

Bus Accident on M4: At least 18 passengers charred to death and 15 injured, near Pindi Bhattian

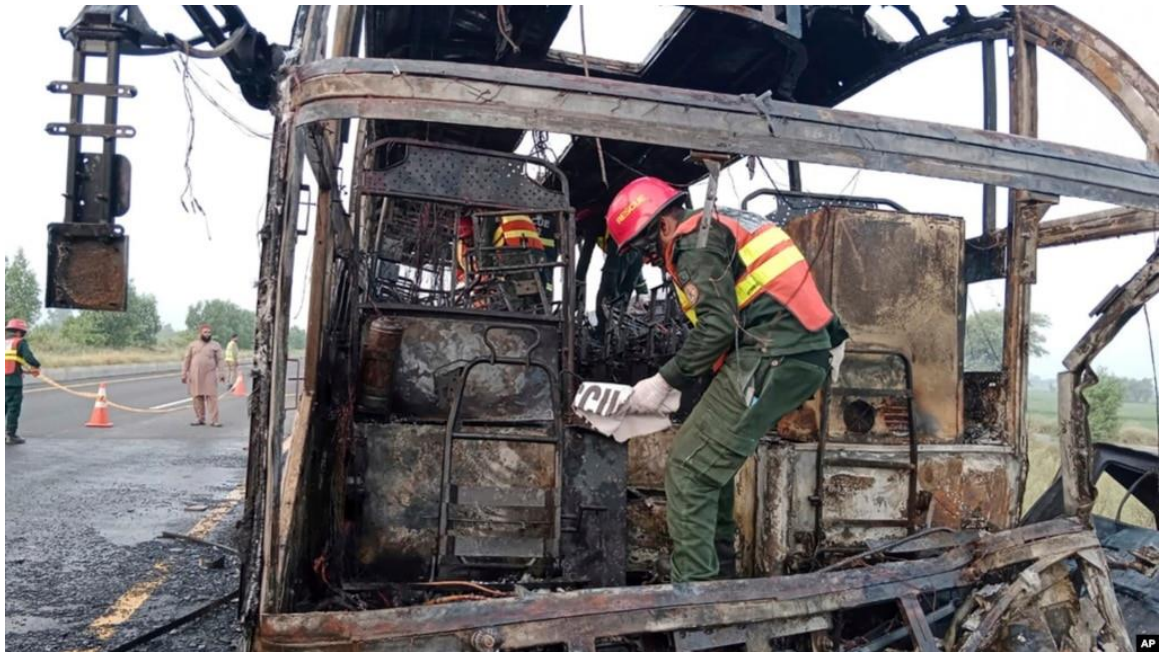


Figure 1: Image courtesy AP

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PG. 1

Bus Accident

PG. 4

Cable-Car
Accident

PG. 8

Upcoming Event

PG. 9

Join PSCE

Rizwan Mirza, CE
Editor-in-chief

On wee hours of Sunday, 20th August, 2023, at 4:30 am, at least eighteen bus passengers were charred to death and fifteen injured – some seriously – after an Islamabad bound bus caught fire, after hitting a pick-up, on motorway M4, 7 km from Pindi Bhattian. Pindi Bhattian is one of the two tehsils of district Hafizabad. Most of the passengers were asleep at that time.

The inferno engulfed the bus, while the fire raged for hours. The only survivors were those who were pulled out by locals by breaking the window glasses or themselves broke the glasses and jumped out. Some of the dead were burnt, beyond recognition, making DNA-based recognition a potential course of action.

The fateful bus had begun its 1401 km journey at Karachi, Sind, generally taking 1116 hours and 26 minutes of driving time. Thirty-three passengers were on board.

The attached map shows the location of accident on the highway map of Pakistan.

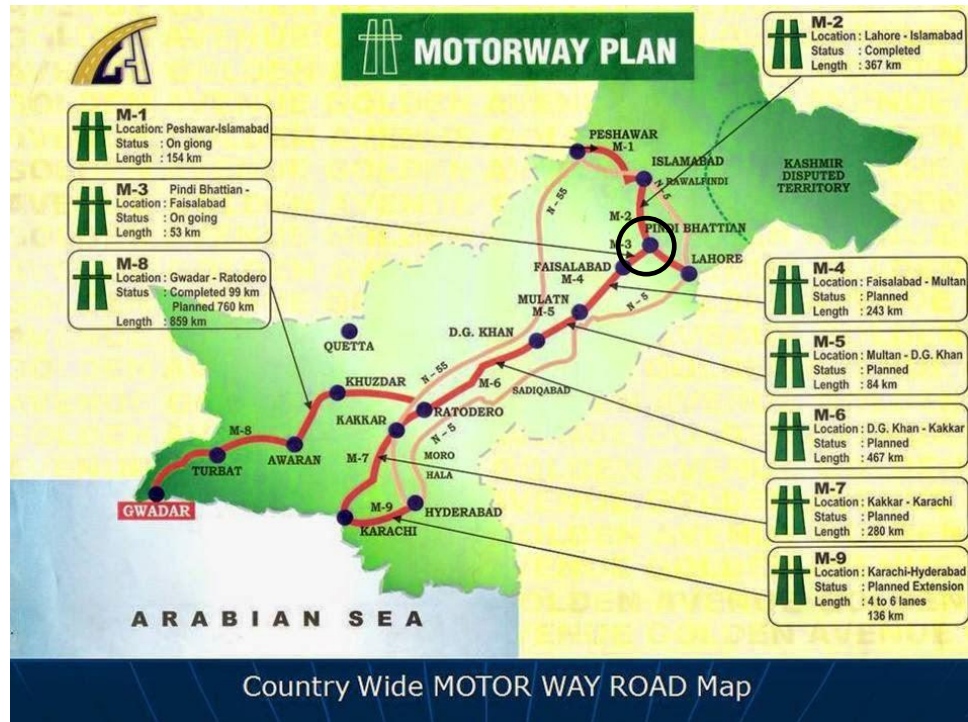


Figure 2: NHA's motorway map

The Pindi Bhattian-Multan Motorway M4 is a section of highway that traverses 309 km and has two to three lanes on each side of the median, at various locations. It connects several cities in the province of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Shorkot and Khanewal.



Along its length, the M-4 expressway has more than a dozen interchanges, connecting some of Pakistan's major road linkages, such as the M-5, M-2, and M-3 motorways.

According to accounts of the accident, the van was carrying diesel drums. The police authorities say that the fire may be the result of a short-circuit. Police authorities also say that the cause of accident was driver error.



Figure 3: A horrifying view of the bus

Whatever the cause, we have failed as a nation to ensure safe highway travel. Train travel has been equally unsafe.

As PSCE has repeated stated, each accident needs to be professionally investigated and findings made public. The team must include mechanical engineers, specialising in automobiles and transportation engineers and must be headed by an engineer.

The fact that the real causes of each accident are either never determined or are buried under files, beyond public access and guarded like issues of national security. This attitude is not contributing to the safety of the road-users. The facts related to railway accidents do meet a different fate.

It would be fair to say that truth is the first victim of all highway and railway accidents.

The number of accidents in the country has assumed alarming proportions. The existing safety mechanisms have been proven to be seriously flawed.

Cable Car Failure

Rizwan Mirza, CE
Editor-in-chief

A makeshift cable car, designed and fabricated by a local mechanic, and managed privately, was came to a halt at roughly the middle of its 600-meter span at a height of around 275-meter from the ground below. The cause of the failure has been reported to be snapping of a wire rope. The car underwent a rotational movement as one wire-rope broke. Eight stranded persons, included six school children and two teachers.



The ordeal began at roughly around 7:00 am to 8:30 am when eight persons boarded the fateful cable car to reach their school located at a hill top, across the valley.



Figure 4: Image courtesy AFP

The date of 22nd August, 2023. The location is Battagram, KPK, Pakistan, 200 km, north of Islamabad. The cable car has been proposed as a solution for connecting communities of 30 to 40 houses living on each side of the Jahangir Khor stormwater stream, as the pedestrian root on ground is tiring and very time-consuming, taking around two hours. Around 150 students commute through the cable car on all week days.



As the fate the travellers hung in balance, Pakistan Army and Air force were reportedly called for help but a straightforward helicopter operation became very hazardous due to windy weather and also as the wind waves generated by the helicopter blades subjected the car to severe shaking as the helicopters drew nearer. Besides, there was a real danger of accidentally hitting the cables above the one with which the car is presently hanging. A charity organisation was also assisting the military. As a last restore special services group of Pakistan army has been called in to handle the situation.



Figure 5: Image courtesy VOA

Finally, the team did succeed in rescuing five students and one teacher by throwing wire-ropes at the car from a distance and lifting one passenger at a time.



Figure 6: Image courtesy AFP

That cheap engineering is always costly has been proven to hilt by the present accident. But for the specialised training of the special services group of Pak Army, all precious lives may have been lost.



Figure 7: Image courtesy VOA

There is a lesson to be learnt here. The cable car was a non-engineered local contrivance. Apparently, there was inadequate or no maintenance, especially that of wire-ropes. There may well be other flaws which may be determined after a proper forensic structural and mechanical engineering investigation. We note that hue and cry is now being raised by everyone, after the incidence. But this is a myopic approach. We need a more informed and proactive professional decision-making process, in place, in order to guard public safety.

For civil engineers, this is a familiar example of history repeating itself. As time would pass by, this incident would be lost into oblivion and life would return to normal till such time, that God forbid, another accident takes place.

Needless to add that this is not the only makeshift cable car running in the country. The decision-making and controls are not in the hands of trained and competent structural and mechanical engineers. One does not need to be a genius to see the results. Even if laws are made to regulate cable cars, issue of enforcement would still remain highly questionable. At the moment, we pray for the safe rescue of the remaining people and keep our finger crossed waiting for action targeted at minimising the risk of repetition of such failures in future.

Today, it is a cable car. In the past, we have seen bridges meeting the same fate. Buildings have collapsed. Sign boards have been blown away by wind. But the life goes on.

Pakistan Society of Civil Engineers is ready to play its role, if called upon to do so by the government. It has amongst its fold very experienced practicing engineers duly qualified to address the issue.



Upcoming Event



Pakistan Society of Civil Engineers

Licensed, by the Pakistan Engineering Council, as a Professional Engineering Body

▶ Continuous Professional Development Initiative ◀

PSCE LECTURE No. 58

Technical Lecture Counted Towards CPD Points Under
Professional Development of Engineers Bye-Laws, 2008 of the PEC

On Portal Frames



Azhar Ali Bhatti, P. E.

B. Sc. Civil Engineering, UET, Lahore
Doctor of Engineering, Izhar Construction

Saturday, 16th September, 2023

14.00 to 16:00, Pakistan Standard Time (PKT)
9:00 to 11:00, Universal Time Coordinated (UCT)

On-line lecture to be joined through ZOOM.

Details would be sent, by email, to the registered applicants, a day before the lecture.
For obtaining CPD points, live appearance of every participant is mandatory during the lecture.

Registration Fee:

PSCE associates: Free

Other engineers and allied professionals: PKR 500

Bank Details:

Account title: Pakistan Society of Civil Engineers

Account Number: 2008209912

Bank: Silk Bank Limited

Branch: Egerton Road Branch, Lahore 54000, Pakistan

Branch Code: 0003

IBAN: PK39 SAUD 0000 0320 0820 9912

Swift Code: SAUDPKKAXXX

Contact person for registration:

Mrs Sadia Naveed, Administrator

+92-42-3571 3362, +92-42-3571 3363 & +92-42-3571 3364

psce@psce.org.pk



Join PSCE

Join PSCE and be part of the growing community. It is extremely simple and costs very little. Even civil engineering students may join. Visit our web site and find out the details.



Disclaimer

This issue is partly based on information obtained, in good faith, from secondary sources and no claim about veracity, originality or exhaustiveness is made. Through this document, no position is being intended or taken by the PSCE on the issue in question.

PSCE Newsletter



Pakistan Society of Civil Engineers

Head Office: 17 Km Shahdara – Kalakhtai/Narang Mandi Road, Distt Sheikhpura, Pakistan
Liaison Office: 14 A/1, Block P, Model Town Extension, Lahore 54700, Punjab, Pakistan

Tel.: +92 42 3571 3362; +92 42 3571 3363; +92 42 3571 3364

Email: psce@psce.org.pk

URL: www.psce.org.pk

Editor-in-chief: Rizwan Mirza, CE