



The exploded boiler at a factory of Multifabs Ltd in Gazipur's Kashimpur area.

PHOTO: ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND

9 killed in Gazipur boiler blast

FROM PAGE 1
The DC said Tk 20,000 would be given to each family of the dead.

Abdul Alim, who was working in a nearby factory of Islam Knit Designs Limited, said glass windows of his factory shattered in the impact of the blast.

Fire service official Akhtarruzzaman said the boiler room was on the ground floor of the four-storey build-

ing. Plaster fell off the walls and floors over the boiler room by the impact of the explosion.

At least 17 people died in three boiler blasts from January to April this year. Of them, 13 died in a single incident in Dinajpur, according to The Daily Star reports.

A boiler is a closed tank in which water is heated. The main function of it

is to generate steam for space heating, sterilisation, drying, humidification and power generation. And the government's lack of inspection capabilities of this widely used equipment is evident in the string of fatal accidents.

For the 5,000 odd authorised boilers in the country, there are six inspectors designated to examine them once a year.

All rivers overflowing

FROM PAGE 1
The two rising rivers inundated several hundred villages in Zakiganj, Kanaighat, Fenchuganj, Beanibazar, Golapganj and Osmaninagar upazilas in the last seven days. Besides, Gainghat and Companiganj upazilas were hit by flash floods due to the onrush of water from the hills of Meghalaya.

Some areas in Sylhet Sadar upazila also went under water, but the situation was not as grave as in some other upazilas.

Sirajul Islam, executive engineer of WDB in Sylhet, said flood water might continue to rise for some more days due to heavy rain in the Barak basin.

Syed Ahmed Chowdhury, a Met official of Sylhet meteorological department, said the district might experience heavy rain till Friday and the flooding might take an alarming turn and cause landslides in hilly areas.

Earlier this year, Sylhet suffered a huge loss as the Boro crop was damaged due to flash floods in haor areas. The district is now faced with another loss as the Aush paddy on around 3,000 hectares of land has been inundated, said district administration

officials.

At least 161 primary and 13 higher secondary schools were shut. Around 100 flood-hit families took shelter at nine shelter centres opened by the district administration.

Rahat Anwar, deputy commissioner of Sylhet, said the administration was considering the situation as a natural disaster.

A total of 128 tonnes of rice was distributed in six upazilas and Tk 2.77 was given to flood-hit families as part of the government's relief initiative, he said, adding medical teams were formed in each upazila to monitor the health condition of the victims, especially the children.

MOULVIBAZAR

The flood submerged 29 unions in the district's three upazilas.

"We've been confined to our house since the Eid day [June 26] when water entered the home," said Husna Begum, 36-year-old housewife from Bhuksimul area of Kulaura.

Misbah Uddin, 45, of the same area said locals couldn't cook food in their houses for the last couple of days as those went underwater.

Like in Sylhet, Moulvibazar also saw

a similar calamity in March when the Sonai, Kontinala, Juri and Kushiara rivers swelled, causing flash floods in the district. Farmers incurred a huge loss due to the damage of Boro crops.

The latest flood has come as another blow to the growers as their seedbeds of Aus and Aman crops have already been inundated.

The government disbursed relief materials to the affected people through various disaster management programmes, but the allocation was still inadequate, said Borolekha UNO SM Abdullah Al Mamun.

AFM Kamrul Islam, chairman of Kulaura Upazila Parishad, called upon the government to declare the region as a disaster area and take immediate steps to alleviate the sufferings of the flood victims.

Abdul Alim, primary education officer in Moulvibazar, said 152 primary schools were closed in the district.

Forty-eight secondary schools were shut and eight of them were being used as flood shelters, said ASM Abdul Wadud, district education officer of Moulvibazar.

Meanwhile, Farhad's wife Farida Akter has expressed happiness over the "rescue" of her husband.

"We are waiting eagerly to meet him," she told The Daily Star last night.

Earlier at a press briefing at their Adabor home, Farida claimed that her husband was kidnapped early yesterday.

"I got a phone call from his [Farhad] number at 5:29am. He told me that some people were picking him up. He said they would kill him," she said.

Farhad again called her from his number around 6:21am and requested her to arrange Tk 30 to 35 lakh to be paid as ransom. The family received three to four more phone calls from Farhad. The last one came at 7:30pm, she said.

At the briefing, Farhad's daughter Chaumtoli Huq said, "It is a matter of concern that a man like my father has gone traceless."

Asked whether he was kidnapped as claimed by his family, DIG Didar said it did not look like a case of abduction.

In reply to another query from a reporter whether the writer was staging a drama, the officer said, "Initially, it appears to be so. But we can be sure about it after investigation."

No one was arrested over the incident.

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Syrian army declares ceasefire in south ahead of peace talks

AFP, Damascus

The Syrian army yesterday unilaterally announced a halt to fighting in the country's south that would coincide with a new round of peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana.

The army statement, carried on state news agency SANA, said hostilities would stop in the southern provinces of Daraa, Quneitra, and Sweida.

"In order to support the peace process and national reconciliation, a cessation of hostilities took hold at 12:00 pm (midday) on July 2 and will last until midnight on July 6," the statement said.

The freeze was not expected to include fighting against the Islamic State group.

The Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights, which has a wide network of sources on the ground, confirmed to AFP that fighting "almost completely stopped" across the mentioned territory.

The army did not specifically refer to the Astana talks, which opens today and are expected to last for two days.

The areas mentioned, however, form one of the four de-escalation zones agreed upon in the last round of negotiations in the Kazakh capital in May.

Violence decreased markedly across all four zones in the first few weeks after the deal was announced, but it had recently ramped up in Daraa.

Rebels and government troops have exchanged fire in the southern provincial capital by the same name.

The process is brokered by rebel backer Turkey and regime allies Russia and Iran.

Syrian deputy foreign minister Faisal al-Moqdad said yesterday that his government's delegation was on its way to Astana.

"Our delegation is about to arrive in Astana... because we have a higher interest, which is stopping bloodshed in Syria, we are taking part," he said at a news conference in Damascus.

And rebel representative General Ahmad Berri told AFP he was also travelling to Kazakhstan for the negotiations.

"I am attending the talks. There are other representatives coming, and we will announce the full list when we arrive," he said by phone.

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