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Blast kills at least six, injures 50

Fire service officials suspect leaky gas connection behind explosion in city's Moghbazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six people were killed and 50 others injured in a huge explosion on the ground floor of a three-storey building in the capital's Moghbazar last evening.

Officials of Fire Service and Civil Defence and a bomb disposal unit of police primarily suspected gas leakage to be the source of the explosion at the building on Outer Circular Road.

Three of the victims were identified as Jannat Aktar, 23, her nine-month-old daughter Subhana, and Md Swapan, 35, their family members said. The identities of the other victims could not be known.

Soon after the explosion at 7:35pm, locals rushed to rescue the injured and sent them to different hospitals and clinics on whatever vehicles they found.

Firefighters later joined the efforts with 15 fire engines. They searched the ground floor for hours to ensure there is no body or anyone trapped under the rubble.

Three fire service units were still working at the spot when this report was filed around 2:00am today.

Brig Gen Md Sazzad Hussain, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they are primarily suspecting that the

explosion took place from accumulation of gas from a leakage.

"We are measuring the presence of gas in the building," said the DG while addressing reporters at the spot.

Contacted over phone, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said the explosion was not an act of sabotage and primarily believed to have been caused by gas leakage.

Sazzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Ramna Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, confirmed the deaths of six people at 11:30pm last night. The DMP commissioner had earlier said seven had died in the explosion, but DC Sazzadur revised that number later.

Ground floor walls, pillars had collapsed while refrigerators, air conditioners and other items had disintegrated. The force of the explosion shot some rubble into the busy road in front of the building, hitting people and passing vehicles and causing injury to many, said witnesses.

The ground floor housed an appliance store, an abattoir, a restaurant, and a sweetmeat shop.

During a visit to the spot around 9:30pm last night, The Daily Star saw shattered

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A man walks over the debris of a building damaged by the explosion from what experts believe was a leaky gas connection. At least six people died and 50 injured in the explosion last evening.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hasina seeks cooperation from all

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for cooperation from all as she reiterated her government's resolve to overcome the coronavirus pandemic.

"We will be able to face the present situation [of the coronavirus] Insha'Allah, we have that belief in us and for this purpose, we want cooperation from all," she said.

She said this while giving prestigious Bangabandhu Jatiya Krishi Puroshkar-1424, (Bangabandhu National Agriculture Award-1424), the highest state recognition in the agriculture sector to 32 individuals and organisations.

The prime minister said that the country is now passing through the second wave of the coronavirus.

In this connection, she said that the number of infections has increased massively while the number of deaths

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Swinging between lockdowns

Lack of coordination writ large in govt measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the cabinet division decided late on Saturday evening that the nationwide "total and complete" lockdown would be postponed from June 28 to July 1, and there would be a limited-scale or partial countrywide lockdown in the interim period, it left many asking what a "limited-scale" lockdown even meant.

As the country enforces a partial lockdown from today, the cabinet division yesterday issued a circular outlining how the nation would operate over the next three days leading up to the actual lockdown on July 1.

The new decision comes amid travel restrictions across the country from June 16 to July 15.

The government has yet to issue a directive regarding the "total and complete lockdown" even though the Press Information Department earlier said the cabinet division would issue a gazette regarding the lockdown on Saturday.

As per yesterday's gazette on the three-day partial lockdown, all forms of

CURBS FOR JUNE 28-30	
●	All public transport will be off the roads
●	Shopping malls, tourism centres, resorts to be closed
●	Restaurants to stay open for takeouts only
●	Police, BGB, army personnel to ensure lockdown from Thursday

transport, except rickshaws, will be banned. The government and private offices may remain open with only the essential staff.

"The law enforcement agencies will patrol the streets to ensure this," said the circular.

It added that organisations must provide transport for employees deemed essential.

Shopping malls, resorts and tourist

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Country logs highest daily deaths at 119

UNB, Dhaka

A total of 119 people died with Covid-19 in Bangladesh in 24 hours until yesterday morning, the biggest figure since the pandemic hit the country.

During the period, 5,268 more people came out positive with the deadly coronavirus in 24,400 sample tests.

The country's daily positivity rate fell to 21.59 percent yesterday from Saturday's 22.50 percent, according to the government data.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's coronavirus fatality rate rose to 1.60 percent from Saturday's 1.59 percent.

The new numbers pushed the country's caseload to 888,406 while the death toll to 14,172 yesterday.

Barely two months ago, the country reported 112 deaths in a single day on

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RUSH OUT OF THE CAPITAL

Fear of hard days spurs it

STAR REPORT

People in their thousands, mostly low-income ones, made desperate bids to leave the capital yesterday ahead of the nationwide complete lockdown from Thursday.

They boarded trucks, pick-ups, three-wheelers, human hauliers and rode motorbikes to go back to their village homes, disregarding the health safety rules.

Most of the home-goers were low-income people who feared that they would lose their livelihoods in the city and face starvation if the lockdown continues till the Eid-ul-Azha.

Many others who came to the capital from different districts for treatment or other emergencies were also seen heading for their village homes.

The government is set to enforce nationwide strict restrictions from today till Wednesday and complete lockdown from Thursday to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

With public transport suspended to and from seven districts around the capital, many took three-wheelers and human hauliers and even got on trucks and pick-ups to reach their destinations in those districts, leading to traffic congestions on different roads.

Thousands of home-goers, including women and children, waited for hours at Shimulia and Paturia ferry terminals to cross the Padma.

They took detours and changed vehicles multiple times to go home. Many others walked long distances to reach their destinations.

The exodus began on Saturday after the announcement of complete lockdown amid a surge in Covid deaths and infections across the country.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A relative of a patient in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Covid-19 unit resting her head on a pillar. Their worries have increased along with the rise in infections and deaths caused by the virus. The photo was taken yesterday.

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BUYING VACCINES Momen doubts it'll be smooth

Says global politics at play

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen expressed scepticism about procuring vaccines smoothly saying bilateral cooperation is not the only deciding factor and that issues of global politics are at play.

"We have discovered, with shock and disappointment, that global politics and affluence-power nexus have the overpowering dominance in the global society...", he said at a webinar titled "Revisiting Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges in the South Asian Region", organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

It was attended by diplomats, academics and government officials.

Momen said due to the sudden rise in Covid-19 cases in neighbouring countries, it is imperative that South Asian nations receive their share of the vaccine without any strings attached.

Over 3,000kms of roads poor, bad or very bad

Finds RHD survey on roads condition; overall state improved a little

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Although road conditions under Roads and Highways Department network have improved a little compared to the last year, over 3,000km surveyed roads -- 16.26 percent -- are still in "poor, bad or very bad" condition, says an RHD survey.

Around Tk 15,606.6 crore would be required to repair those in the current fiscal year, according to the Maintenance and Rehabilitation Needs Report 2021-22.

But the government has allocated

CONDITION OF 18,473.67KM SURVEYED ROADS

Good	12002.75km (64.97%)
Fair	3465.2 (18.76%)
Poor	1524.29 (8.25%)
Bad	789.6 (4.27%)
Very Bad	691.83 (3.74%)

Tk 3,011 crore -- almost one fifth of the required amount -- in the budget and that too is for repair and maintenance

of all roads and bridges across the country.

It means that the condition of the dilapidated roads, especially those in the districts, is likely to worsen as they might not get priority for repair due to the fund crunch, said experts, including RHD engineers.

Experts have blamed overloading, waterlogging and poor construction work for the bad condition of roads, which is considered one of the major reasons behind road accidents.

The RHD authorities, however, did

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