

BOMB BLAST AT GULISTAN

No headway yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcement agencies could not arrest any criminals as of yesterday in connection with the Saturday's bomb blast at Gulistan in the city.

A case has been filed with Paltan Police station six hours after the bomb went off in front of Sergeant Ahad Police Box at around 7:00pm, injuring seven people including a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) member and shattering the windowpane of a Rab vehicle.

The injured -- Md Milon, 14, a worker of the police box, Nasir Ali, 35, a rickshaw-puller, Abdul Aziz, 32, an employee of a nearby public toilet, Abul Bashar, 35, a businessman, Abdur Rahsid, 60, a pedestrian and Khairul Hasan, 36, an engineer, -- are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Saifur Rahman, assistant sub-inspector of Rab-3, who received injuries in his right arm and leg, is being treated elsewhere.

Rab, DB police, CID is investigating the matter though they are yet to

establish any motive behind the bomb blast.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Dipak Gupta told The Daily Star that they have been examining the samples collected from the spot.

"I think that the bombs are made locally. But it will take seven or eight days more to be sure," he said.

The car was probably not the target of the attack, said high official of Rab, preferring not to be named. If it was the target, the attackers easily would have hit the car as it was not moving at that time, they added.

NU final exams from Feb 24
Bss, Gazipur

The honours 4-year (final) examinations-2005 under National University will begin all over the country on February 24.

All examinations will start at 9:00am, said a NU press release.



PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion members arrest two criminals during a raid on Karwan Bazar area in the city yesterday.

NAT'L TB PROGRAMME

Shasthya Sebikas play major role in achieving target in Barisal

MOON MOON SULTANA,
Back from Barisal

Abul Kalam, 48, a timber trader in East Billo Bari village of Barisal, had been suffering from fever and cough for over 22 days. He took medicine on local doctor's prescription but of no avail.

His wife Fatema said, "As my husband's health condition gradually deteriorated, Shasthya Sebika (SS) Julekha Begum suggested him to have his cough tested at Amanatganj Chest Disease Clinic".

Fatema went on, " After the test, tuberculosis (TB) was detected in the cough. Since then the treatment started with the help of Julekha and my husband has been taking medicine for a month regularly."

At present, like Kalam, 5,125 TB patients of Barisal division are taking treatment under the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) operated in joint collaboration of the government and Brac. Besides, 14 partner organisations, including Brac, Damien Foundation, Lamb Hospital, ICDDR, B, Friends of Bangladesh and Salvation Army, are providing free TB treatment across the country.

Brac has been working in this field since 2004 and achieved government's target in 283 upazilas of 42 districts, including Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, peripheral areas of Khulna and entire Barisal division, said Humayun Kabir, senior health coordinator of Barisal division, Brac.

The Shasthya Sebikas (SSs) play an important role in the treatment of TB patients, said Humayun. They, mainly women, are selected from the micro finance samity of Brac and given 18 days of training on TB treatment, he added.

A total of 7,000 SSs work at Barisal division on voluntary basis. An SS serves 250 households of her locality and there is a Shasthya Karmi (SK), a paid staff of Brac, to supervise the work of SS, he explained.

SS Julekha, who claimed that six TB patients were cured under her supervision as she has fed medicine everyday for six months, said she took health training on 11 common diseases including TB, anaemia, diarrhoea, gastric and skin disease. Although she treats TB patients for little amount of remunera-

tion, she can earn money by selling medicines of other diseases buying from Brac.

The SSs get Tk 200 after the recovery of a TB patient, said Humayun, adding, "This Tk 200 is taken from TB patients in instalment to motivate them to take medicine regularly".

SS Jobeda of Mukunda Patti village said she visits 15 households a day to serve healthcare managing her own household works.

SK Fakhrunnesa, who has been involved with Brac since 1992, said she organises health forum with women of her area three days a week and monitor the work of SS at the same time.

However, SSs sometimes make mistakes while performing their duties.

Moifuli, 50, of Kakasura village, started taking TB medicine from SS Ambia.

After three days Moifuli stopped taking medicine due to imitation and vomiting. SK, SS and health programme organiser of Brac could not give a logical explanation about this case.

As per the Global Fund to Fight TB and Malaria (GFTM) guidelines, 70 per cent TB patients of an area should be detected and the recovery rate should be 85 per cent in order to achieve optimum success, Humayun said.

Until 2004, the NTP was executed by the government initiative only and the recorded TB patients were counted 16 percent in 2003, he added.

He also claimed that the recovery rate was 91 percent in 2005.

We cannot achieve 100 per cent success due to social phobia, migration and poverty, he pointed out.

The ratio of male and female TB affected patients is 65:35. The male is affected more due to frequent movement and hard labour and in most cases the male patients do not continue treatment, he explained.

The District Civil Surgeon Md Abdul Malek expressed satisfaction over the activities of joint cooperation of government and NGOs in combating TB, and claimed that the target rate has been achieved in the district.

"Every three months, deputy civil surgeon and divisional director monitor the overall activities and give reports on the achievement," he argued.

Farmers overusing pesticides

Reveals WB survey

Bss, Dhaka

More than 47 percent of farmers in Bangladesh use more pesticides than needed to protect their crops, while only four percent farmers are formally trained in using or handling of pesticides.

According to a recent survey released by the World Bank on winter rice, potato, bean, eggplant, cabbage, sugarcane and mango growers, more than 87 percent freely admitted to using little or no protective measures while applying pesticides.

The study said farmers identified pesticide traders as the main source of information and 54 percent of the traders report frequent health symptoms commonly associated with acute pesticide poisoning.

Ninety-two percent freely admit that they don't take any protective measures while handling pesticides.

"But this problem is hardly confined to Bangladesh, where in fact we have been working with

local groups to come up with solutions," says World Bank economist Susmita Dasgupta, who has been leading the research on the use of pesticides.

"Overuse and other pesticide-related problems are common in the developing world, though the extent may vary across countries."

The indiscriminate use of agricultural pesticides has created very serious health and environmental problems in many developing countries. Worldwide one to five million farm workers are estimated to suffer pesticide-poisoning every year and at least 20,000 die annually from exposure, many of them in developing countries.

A team of World Bank researchers has gathered and analyzed detailed survey data from Bangladesh and Vietnam on the risk perceptions of pesticide users, their pesticide-handling behavior and the effects of pesticides on their health.

Misperceptions of health hazards, income, farm ownership, the

toxicity of used chemicals, crop composition, and geographical location account for pesticide overuse in Bangladesh.

There is an urgent need to actively promote safer pesticide use and hygienic practices among people who handle these substances in Bangladesh, according to Dasgupta.

Research findings also highlight the need for policymakers to design effective, targeted outreach programmes that address pesticide risk, safe handling and protection.

World Bank research compares outcomes for farming with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and conventional techniques, using input-use accounting, conventional production functions and frontier production estimation.

IPM comprises a range of approaches, from carefully targeted use of chemical pesticides to biological techniques that use natural parasites and predators to control pests.

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