in Pavagadh, about 150 km from Ahmedabad, when a large number of devotees gathered to offer prayers on the third day of the Hindu festival of Navaratri. Over 100,000 devotees were present in the temple complex at the time of the stampede, which took place on the Patia Pul, a narrow path that leads to the shrine. As people climbed up the path to get into the temple, they jostled with those who were climbing down. This led to the stampede.

Rail Accidents

Eight persons, travelling in an unauthorised manner in the brake van of a goods train, heading to Panipath from Barwadi, were killed and seven injured when it derailed and fell into a rivulet in Jharkhand. The brake van, the guard van and the two wagons at the rear end of the coal-laden train derailed on 12th January night when it was crossing a small bridge.

Nine village administrative officers of Vellore district and two others were killed when a train hit the van in which they were travelling, at the Agaram unmanned level crossing under Chengalpattu-Arakonam railway section near Kancheepuram on 16 April.

Nearly 30 people were injured, five critically, when the Kanpur-bound 2308 Jodhpur-Howrah Express derailed at the Juhi yard, about 10 km from the Kanpur Central Station, on 7 August. There were no casualties. In another incident, one person was killed and 49 injured after 14 bogies of the Delhi-bound Brahmaputra Mail derailed near New Jalpaiguri in West Bengal on 10 December.

Boat Accidents

On 18 January 2007, 64 persons were killed when an overcrowded boat sank in the Krishna river in Andhra Pradesh's Mahabubnagar district. This accident occurred when a boat carrying 83 people against its capacity of 35 sank in the backwaters of the Srisaillam dam. Mechanised boats in the area had rescued 19 persons immediately. On 20 February 2007, 38 school children were drowned when a school picnic turned into tragedy as 50 students and teachers, none wearing life jackets, were packed on a boat designed to carry no more than 35 people, tipped into the Periyar river in Kerala. In another incident, about 80 people are feared to have been drowned after a boat capsized near Shahpur Patori in the Samastipur district of Bihar on 16 April 2007. The boat was on its way to Samastipur from Patna with 100 people on board when this mishap occurred. At least 10 persons reportedly swam to safety and rescue operations were undertaken to save others. Another boat accident in the East Champaran district claimed the lives of five women and a child. In another tragic incident, at least 28 people were drowned when a boat filled with people and their

belongings attempting to flee an inundated Harkapur village in Uttar Pradesh's Maharajganj district bordering Nepal sank in strong river currents of Rohini river on 1 August 2007.

Building and bridge collapse

Building collapses are frequent in India where construction is often hastily done, with little regard for safety regulations, particularly in the western part of the country.

In a tragic incident, at least eight labourers died when a building collapsed in the town of Allahabad, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh on 10 January 2007. Dozens of workers were trapped in the rubble of the multi-storeyed building which was under construction. The Army was called to help with the rescue work. In another incident, a four-storied building collapsed in Surat on 10 May 2007 but there were no casualties as the fire brigade evacuated the occupants in time.

The Surat Municipal Corporation started an investigation into the collapse of the building, constructed in the early 1980s, and preliminary investigations revealed that the structural engineering of the building was not up to the mark; additionally, two large hoardings atop the building may have also exerted pressure on its foundation, leading to its collapse.



Figure 13.1: A building collapsed in Surat, India; however no casualty occurred as the fire brigade had evacuated the occupants in time.

At least 26 people were killed and 15 others injured when a seven-storied building collapsed in Borivali, Mumbai on the night of 18 July. Mumbai authorities routinely demolish shoddy buildings ahead of the monsoon rains but this building was not listed as dangerous.

At least 20 people, including eight children, were killed and 21 others were injured when a portion of a four-storied building named 'Dutt Niwas' in south Mumbai collapsed in the wee hours of 13 August 2007. Rescue efforts were hampered by narrow lanes leading to the site as well as rains. Many residents on the higher floors of the building survived while those on the lower floors were not so fortunate and were trapped under the rubble. The tenants of the building, which was 70 to 75 years old, had been asked by Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority to evacuate in 2007 due to its dilapidated condition. However, the people had ignored the advice and were living in the building and thus paid a heavy price.



Figure 13.2 : An unidentified person who survived the collapse of a building, being pulled out of the rubble by firemen in Borivli, in suburban Mumbai, India.

In another incident, on 11 August, five persons died and 20 others were injured, four of them seriously, after an under-construction 4-storeyed transit camp building of the Slum Rehabilitation

Authority collapsed in the Shimpoli area of Borivali (West), Mumbai. According to the police, the structure collapsed even as work was in progress, trapping the workers and some residents in the debris.

13 persons were killed, including three women and a nine-year-old boy when the 30-year-old, three-storied building, which housed 24 flats, collapsed at Ukkadam, Coimbatore, following heavy rains on 19 October.



Figure 13.3 : Rescue workers toiled through the night, often pulling aside chunks of masonry with their bare hands, in an attempt to find survivors at the scene of the building collapse in Mumbai.

On 9 September, a highway overpass under construction in Hyderabad collapsed, killing at least 20 people. The overpass was being built to connect the city's posh Banjara Hills residential neighbourhood to Panjagutta, a busy commercial area in the city. Witnesses said enormous concrete slabs from the structure collapsed, crushing several pedestrians trying to take shelter from the rain, as well as vehicles on either side.

Bomb Explosions

At least 67 people were killed and 50 injured when two firebombs went off on the New Delhi-Wagah Samjhauta Express just before midnight on 18 February. Most of the dead, including three children, were Pakistani citizens on their way back home.



Figure 13.4 : The Delhi-Wagah Samjhauta Express in flames after explosions rocked it near Panipat, Haryana, before midnight on 18 February, killing 67 persons.

In Hyderabad, as many as 14 persons were killed and over 50 others injured in a bomb blast in the historic Mecca Masjid and in the subsequent police firings in the nearby areas on 18 May. The bomb exploded at around 1:30 p.m.

when thousands of people were gathered in the mosque for Friday prayers. The police also recovered two unexploded bombs from the vicinity of the mosque.

Two explosions within minutes, one at an amusement park in front of the State Secretariat and another at a popular eatery in the busy Koti area, left at least 34 people dead and more than 50 injured in Hyderabad city on 25 August. Another unexploded bomb was found in the Dilsukhnagar

locality late in the night. Explosions rocked Lumbini Park, abutting the Hussainsagar lake and in front of the Secretariat main gate, and at Gokul Chat, a popular eatery in the busy Koti area in central Hyderabad, leaving 34 dead and scores injured.

A bomb exploded at the Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti dargah on 11 October, tearing apart the solemn assembly of the devout just as evening fell and officials began preparations for iftaar to end the day's Ramzan fast. Two persons died on the way to hospital and 17 were injured, five of them seriously. Investigators found splinters of a mobile phone at the spot, which, they said, pointed to similarities with the explosions at the Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad in May where the two bombs were triggered by a mobile phone. The shrine houses the tomb of the 13th-century Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti who came to Ajmer from Persia in 1192. The shrine is extremely popular among both Muslims and Hindus. The explosion caused a stampede in which some people were also injured.



Figure 13.5 : Bodies lie strewn at Lumbini Park in Hyderabad after a powerful bomb explosion on the night of 25 August night.

Bhutan

In Bhutan, road accidents are frequent, due to narrow width of roads in the mountainous region. More than 75 per cent of all road accidents in Bhutan occurred on the Asian Highway, due to traffic of more than 850 vehicles per day on this road compared to its design capacity of about 100 vehicles per day. The problem is also aggravated by unstable slope conditions. At many places, landslides directly or indirectly influence road accidents.

Bangladesh

Road accidents

Road accidents are very common in Bangladesh. A recent study concluded that the actual number of road deaths in Bangladesh in 2004 was 12,786, and the number of such deaths are increasing due to a variety of factors such as, (i) rapid increase in the number of vehicles, (ii) more paved roads leading to higher speed, (iii) inconsistent road-use environment, lack of signs and markings and road surface, (iv) poor-driving and road use knowledge, skill and awareness, (v) poor traffic management and enforcement, (vi) lack of appropriate road safety interventions and (vii) poor medical services.

In one of the most tragic incidents, at least 41 people were killed when an overloaded bus, speeding towards Chittagong, lost control 20 km from Comilla town and fell into a ditch and burst into flames at Suwagazi on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway on 6 January 2007.

At least 13 people were killed in separate road accidents in Munshiganj, Manikganj, Tangail, Netrakona and Sherpur during 14-15th April. Police said two people were killed when a bus rammed a rickshaw at Kakoldi in Sirajdikhan upazila on 15th morning. An unidentified man was killed and five others were injured when an ambulance hit an auto-rickshaw at Tin Dokan in Lauhajang upazila. Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Manikganj on 14th April. A child was run over by a speeding bus while he was crossing the road at Golora area on Dhaka-Aricha highway. Five people died and 50 others were injured, 41 of them seriously, in a road accident on Netrakona-Mymensingh Road in Phulpur upazila on 20th April morning. Police and local people said that the accident occurred when a Mymensingh-bound passenger bus from Netrakona skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Khicha.

At least 37 people were killed and some 150 were injured in road accidents in the capital and elsewhere in the country during 13-17 October 2007. A student of Tejgaon College was killed when a bus rammed into his private car near Khilgaon over bridge at about 3:00 p.m. A student of Govt Bangla College, Mirpur died as a CNG-run three-wheeler hit her on Mirpur Road the same day, while another person was killed in a road accident in the city on October 12. An unidentified man died and two others were injured when a private car ran over some people waiting in front of Zia International Airport at around 3:00 p.m. on 14 October, while another unidentified man was killed as a private car hit him when he was crossing the road at West Agargaon in Dhaka. One person was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Dohar road on October 12, while an unidentified man was killed in another road accident at Basabo on October 13. An eight-year-old child died in an accident in Sadar Upazila of Narayanganj, while another unidentified man was run over by a bus at Jatrabari in the capital on October 13.

Rail accidents

At least four persons were killed and about 50 were injured when five carriages of an inter-city train jumped of the tracks in south-eastern Bangladesh on 13 October. The Probhati Express, which was travelling from the port city of Chittagong with more than 600 passengers on board, derailed at Baratakai, 280 km short of the capital, Dhaka. Most of the dead and injured had been travelling on the roof of the train, which was packed with passengers heading home for the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday.

About 20 passengers were injured as three compartments of a local train derailed near Akhanagar Railway Station under Thakurgaon Sadar upazila on 15 April 2007. The derailment of Thakurgaon-bound train occurred due to poor condition of railway tracks and sleepers. Another derailment occurred at about 1:30 p.m. near Sholoshahar Railway Station causing immense sufferings to thousands of city-bound students and others passengers.

Bomb explosion

On 31 January, a policeman was killed and another injured in a bomb attack north of the Bangladesh capital. Three near-simultaneous explosions rocked railway stations in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet on 1 May, injuring many persons.

Building and bridge collapse

At least one person was killed and about 50 workers injured when the roof of a 22-storeyed building collapsed in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka. In another incident, at least three people were killed and nearly 100 injured in Bangladesh on 24 November when a road bridge packed with hundreds of cyclone survivors waiting for food aid collapsed into a river. The bridge in Kalapara village in Patuakhali district gave way beneath the crowd of people who were hoping for the arrival of vehicles with food and other relief after the country's deadliest cyclone in 16 years.

At least four workers were killed and about 50 others were injured when the roof of a 22-storeyed building collapsed as it was being demolished in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, on 8th December. An unspecified number of workers were also believed to be trapped inside the Rangs Building, which was one of the tallest in Bangladesh's capital. City development authorities had opted to demolish the building manually rather than with explosives, providing temporary jobs to hundreds of workers in the city with high unemployment. Demolition work had begun months ago. The government formed a committee to investigate the cause of the collapse and offered to pay compensation to the families of the victims.

Sri Lanka

Road accidents and drowning

In one of the most tragic road accidents in Sri Lanka, twenty-three persons were killed and over 60 injured when a giant beer container truck crashed into a SLTB bus at Keikawela in Induruwa, Kosgoda in the early hours of 10 April 2007. The victims included eight women and two children who were among the 20 passengers burnt to death after both vehicles caught fire following the collision. An eyewitness said most passengers choked to death as a result of smoke inhalation well before the flames reached all parts of the bus.

The accident occurred when the truck coming from the direction of Colombo lost control of the vehicle, which veered off the road and crashed head-on into the incoming bus. The fire is believed to have been ignited as a result of a fuel leak coupled with gas, which emanated from the beer container following the impact, which overturned the bus. Preliminary investigations revealed the accident occurred as a result of the truck driver's negligence. It has been disclosed that he had come to Colombo around 1 a.m. and headed back to Galle again.

In another tragic incident four Sri Lankan refugees, including two women drowned in the sea in the early hours on 11 April 2007, in Indian waters off Palk Strait when their fibreglass boat capsized, apparently in rough weather.

Bomb Blast

At least 18 people were killed in Sri Lanka on 28 November 2007 in two bomb attacks by Tamil Tiger rebels. A powerful parcel bomb exploded outside a clothing store on the outskirts of the capital Colombo, killing 17, wounding 43 others and leaving the street littered with body parts. The attack came just hours after a disabled female suicide bomber blew herself up outside the office of a Tamil government minister, killing his secretary and injuring two security guards.

One soldier was killed and six others, including three civilians were injured when the LTTE detonated a claymore mine targeting an Army bus in Reclamation Road, Pettah. The bus was taking soldiers relieved from their duties on guard points to the Mattakkuliya army camp when it was caught in the claymore explosion around 8.55 a.m. on 25 May 2007.

Maldives

The islands, famed for their tranquillity, came under attack with an explosion outside the main mosque in the capital, Male, that left 12 people injured. The bomb was triggered by a homemade device using a mobile phone and washing machine motor attached to a gas cylinder.



Figure 13.6 : Security Forces personnel at the site of the claymore blast in Pettah.

Industrial Accidents

It has been estimated that globally 2.2 million people die every year due to occupational hazards or work-related accidents. While the number of work-related illnesses and deaths has come down in the industrialized countries, the number of accidents - in particular fatal accidents - appears to be increasing, particularly in some Asian countries due to poor working conditions, rapid development and strong competitive pressures of globalization. The majority of the workforce lacks legal or preventive safety or health measures, accident or illness compensation and has no access to occupational health services. In several countries, more than half of the retirements of the work force are based on early retirements and disability pensions rather than workers reaching the normal retirement age. No comprehensive data base on industrial accidents is available in the South Asian countries. Therefore reliance has been placed on the reports on industrial and work related accidents that were published during the year.

In Afghanistan it was reported that the fur and wool industry is vulnerable to virulent microbes, which harm the respiratory system and cause chest infections. Several women workers of the wool and fur factories in Herat have died in 2007 due to respiratory diseases and chest infections. These factories produce coats, jackets, hats and other garments for the European and North American markets.

According to a Survey Report of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, at least 435 working people were killed and 1,176 injured in different types of occupational accidents in 2007. The highest number of casualties was in the construction sector, followed by marine accidents.

In Pakistan, Aabegum, Souranj, Sharag and Harnai coal mines collapsed due to torrential rains in the first week of July 2007, leaving 40,000 labourers marooned due to the flood in mining areas.

In India 1200 industrial accidents were reported during the year, the majority of which happened in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The most hazardous industries included mining, construction and chemical factories. As per the Annual Report of Ministry of Labour and Employment, in 2007, 725 mining accidents caused the death of 125 and injury to 630 workers.

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