

Chinese worker killed during brawl in Payra Power Plant dorm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Chinese worker at Payra Power Plant in Patuakhali allegedly stabbed a fellow worker dead on Saturday night. The deceased is Feng Lue Jun, 36, of Hunan province in China, said police, adding that they detained his roommate Sang Ziyang in connection with the killing.

Both of them were workers of Bangladesh-China Power Company Limited, police said.

Pinjur Rahman, sub-divisional engineer of the company, told The Daily Star that while having dinner, the Chinese men locked into an altercation over food. At one point, Sang Ziyang stabbed Feng Lue with a knife.

Hearing the victim scream, other workers at the dormitory went to the room and took him to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex where he died at 9:30pm, said Pinjur.

Refayat Hossain, medical officer at the hospital, said he died of excessive bleeding.

Workers in the factory caught Sang Ziyang and handed him over to police, said Md Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.

The OC said they sent the body to Patuakhali General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Acid thrown on housewife in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A woman allegedly had acid thrown on her by a youth in Faridpur's Jagannathi village under Madhukhali upazila on Saturday evening.

The victim is now under treatment in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested Sujan Kumar Hawladar, 28, after a case over the incident was filed with Madhukhali police station yesterday.

The victim is Saraswati Malo, 23, wife of Chaitano Malo.

Krishna Malo, brother-in-law of Saraswati, said, "Sujan has been harassing Saraswati for two years. We informed Sujan's family about it," he said, adding, they had asked the family to take steps to deal with the situation.

"Sujan threw acid on Saraswati, while she was cooking in her house around 6:35pm on Saturday. After that, she was taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital with burn injuries to her face, neck, head and hands. She was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital," Krishna said.

Mahfujur Rahman, assistant superintendent of the hospital, said, "She sustained burn injuries... For this reason, we shifted her to Dhaka. It was a chemical burn, but it is not possible for us to tell it is an acid burn without examination."

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the station, said, "After the case was filed, we arrested Sujan from Faridpur on Sunday noon. We shall produce him before a court on Monday."

He said they primarily suspect that it was an acid attack.

Onion prices

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the bulb ahead of schedule to maximize profit, reports our correspondent in Pabna, one of the largest onion producing districts in the country.

"I've grown onions in 12 bighas of land this year. Since the price is high, I've harvested from a portion of the land and sold them to the wholesalers for Tk 5,000 per maund," said Abdul Alim, a farmer of Dhulauri village in Pabna's Santhia upazila.

Munnaf Pramanik, an onion trader at Santhia Wholesale market, said, "Each mound of onion was sold at Tk 8,000 to Tk 9,000 last week... The price dropped after the arrival of new onions."

The scenario is similar in Jashore where onions are cultivated on about 1,500 hectares of land.

Mehedi Hasan, a farmer of Jashore's Chowgachha upazila, said they were reaping immature onions since the market price was high.

Emdad Hossain, an official of the District Agriculture Extension Department in Jessore, said they had suggested the farmers not to pick the immature onion as the bulbs were supposed to get matured in early December.

In Rajshahi, onion prices dropped to Tk 150 from Tk 250 a day earlier following a joint operation led by the district administration, reports our correspondent there.

Onion prices began to rise across the country about two months ago when the Indian government imposed a ban on onion export.

But the prices started to rise sharply since last week.

Earlier this month, each kg of locally grown onion was sold at Tk 100-120 in the capital's kitchen markets.

But the price jumped to Tk 160 on Tuesday morning and then kept rising.

The prices rose by Tk 30 to 40 every day since Wednesday.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Dubai Airshow in DWC Dubai Airport yesterday.

Biman signs deal to buy 2 more 787s

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1,300 companies from 160 countries.

Hasina joined at the invitation of Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

On her arrival at the venue, she

was received by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, also the UAE defence minister.

Later, she attended dinner hosted by Bangladesh Ambassador to the UAE in her honour.

Hasina reached Dubai on Saturday

night on a four-day official visit.

The Dubai Airshow, launched in 1989, has turned as a global platform for the aviation industry to sell its new wares, as the public and private sectors meet to discuss new technologies, opportunities, and hurdles facing the

industry.

In 2017, the last aviation exhibition drew 79,380 trade visitors from around the world, which featured 1,200 exhibitors from 63 countries and an order book in excess of \$113.8 billion.



PHOTO: BSS

Enforcement a stiff challenge

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get the unregistered vehicles registered or off the roads.

Then there are the "unfit" vehicles. Under the act, there is a six-month jail sentence or a fine of Tk 25,000 or both for driving unfit vehicles on roads.

Every year, the BRTA issues around 6 lakh annual fitness clearances to vehicles.

According to a BRTA report, about 4 lakh registered vehicles were on the road without fitness certificates last month.

But the BRTA has only 109 vehicle inspectors against a demand for around 1,000, officials said.

There is only one Vehicle Inspection Centre (VIC) at its office in the capital's Mirpur. The VIC can check some elements of a vehicle digitally while the inspectors check many vehicles manually, which according to experts, can compromise safety.

Besides examining fitness, registering, and issuing licence, the BRTA has many other tasks. But it has only 708 employees against a sanctioned 823 posts.

Officials say even the number of sanctioned posts is too small to deal with ever increasing number of vehicles.

As per the act, no vehicle is allowed to park or load and offload goods or

pick up and drop off passengers at any place not designated for the purposes. Violators would be fined Tk 5,000.

However, only a handful of commercial buildings has parking spaces. For the buses, there are no designated parking space or terminal in the capital. Therefore, many vehicles remain parked on roads, causing congestion.

The new act applies to drivers, pedestrians, and all road users. Failing to obey the law may land the violator in jail for a month. They may also be fined Tk 10,000 or be imprisoned or both.

The traffic signalling system in Dhaka, however, is chaotic.

City authorities have tried different methods to control traffic chaos over the decades.

The manually controlled traffic lights had been turned automatic at the capital's intersections. The system had been upgraded with electronic countdown timers and solar panels.

But very little had changed for the better.

Members of traffic police still control traffic with their arms and often use sticks or ropes to stop the rush of vehicles. But Dhaka Metropolitan Police has only 4,000 members, which according to officials, is way too inadequate.

The act will mainly be executed by police and mobile courts run by the BRTA and district administrations.

The BRTA has only nine executive magistrates against 13 posts. They are supposed to lead drives in Dhaka and Chattogram. Besides, the regulator often asks the district administration to have mobile court drives.

The law enforcers will not be able to impose the on-the-spot fines as their point of sale (PoS) machines had not been updated in line with the new law.

It may take at least two weeks for the law enforcers to prepare.

The highway police are also not equipped with modern technology and human resources.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said, "I request everyone to obey the law."

After attending a lecture on Road Safety and Road Transport Act-2018 at American International University Bangladesh, he told reporters, "The law was scheduled to be enforced on November 1, but I kept the law relaxed for two weeks in order to make people aware. The deadline ended on Thursday..."

The government on October 22 announced that the law would be implemented from November 1.

"This act was enacted to discourage

traffic violations," he said.

He added that no serious punishment will be meted out at the initial stage.

"It is not like the act will be implemented right now as it is," he said.

If any inconsistency is found while enforcing the law, amendments will be made, he said.

Meanwhile, transport workers in Jashore yesterday went on an indefinite strike demanding amendments to the law.

No bus or truck operated on 18 routes in Jashore, causing immense sufferings to the people.

Transport workers in Kushtia observed a strike on Friday and Saturday. A strike was enforced in Bogura on Saturday as well.

BRTA TO LAUNCH DRIVE TODAY

The BRTA would launch mobile courts today, said its chairman Kamrul Ahsan.

The home ministry yesterday issued a gazette incorporating the Road Transport Act-2018 into the schedule of the Mobile Court Act-2009, clearing the way for conducting mobile court operations, Kamrul told The Daily Star.

After the gazette, mobile courts run by district administration will also be able to enforce the Road Transport Act.

Café attack verdict on Nov 27

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University, owner of the Holey Artisan restaurant, and top police officials narrated their experiences of the incident.

Hasnat was first shown arrested in the case but was later relieved of the charges following a probe that found no evidence of his involvement.

On July 1, 2016, armed militants stormed the Holey Artisan Bakery at the diplomatic zone in Dhaka's

Gulshan area. Two police officers were also killed during the 12-hour standoff that followed.

On July 23 last year, Counter Terrorism & Transnational Crime Unit pressed charges against eight militant suspects who they say wanted to destabilise Bangladesh by initiating the country's worst-ever terror incident.

The charge sheet also said apart from destabilising the country and

turning it into a state controlled by terrorists, the suspects wanted to put the government under pressure, make investors and foreign consultants leave the country and destroy the economy.

The suspects thought if they could kill a large number of foreigners, they would be under local and international spotlight, alongside drawing attention of global terrorist groups, according to the charge sheet.

The eight accused are: Jahangir Alam

alias Rajib Gandhi, alleged recruiter of the café attackers; Rashed alias Rash, one of the alleged planners; Sohail Mahfuz, reported grenade supplier; suspected arms suppliers Mizanur Rahman alias Boro Mizan and Hadisur Rahman Sagor, and Rakibul Islam, so-called religious trainer, and Shahriful Islam Khaled and Mamunur Rashid Ripon.

On November 26 the same year, the tribunal framed charges against the eight.

Husband, his friends rape garment worker in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A readymade garment worker has allegedly been gang-raped by her separated husband and his two friends in Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat on Saturday evening.

Monsur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Panchbibi Police Station, said the victim filed a case against her separated husband Mehruul Islam, 23, and his two friends Gopal Chandra Barman, 22, and Murshidur Rahman, 23, yesterday.

Police arrested two accused Mehruul and Gopal -- while on Saturday night and sent them to jail yesterday via court, the OC said, adding that Murshidur was on the run.

Quoting the case statement, the police official said Mehruul and the victim married each other around a year ago. Three months after the marriage, the husband sent a letter to the victim mentioning that he divorced her. Since then, the husband never treated the victim as his wife.

However, no legal step to divorce the woman followed, he added.

According to the case statement, Mehruul recently asked the victim to visit him in Panchbibi as he wanted to mediate the issue between them.

Responding to the request, the victim boarded on a Panchbibi-bound bus and met Mehruul on Saturday evening. Receiving the victim, Mehruul took her to an isolated area near Chhoto Jamuna River in the upazila.

Mehruul, along with two of his friends who were already on the spot, then gang-raped her. Hearing the victim scream, locals rushed to the spot and rescued her. The accused, however, managed to flee, the case statement added.

The victim was sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for treatment.

Donald Trump gets annual physical exam

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump began his annual physical exam on Saturday, visiting the doctor several months ahead of schedule in anticipation of the busy 2020 election season, his spokeswoman said.

The 73-year-old last had a routine examination in February, when presidential physician Sean Conley declared Trump to be in "very good health."

Trump, who has confounded health experts with his penchant for junk food and avoidance of strenuous exercise, weighed 243 pounds (110 kg), the report at that time said.

His Saturday physical consisted of a "quick exam and labs" at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham said.

Defaulters

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A maximum 9 percent interest will be charged on the rescheduled loans while the existing interest rate is 12-16 percent.

Besides, the tenure for repayment is 10 years with a grace period of one year.

As per the latest central bank notice, banks will have to adjust the 15 percent down payment with their outstanding loans.

This means defaulters who enjoy the relaxed facility will have to give down payments twice.

The High Court and the central bank gave the instruction in accordance with the master notice on loan rescheduling issued in 2012 by the Bangladesh Bank.

The central bank also extended the easy rescheduling facility for another 90 days since yesterday.

The relaxed facility has drawn huge criticism from different corners as they think that it will bring no good for the banking sector.

Rather, this will heighten indiscipline in the banking sector as the policy will encourage habitual defaulters.

A number of senior bankers wishing not to named yesterday told The Daily Star that they have adopted a cautious policy on the issue.

Banks have already received plenty of applications to reschedule default loans under the relaxed policy, they said.

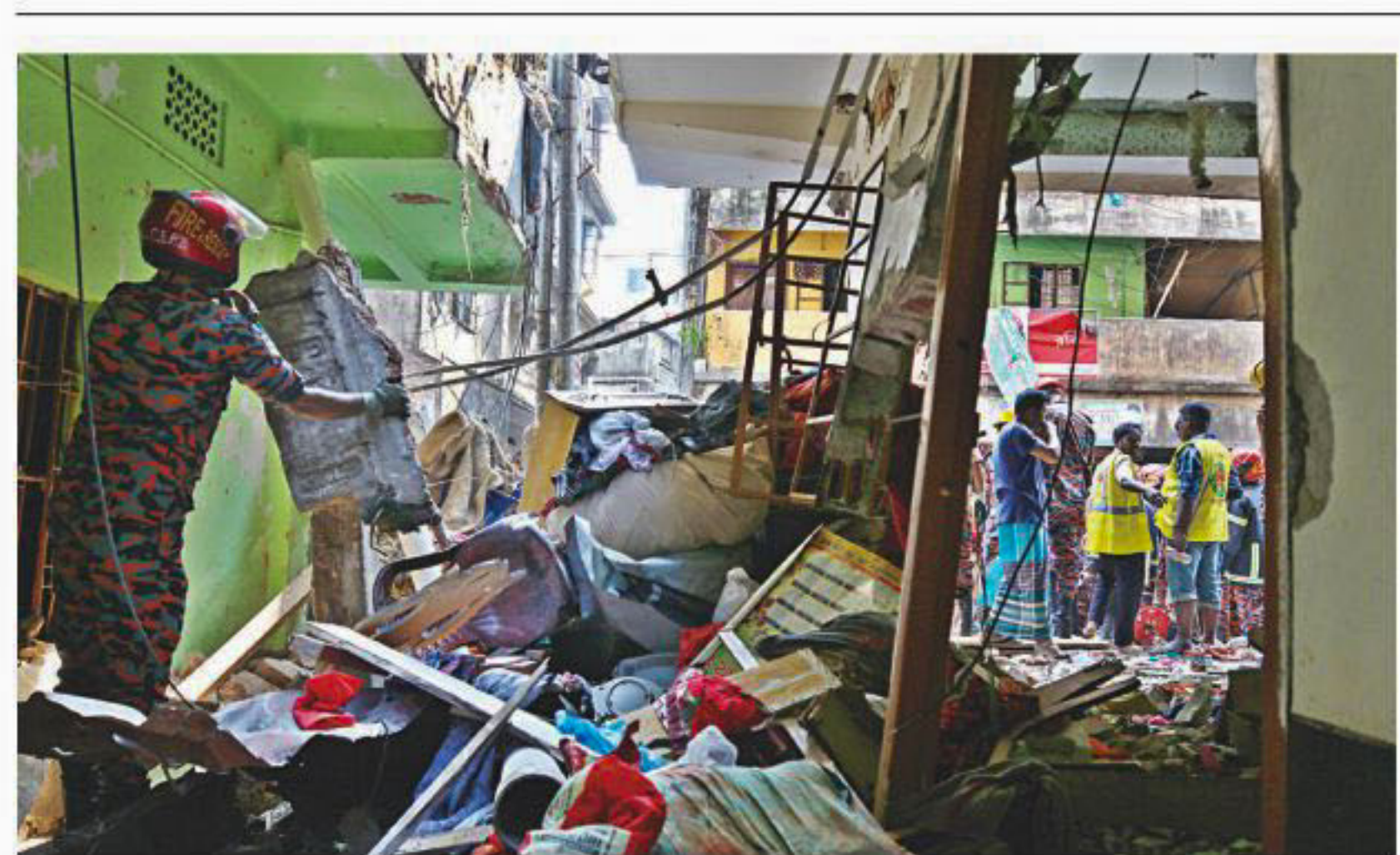
But, there will be little chance to extend fresh credit facility to the habitual defaulters, they said.

Good clients, however, will be considered for fresh loans, according to them.

Banks went on a loan rescheduling spree in the first half of this year to arrest default loans, according to data from the central bank.

Between the months of January and June loans amounting to Tk 21,308 crore were rescheduled, which is almost thrice the amount rescheduled a year earlier. Loans amounting to Tk 7,338 crore were rescheduled in the first half of 2018.

Banks failed to bring down delinquent loans in the period: default loans in the banking sector stood at Tk 112,425 crore, up 19.71 percent from six months earlier.



Firefighters examine the remnants of a building, the front walls of which collapsed after the explosion. The accident killed seven and injured 15 others.

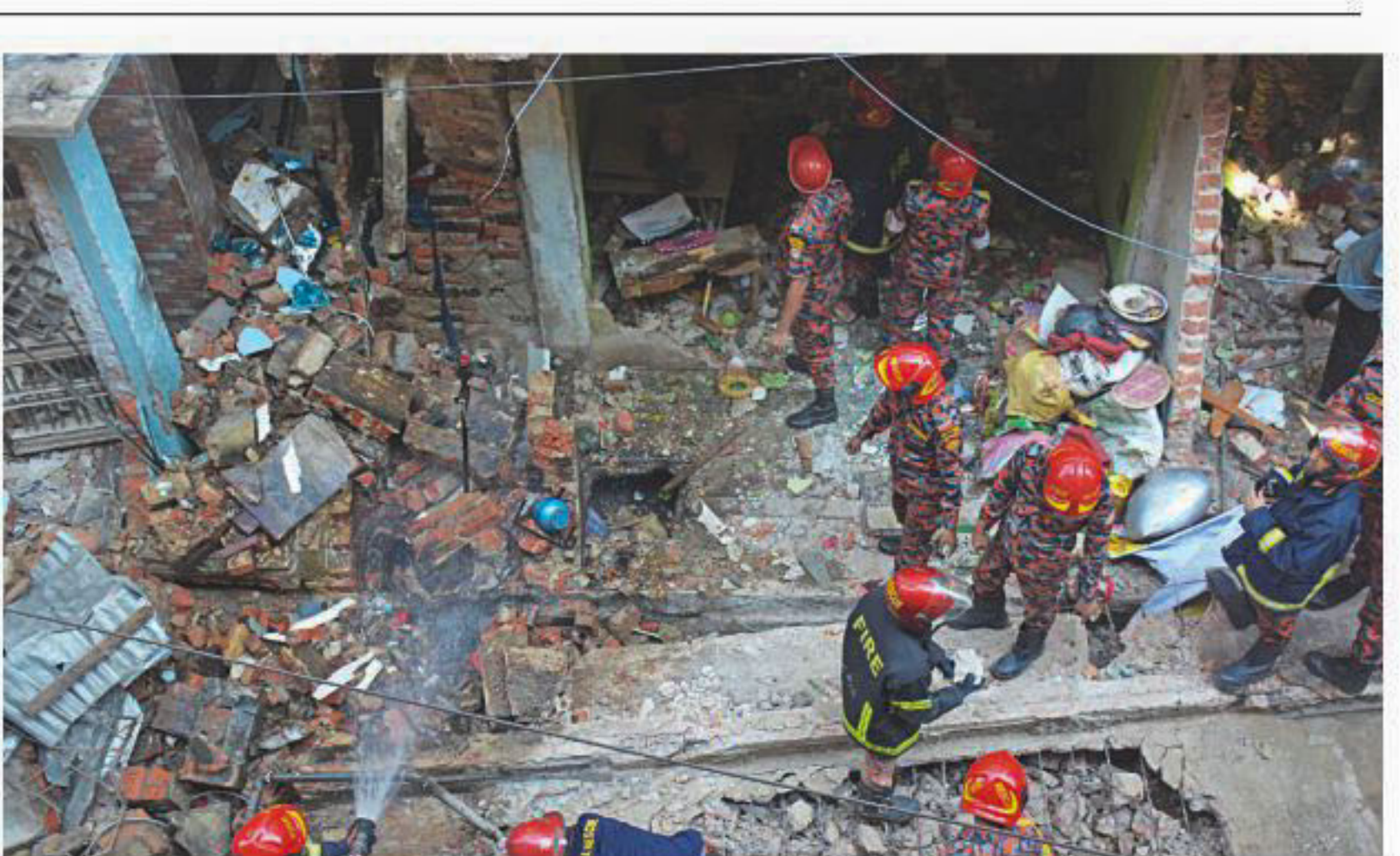


PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

7 killed as gas blast rips apart Ctg house

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Chattogram.

Purna Chandra Mutsuddi, deputy assistant director (DAD) at Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters, said, "During primary inspection, it was found that the blast was caused by a leak in the gas pipeline riser.

"Gas leaked through the riser, and the two-room house got filled with gas at night. In the morning, it exploded when someone lit a fire," the official told The Daily Star.

Arpita Debnath, a ninth grader, and her aunt Sandhya Rani Das, who live in the two-room house, were injured in the blast.

"My aunt woke up in the morning. She might have lit a fire to offer prayers, resulting in the explosion... Something hit me and I became unconscious."

Arpita's parents were away when the incident took place.

Fire service officials said that on impact, sidewalls of the building's ground floor gave way.

Witnesses said two rickshaws carrying passengers and pedestrians

were hit by flying debris after the explosion.

Manjur Hossen, owner of a small shop opposite the building, said, "I was inside my shop. I heard a loud bang and suddenly chunks of bricks fell on my shop."

"Labourer Nurul, who was standing in front of my shop, was hit by flying debris."

BREACH OF BUILDING CODE

Officials of Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) and Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) visited the spot.

Shahinul Islam, chairman of CDA's Building Authorisation Committee, said, "The building was built violating the CDA building code... The gas riser was installed inside the house, which is also a violation of the code."

"Even a septic tank was built right under the house where the accident occurred... The owner of the building built the boundary wall, grabbing part of the road."

"The area is densely populated and has old buildings... According to the masterplan, the road in the area should be 40-feet wide. But we have

found it 20-feet wide as most of the land owners built buildings grabbing parts of the road," he added.

5-MEMBER COMMITTEE

Chattogram district administration formed a five-member probe committee headed by Additional District Magistrate AZM Shariful Hassan.

Elius Hossain, deputy commissioner in Chattogram, told The Daily Star, "The committee has been asked to submit its report in seven working days."

"The families of the deceased were given Tk 20,000 each. The district administration and the Chattogram City Corporation will jointly bear the treatment costs of the injured."

DIFFERENT VERSIONS

Fire fighters and explosives experts said the blast occurred due to a leak in gas pipe riser, but Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd (KGDCL) officials refuted it.

The four-member committee, formed by the gas company, submitted its report yesterday after probing the incident.

KGDCL General Manager (Engineering) Sarwar Hossain, who headed the committee,

said, "We examined the pipe line and the gas riser. We didn't find any leak during inspection... the gas riser and the pipeline were intact ..."

"Usually gas explosion causes fire but we did not see any sign of fire in the house."

"We submitted our report mentioning that there was no leak in the gas pipeline," he told The Daily Star.

However, Md Tofazzal Hossain, inspector of the Department of Explosives, told reporters, "We found that the riser and the gas pipeline were very old. Gas leaked from there and turned the entire house into a gas chamber."

"The blast occurred as the dwellers of the house lit a fire to offer prayers in the morning," said the explosives expert after inspecting the scene.

Akhtarul Islam, deputy director of Chittagong Medical College Hospital, said, "The seven were killed as walls collapsed on them."

"Only Arpita suffered burns. She was sent to the capital for better treatment as she had 30 percent burns," added the physician.