

GAS TANKER EXPLOSION

At least 50 people killed in Haiti

AFP, Port-au-Prince

At least 50 people were killed when a gas tanker exploded in the Haitian city of Cap-Haitien yesterday morning, according to a local official, with overwhelmed local medics saying the toll was feared to rise.

"I saw on the scene between 50 and 54 people burned alive," Deputy Mayor Patrick Almonor said. "It is impossible to identify them."

Almonor also said "about 20" houses in the area were set ablaze by the explosion.

"We can't yet give details on the number of victims inside the houses," he said.

Nearby Justinien University Hospital was overwhelmed with patients as the injured were transported to the facility.

"We don't have the ability to treat the number of seriously burned people," a nurse told AFP.

"I'm afraid we won't be able to save them all," she said.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry said the explosion left "around 40 people" dead and dozens injured, as he decreed three days of national mourning.

Ariel said field hospitals would be rapidly deployed to help care for the blast victims.

According to Almonor, it appeared the truck driver lost control as it swerved to avoid a motorcycle taxi and the tanker flipped over.

Almonor said fuel spilled onto the road and pedestrians rushed to collect the tanker's gas, which is currently in short supply as Haiti grapples with a severe fuel shortage caused by the tightening grip of criminal gangs on the capital Port-au-Prince.

End 'aggressive actions'

Blinken, in Jakarta, urges China, vows to protect rule-based order in Asia-Pacific

AGENCIES

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday urged China to cease "aggressive actions" in the Asia-Pacific, speaking during a visit to the region, as Washington seeks to bolster alliances against Beijing.

President Joe Biden's administration is trying to reset relations and reassert its influence in Asia after the turbulence and unpredictability of the Donald Trump era.

Blinken's comments came in Indonesia, the first leg of a Southeast Asian tour. He heads to Malaysia and Thailand next.

In a speech outlining the US approach to what it terms the Indo-Pacific, Blinken said Washington would work with allies and partners to "defend the rules-based order" and that countries should have the right to "choose their own path".

Blinken added that Washington was "determined to ensure freedom of navigation in the South China Sea", and

» Says US preparing 'alternatives' in case Iran nuclear talks fail

» Washington to press Myanmar to 'cease its indiscriminate violence'

» Putin and Xi to discuss 'aggressive' talk from US and Nato today



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi sign a MOU at the Pancasila Building in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

said Beijing's actions there threaten the movement of more than 3 trillion dollars' worth of commerce every year. Blinken also said Washington wants to ensure "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".

Blinken said the US would press Myanmar to "cease its indiscriminate violence, release all of those unjustly detained, allow unhindered access, and restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy".

On Iran, he said the US is preparing "alternatives" in case efforts to revive a deal to curb Tehran's nuclear ambitions collapse, as expectations grow that talks will fail.

"We continue in this hour, on this day, to pursue diplomacy because it remains at this moment the best option, but we are actively engaging with allies and partners on alternatives," he said in Jakarta.

MORE NEWS

Mother Teresa charity probed for 'forced conversion'

Indian police are probing a charity started by Mother Teresa, officials said yesterday. Authorities in the western state of Gujarat told AFP they were investigating whether the Missionaries of Charity forced girls in its shelter home there to wear a cross and read the Bible. District social officer Mayank Trivedi told AFP that his complaint to the police was based on a report by child welfare authorities and other district officials.

UN validates 38 degrees Celsius Arctic temperature

The UN yesterday officially recognised the 38 degrees Celsius measured in Siberia last year as a new record high for the Arctic, sounding "alarm bells" over climate change. The sweltering heat -- equivalent to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit -- was seen on June 20, 2020 in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk, marking the highest temperature ever recorded above the Arctic Circle, the World Meteorological Organization said. Verkhoyansk lies about 115 kilometres (70 miles) north of the Arctic Circle.

Capitol riot panel votes to hold Trump aide in contempt

Lawmakers investigating the assault on the US Capitol voted unanimously Monday to pursue criminal contempt charges against Donald Trump's former chief of staff for refusing to testify. Mark Meadows has made clear he has no intention of complying with a subpoena to appear before the cross-party January 6 congressional select committee and missed a scheduled deposition for the second time last week. Meadows was Trump's most senior aide at the time of the assault and was reportedly with the then-president in the White House as the rioters breached the Capitol.

Duterte withdraws from 2022 Senate race

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday withdrew his candidacy for the 2022 Senate race, the government elections monitor said, a month after he made a last-minute entry into the contest. Duterte, 76, is constitutionally barred from seeking re-election. No official reason was immediately provided for Duterte's sudden withdrawal from the elections in May. His latest withdrawal does not necessarily mean he is planning to quit politics. Under election rules, he could potentially substitute another candidate sharing his surname if they were disqualified or died. Duterte's daughter Sara is running for vice president while his son Sebastian is contesting the mayoral race in the family's southern stronghold of Davao City.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

VOTE IN PARLIAMENT ON NEW CURBS OVER OMICRON THREAT

British PM faces rebellion

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faces a large rebellion among his Conservative lawmakers yesterday in a parliamentary vote over new restrictions to try to curb the spread of the new Omicron coronavirus variant.

The measures, including ordering people to work from home, to wear masks in public places and use Covid-19 passes to enter some venues, are expected to be approved by parliament but with Johnson relying on the opposition Labour Party for votes.

It's yet another blow to a prime minister already under pressure over reported parties in his Downing Street office last year when such gatherings were banned, a pricey refurbishment of his apartment and the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Many of his lawmakers say the restrictions are draconian, with several questioning the introduction of vaccination certification, dubbed Covid passports, to enter some venues, such as night clubs.



Others are using the votes as an opportunity to vent their anger at Johnson, believing the man who helped the Conservatives win a large majority at a 2019 election is squandering the party's successes by self-inflicted missteps and gaffes. But despite the grumblings of discontent, Conservative Party insiders say there is not enough of a groundswell against Johnson to dislodge him yet, with no potential challenger commanding enough support to replace him.

Before the series of votes on the measures, due to start at around 1830 GMT, Johnson warned his cabinet of

top ministers that there was a "huge spike" in Omicron cases heading Britain's way and that the measures were necessary to protect people.

Britain has registered almost 4,500 cases of Omicron, with 10 people hospitalised. One person has died after contracting the variant.

In China, economically important Zhejiang province wrestled with a Covid outbreak that has caused some districts to shut down businesses and left hundreds of thousands of people facing quarantine or other restrictions. Zhejiang, a major industrial and export hub, reported 44 of China's 51 domestically transmitted coronavirus cases yesterday, bringing the total since late last week to nearly 200.

In Australia, authorities yesterday said they will push ahead with plans to ease Covid restrictions before Christmas. After a string of infections linked to festive season parties in and around Sydney, New South Wales state recorded more than 800 new cases yesterday -- its highest total since October 2. There were seven related

DU student tortured

FROM PAGE 12

Chowdhury Meghla, 26, to United Hospital yesterday where doctors declared her dead.

Police and her family members said Elma had numerous bruises on her body.

Elma, a final year student of the department of dance, married Canada expat Iftekhar Abedin six months ago and used to live in her husband's Banani home.

Iftekhar came to Dhaka some days ago, police and family members said.

On information, police went to the hospital and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, said Alamgir Gazi, inspector (investigation) of Banani Police Station.

Iftekhar was taken into police custody for interrogation, he said, adding that there were marks of old and fresh injuries on her body.

Iqbal Hossain, an uncle of Elma, said, "My niece was tortured to death by her husband and his family members. We saw numerous torture marks."

Elma's teachers and classmates rushed to DMCH hearing the news of her death. The students demanded an impartial investigation and justice for their friend.

Jannatul Ferdous, a classmate of the victim, said they could not reach Elma after she got married.

"We often found her phone switched off or her in-laws received the calls whenever we called her," she said, adding that Elma last went to the university campus in September to sit for an exam.

Tamanna Rahman, a teacher, said a man accompanied the student when she went to the department to sit for the exam.

He, like a bodyguard, was watching her all along, she said. The Daily Star could not reach Elma's in-laws for comments.

Factory fire kills five in Bogura

FROM PAGE 12

The bodies of the victims could not be recognised, as they were charred badly, police and fire service officials said.

The district administration formed a four-member probe body, headed by an additional district magistrate, who will submit a report within the next seven working days, said Ziaul Haque, deputy commissioner of Bogura.

A worker of the factory said, "I was at the front part. I suddenly heard a loud noise and moments later, dense smokes began spreading through the factory. Some of my colleagues and I immediately ran out through the main gate."

Abdul Malek, deputy assistant director of Bogura's Fire Service and Civil Defence, said, "We could not identify the cause of the fire, but we talked to some of the workers who were present during the incident and they told us it generated from the machine unit."

"They also said that due to extreme heat in the production unit, there was a spark that ignited the trash in the

bin near the machine unit."

The fire service official added, "There were not adequate fire extinguishers in such a large factory; there weren't enough exit doors either. We found five charred bodies at the rear end of the factory. There was a small emergency gate there, but it was locked. If it were not, the five could have survived."

AKM Morshed, deputy assistant director of Naogaon Fire Service and Civil Defence, said, "It is a large factory, but we did not find adequate measures to put out a fire immediately. We only found some small extinguishers, which weren't sufficient."

He further said, "We also came to know the workers did not even know how to use a fire extinguisher."

Contacted, Jalal Uddin, OC of the Adamdighi Police Station, said, "We have called the CID forensic team to identify the charred bodies. They are working on it."

Jahangir Alam, accountant of the factory, said, "We had 70, including 15 women, working in two shifts. At least 11 women were working during

the incident yesterday."

Contacted, Tofazzal Hossain, owner of the factory and also the mayor of Santahar municipality, said, "I was at the municipality office during the incident. The fire gutted my factory and damaged things worth around Tk 30 crore."

Asked about fire safety measures, he claimed he had "all the required facilities" in his factory.

It was also found that the factory does not have any environmental clearance.

When asked about this, the mayor said, "I have applied for a clearance certificate from the Department of Environment."

Sufia Nazim, director of DoE at Rajshahi's divisional office in Bogura, said, "The BIRS Plastic Industries Limited has no environmental certificate. They had applied a year ago but there was a High Court order that no factory can produce one-time use plastic products after BELA filed a writ petition in this regard. Thus, I did not give them environmental clearance."

Woman raped

FROM PAGE 12

Sadar Hospital for medical tests.

Police were yet to detain Rubel, the prime accused. Meanwhile, two accused in a case filed over the gang-rape of a garment worker in Barguna's Amtali upazila were sent to jail.

Police handed over two accused Jewel Sikder alias Akash, 30, and Kawshar Mollah, 28, to a senior judicial magistrate court in the noon and the court directed to send them to jail, said AKM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Amtali Police Station.

Earlier, the victim's mother filed a rape case with Amtali Police Station on Sunday evening.

Police raided the house in the evening and arrested Jewel and Kawshar from Kulaichar village.

[Our Patuakhali correspondent contributed to this report]

First protect

FROM PAGE 12

reports Reuters.

Even if Omicron turns out to be a milder disease in an individual patient, there was no doubt that the rapidly rising force of infection would generate more hospitalisations in the coming weeks just by the sheer weight of numbers, he added.

"Every single health system needs to get ready," Ryan said. "We are going to likely to see a very large Omicron wave. We need to protect the health system, we need to protect those we love. It's not rocket science, everyone knows how to do it."

The coronavirus has killed at least 5,311,914 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP yesterday.

Bhutto walks out in tears

FROM PAGE 12

airfields in Amritsar, Pathankot, Srinagar, Avantipur, Utterlari, Jodhpur, Ambala and Agra in the broad day light on December 3.

"Mr. President," continued Indira, "may I ask you in all sincerity: Was the release or even secret negotiations with a single human being, namely, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, more disastrous than the waging of a war?"

Indira Gandhi further said, "We are asked what we want. We seek nothing for ourselves. We do not want any territory of what was East Pakistan and now constitutes Bangladesh. We do not want any territory of West Pakistan. We do want lasting peace with Pakistan."

"Be that as it may, it is my earnest and sincere hope that with all the knowledge and deep understanding of human affairs you, as President of the United States and reflecting the will, the aspirations and idealism of the great American people, will at least let me know where precisely we have gone wrong before your representatives or spokesmen deal with us with such harshness of language," concluded the Indian prime minister.

BHUTTO DENOUNCES SECURITY COUNCIL

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, ripping up his notes as his face streaked with tears, walked out of the Security Council today after accusing it of legalising aggression and occupation of Pakistan.

Bhutto's parting words to the Council were: "Mr President, I am not a rat. I've never ratted in my life. I have faced assassination attempts. I've faced imprisonment. Today I am not ratting, but I am leaving your Security Council."

"I find it disgraceful to my person and to my country to remain here a moment longer. Impose any decision, have a treaty worse than Versailles, legalise aggression, legalise occupation -- I will not be a party to it. We will fight. My country harkens for me."

"Why should I waste my time here in the Security Council? I will not be a party to the ignominious surrender of part of my country. You can take your Security Council; here you are. I am going."

Outside the chamber, he said: "I hate this body. I don't want to see their faces again. I'd rather go back to a destroyed Pakistan."

The council met twice again in the evening.

ON THE WAR FRONT
Indian officials said tonight that the commander of Pakistani forces in the besieged city of Dhaka had asked for a ceasefire, but that India had demanded a complete surrender of the enemy army in East Pakistan.

The Indian Army Chief of Staff Gen SHFJ Manekshaw said he had received a message "regarding a ceasefire" through American diplomatic channels from Lt Gen AAK Niazi, who commanded Pakistani forces in East

Pakistan, at 2:30pm yesterday.

General Manekshaw's reply, also sent through American diplomatic channels, said: "I have received your communication regarding a ceasefire in Bangladesh at 1430 hours today through the American Embassy in New Delhi."

"Since you have indicated your desire to stop fighting, I expect you to issue orders to all forces under your command in Bangladesh to cease fighting immediately and surrender to my advancing forces wherever they are located," General Manekshaw's message added.

He asked the Pakistani commander to answer him by radio and gave frequencies on which Indian radio operators would be listening for a reply.

BE QUICK ABOUT IT: TAJUDDIN
Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad in a broadcast called upon the Mukti Bahini and allied Indian forces to quicken their final assault on the enemy now cornered inside Dhaka city. He said, "Our allied forces are now at the outskirts of Dhaka for a final assault on the Pakistani troops whose moral weakness has reached the lowest ebb."

He added, "The whole nation is awaiting eagerly the rapid destruction of the enemy forces."

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Dr Yunus honoured

FROM PAGE 12

director general of the World Trade Organization.


The award recognises extraordinary contributions of individuals and organisations striving to further the work of the UN and advance its goal of a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world for everyone, everywhere, reads a press release.

The awards were presented on December 9 in USA's New York at a "We The People" event, which named after the inspiring opening words of the UN Charter, and to honour the profound vision of the UN founders -- to save future generations from the scourge of war, reaffirm the faith in human rights and equal rights, ensure justice and international law, and promote social progress and freedom.

Professor Muhammad Yunus, nobel laureate and founder of Grameen Bank, was given the award in recognition of his enlightening leadership and innovation to enhance human dignity, equity, and justice.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J Mohammed presented the award and interviewed Professor Yunus on stage about his campaign for creating a "Three Zero World".

Previous honourees of the Champion of Global Change Award include US presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, UN secretaries-generals Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie.



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NOTICE INVITING RETENDER

Sealed quotations are hereby invited from eligible Vendors as mentioned in the tender documents for the following solutions for the use of NCC Bank Ltd.

Sl	Name of the work	Price of the tender document	Sale start date of the tender document	Sale end date of the tender document	Date and time for Tender Submission on or before
01	Item-1: supplying, installation, configuration and integration of san storage solution at NCC bank Data Center (DC) and Near Data Center (NDC).	Non-refundable Tk.10,000/- (Ten Thousand) in cash	December 15, 2021	December 30, 2021	January 02, 2022 at 3.30 PM
02	Item-2: supplying, installation, configuration and integration of data backup management solution at NCC bank Data Center (DC), Near Data Center (NDC) and Far DC (FDC).	Non-refundable Tk.5,000/- (Five Thousand) in cash	December 15, 2021	December 30, 2021	January 02, 2022 at 3.30 PM
03	Item-3: supplying, installation, configuration and integration of VMware virtualization solution at NCC bank data center (DC) and near data center (NDC).	Non-refundable Tk.5,000/- (Five Thousand) in cash	December 15, 2021	December 30, 2021	January 02, 2022 at 3.30 PM
04	Item-4: supplying, installation, configuration and integrations with existing Software Define Network (SDN) - Application Centric Infrastructure (ACI) of NCC Bank Data Center (DC) And Near Data Center (NDC).	Non-refundable Tk.10,000/- (Ten Thousand) in cash	December 15, 2021	December 30, 2021	January 02, 2022 at 3.30 PM

The schedules containing detailed Terms & Conditions may be collected from the Common Services Division (Level-5), NCC Bank Ltd. Head Office, Dhaka and submit the same under sealed envelope to the Tender Box placed at Common Services Division (CSD). Tender will be opened on January 02, 2022 at 04:00 PM in presence of the bidders or their representatives (if any). The Bank authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Sr. Executive Vice President
Common Services Division