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## FEATURED Q&A

# How Can Road Safety Be Improved in Latin America?



More than 105,000 people are killed in road crashes every year in Latin America, Claudia Adriazola-Steil says below. // File Photo: Guatemalan Government.

**Q Better road safety in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Brazil could save \$29 billion over the next decade, according to new research sponsored by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Meanwhile, weak vehicle safety standards in the four countries will lead to more than 25,000 deaths over the next decade, researchers at the U.K.-based Transport Research Laboratory found. How does Latin America compare to other parts of the world in terms of road safety? Why aren't higher safety standards and better regulations in place? What steps should countries of Latin America and the Caribbean take to prevent road fatalities and serious injuries, and what indirect benefits could this bring?**

**A Claudia Adriazola-Steil, director of the Health and Road Safety Program at the WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities at the World Resources Institute:** "More than 105,000 people lose their lives in traffic crashes across Latin America every year. While in Europe the fatality rate per 100,000 people can be as low as two, the rate in Latin America ranges from 8.5 (Cuba) to 33.7 (El Salvador). What's even more concerning is that deaths are trending up, increasing more than 8 percent over the last three years. Pedestrians account for more than half of all deaths, and motorcyclist deaths are also spiking. Despite the alarming trend, road safety is rarely a political priority in the region. In most places, it is managed as a siloed topic with a slim budget. It is not integrated into infrastructure investments or urban planning, and there is an overemphasis on the responsibility of the road

Continued on page 2

## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## Brazil's Bolsonaro Eyes Economic Stimulus Package

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said his government will announce a stimulus package to boost the country's economy. The announcement is timed to mark Bolsonaro's 200th day in office.

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### BUSINESS

## Alpargatas to Close Operations in Argentina

The textile giant said it is shuttering its operations in the country where it was founded. It has reached a deal to sell three plants for \$14 million.

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### POLITICAL

## 'El Chapo' Guzmán Sentenced to Life Plus 30 Years

Mexican drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán was sentenced in a New York courtroom to a life prison term plus 30 years. His Sinaloa Cartel trafficked billions of dollars' worth of drugs to the United States.

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Guzmán // File Photo: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## ‘El Chapo’ Guzmán Sentenced to Life Plus 30 Years

Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, 62, one of the most notorious drug lords in history, was sentenced Wednesday in a U.S. courtroom to a life sentence plus 30 years in prison. Guzmán was convicted in February on 10 counts, including murder conspiracies, running a criminal enterprise and other drug-related charges. His Mexico-based Sinaloa Cartel trafficked billions of dollars’ worth of cocaine, heroin, meth-amphetamines and marijuana to the United States. At his sentencing in federal court in Brooklyn, N.Y., Guzmán angrily denounced his treatment while in custody at Manhattan’s Metropolitan Correctional Center. “When extradited, I expected to have a fair trial where justice was blind and my fame would not be a factor, but what happened was actually the opposite,” Guzmán said through an interpreter, The Washington Post reported. “I will take this opportunity to say there was no justice here.” Guzmán described his confinement as “psychological, emotional, mental torture, 24 hours a day.” The drug lord, who personally ordered people’s torture and murder, said the conditions

in which he was imprisoned demonstrated “a lack of respect for human dignity.” Federal sentencing laws required the judge in the case, U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan, to send Guzmán to prison for the rest of his life. “The overwhelming evil is so severe,” said Cogan. In addition to the prison sentence, Cogan ordered Guzmán to pay \$12.6 billion in forfeiture, CNN reported. Due to the sentencing laws, Guzmán’s lawyer, Jeffrey Lichtman, spent little time asking the judge for leniency. “What occurred here did not uphold an appearance of justice,” said Lichtman, The Washington Post reported. Lichtman said he plans to file an appeal. If his verdict and sentencing stand, Guzmán, who famously escaped from Mexican prisons twice, will probably be sent to the U.S. supermax penitentiary in Florence, Colo., after which he will likely never be seen in public again.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Brazil’s Bolsonaro Eyes Economic Stimulus Package

Brazil’s government will announce an economic stimulus package this week that seeks to revive weak growth as President Jair Bolson-

ment of traffic laws, safer vehicle standards, retrofitting known danger areas with designs that minimize risk, improving data collection and protecting vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists.”

**A** **Rodrigo Caudullo, advisor to the Montevideo Department of Mobility:** “Road accidents are a disease that, in Uruguay, kills one person every 16 hours, in addition to the thousands of serious and minor injuries they cause annually. Regrettably, different national and departmental authorities’ public policies have not had the expected results.

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## NEWS BRIEFS

## Protesters, Police Clash Again in San Juan as Demonstrations Continue

Protesters and police clashed in Puerto Rico on Wednesday in the fifth consecutive day of demonstrations calling for the ouster of Governor Ricardo Rosselló, NPR reported. Demonstrators, including some of the island’s famous singers, are pushing for Rosselló to resign following the leak of hundreds of pages of misogynistic and homophobic texts between the governor and his closest aides. San Juan reportedly resembled a “war zone” by the early hours of Thursday, with police chasing protesters while firing rubber bullets, gas canisters and what appeared to be flash bombs.

## Power Plant Breakdowns Caused Cuba Blackouts: Energy Minister

A series of breakdowns in Cuba’s power plants caused several blackouts this week across the island nation, according to the country’s energy minister, the Associated Press reported today. Energy Minister Raúl García Barreiro told state-run media late Tuesday that three power plants suffered mechanical problems and two others were down as they underwent maintenance.

## USNS Comfort Completes Five-Day Mission in Peru

The United States’ USNS Comfort navy hospital ship left Peru on Wednesday, completing a five-day mission to “relieve pressure on national medical systems strained by an increase in Venezuelan migrants,” the U.S. Southern Command said in a statement. In Peru, more than 4,500 patients received treatment and more than 100 surgeries were performed aboard the ship. The vessel’s medical mission includes stops in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and several other countries. [Editor’s note: See related [Q&A](#) in the July 11 issue of the Advisor.]

## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 1

user, rather than planners or policymakers. There is an outdated perspective that is not in line with what we know about road safety. To create safer roads, policymakers need to understand that humans make mistakes and are inherently vulnerable to injury; thus, responsibility needs to be shared to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. Leaders need to be proactive rather than reactive. This ‘Safe System’ approach to road safety has been proven to lower injury and death rates faster and more effectively than any other model. In Latin America, a Safe System approach would mean speed management strategies and better enforce-

aro marks his 200th day in office today, the president said Wednesday, Folha de S.Paulo reported. The measures will be announced during an event at the Planalto presidential palace to commemorate Bolsonaro's first 200 days as president. Economy Minister Paulo Guedes on Wednesday said the government will free up 63 billion reais (\$16.8 billion), of which 42 billion reais are from a special fund designated for workers called FGTS and 21 billion reais from a workers' social contribution fund, Valor Econômico reported. The amount is much higher than in previously announced packages. Earlier this year, the Brazilian government was considering freeing up resources of nearly 20 billion reais from the FGTS funds, Reuters reported, citing unnamed sources. The Economy Ministry did not comment on Guedes' remarks to Valor Econômico, saying there are no announcements scheduled. Bolsonaro's economic team will reportedly send two different proposals to the president, a source told Reuters. One of the proposals considers freeing up a more modest amount of around 30 billion reais to avoid jeopardizing housing funding, of which almost half the funds come from FGTS, the source said. The 200-day package will also reportedly include revoking a series of presidential decrees the government considers outdated or without a purpose. Last week, the government cut its economic growth forecast for this year from 1.6 percent to 0.8 percent, in line with central bank and market outlooks, Reuters reported.

## BUSINESS NEWS

### Alpargatas Plans to Close Operations in Argentina

Textile giant Alpargatas has announced it is shuttering its operations in Argentina due to financial difficulties, MercoPress reported Thursday. The company has reached a deal to sell three plants, which were about to close down, for \$14 million. Alpargatas, which was founded in Argentina, previously sold 22.5 percent of the company to the same Brazilian

## THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

### Will Urzúa's Exit Destabilize Mexico's Economic Policy?

**Q** Mexican Finance Minister Carlos Urzúa unexpectedly stepped down on July 9, citing "many disagreements over economic policy" in a strongly worded resignation letter. Urzúa and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador reportedly clashed over several decisions, including one to cancel the construction of a new airport for Mexico City. What does Urzúa's departure say about the direction of Mexico's economic policy? What can be expected of his successor, Arturo Herrera? What are the most important economic decisions facing López Obrador, and what is at stake for Mexico's economy?

**A** Andrés Rozental, member of the Advisor board, president of Rozental & Asociados in Mexico City and senior policy advisor at Chatham House: "Urzúa's angry resignation provides ample evidence of a chaotic and undisciplined government under Mexican President López Obrador (AMLO), as well as of the autocratic style of decision-making that has characterized the first seven months of his administration. Urzúa was considered to be an element of stability and reason as the guarantor of fiscal prudence and good financial management. Clearly, he worked for a president who doesn't listen to those who know more than he does, and who is convinced that only his ideas are worth pursuing. In the short time he was finance minister, Urzúa ran up against AMLO's propensity to hand out financial largesse

to a plethora of social 'objectives,' while restricting government salaries and firing tens of thousands of bureaucrats who he blames for the country's ills. Projects such as the train to ferry tourists around the Yucatán Peninsula, a refinery in his home state of Tabasco and a new airport built at an air force base far from Mexico City to replace the one that he canceled with a spurious plebiscite, are examples of what AMLO has vowed to pursue, notwithstanding opposition on technical and financial grounds. Added to that were AMLO's political appointments foisted on Urzúa of loyalists who have little or no expertise for the positions they hold. The new finance minister will probably not fare any better in reining in the president's whims at a time when Mexico's economy is forecast to grow less than 1 percent this year, if at all. AMLO's decisions to undermine regulatory bodies, cancel further auctions in the energy sector, call for revisions to contracts for gas pipeline projects that were signed before he became president and his constant attacks on the media are beginning to test the patience of both domestic and foreign investors. If AMLO doesn't change course toward a more pragmatic set of objectives by the end of 2019, Mexico's economy risks being seriously damaged."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in Wednesday's issue of the Advisor.

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investors that control sandal maker Havaianas and sportswear brand Topper, Crónica reported. "With the current transfer of these assets to their respective buyers, which will be effective on Oct. 1, Alpargatas Argentina will stop working in the textile segment," the company said in a briefing to the São Paulo stock exchange,

MercoPress reported. Alpargatas' units in the provinces of Corrientes and Chaco will go to Argentina's Mafra, while Fibran Sur will take over the company's plant in Catamarca. The textile company's economic troubles date back to at least 2016, when 360 workers were suspended at the Calzar plant in La Pampa.



## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 2

At the level of vehicle regulations, there are many reasons why, in this part of the world, we are still 20 years behind, as compared to developed countries. This occurs not because of ignorance of international regulations, but rather because when thinking about the auto industry, we see only some aspects, such as job creation, tax collection for exports and value added to production. But we don't see the damages caused by the circulation of unsafe vehicles in countries of the region. At the country level, there is a great dissociation and lack of unity among the different organizations to really address the problem. The same also exists at the regional level. Countries, with their usual blindness and locked into their respective territorial limits, do not see beyond. I do not see another way out than to make those in power aware of this deadly disease and to commit them to at least sit down to negotiate and find the best solution for all parties, to address this serious problem that concerns us all and thus mitigate the negative consequences reflected in the current statistics, which don't seem to stop rising."

**A** **Jolyon Carroll, vehicle safety and technology consultant at the Transport Research Laboratory:** "With the World Health Organization estimating that the number of road traffic deaths has reached 1.35 million per year, we are delighted that Bloomberg Philanthropies asked us to deliver this cost-effectiveness study. The topic was the potential for vehicle safety standards

to influence the burden of road traffic deaths and serious injuries in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. TRL was able to use its understanding of passenger vehicle safety standards and the effect they have on populations to consider their potential in the region. The method estimated the cost-benefit for car occupants of regulating electronic stability control, approved seat belts and anchorages for all seating positions, and occupant protection in frontal and lateral collisions. For pedestrians and cyclists, the cost-benefit model estimated the impact of regulating an advanced emergency braking system capable of detecting pedestrians and cyclists, which prevents collisions, and the pedestrian protection regulation regarding front bumper and hood design, which mitigates the injuries resulting from a collision. This work is core to the societal impact we strive to deliver by making transportation safer. It also supports the overall aim for priority vehicle safety standards to be adopted for all new vehicles globally. We know that these basic measures will save lives. This report demonstrates the scale of benefits that appropriate legislation will achieve. It found that, in total, if Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico adopted the full set of priority vehicle safety standards from 2020, more than 25,000 lives could be saved and over 170,000 serious injuries prevented, by 2030."

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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