

Five injured as explosive goes off in Moghbazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were injured when an explosive kept in a garbage container went off in Dhaka's Moghbazar area yesterday morning.

The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. Four of them took primary treatment, while Atiqul Islam alias Akhil, 15, was still being treated till yesterday evening.

The explosion occurred immediately after Akhil, staffer of a metal-scrap shop, started taking out garbage from a plastic container kept on the footpath in front of a drug store at Wireless Gate area.

A staffer of the pharmacy asked him to take the garbage out. The explosion occurred at 10:15am, said Officer-in-Charge of Ramna Police Station Abul Hossain.

The other injured are Saiful Islam, 36, Tareque,

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As the nearest foot-over bridge is under construction, pedestrians have no other option but to cross this busy road in Farmgate area in a risky manner, as cars, buses and trucks zoom by. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DNCC bowing down to police's wants?

Officials ditch drive to evict police box due to 'resistance, threats' from law enforcers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation was forced to abandon a drive to evict a traffic-police box in the capital's Asad Gate intersection yesterday allegedly due to resistance from police and threat of arrest.

Mafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, deputy chief waste management officer (additional charge) at DNCC, said he along with four other officials started the drive, as the police box was being built on the road's median without getting permission from DNCC.

Soon after they reached the spot at 6:30am, four policemen tried to resist them. Later, around 30 officers joined, he claimed.

They rebuked and even threatened the city corporation officials, Mafizur alleged.

Mafizur then informed the matter to DNCC zone-5 Executive Officer Mutakabbir Ahmed, who after talking to police high-ups, asked the drive team to leave the spot.

The city corporation officials left the area after an hour, Mafizur said.

Contacted, Mutakabbir said the police box was constructed without permission. Police cannot do this.

Deputy Commissioner Traffic (Tejgaon division) Shahed Al Masud denied that police misbehaved and threatened to arrest the officials. "If DNCC had informed us beforehand, police would have dismantled it on their own initiative."

"Traffic boxes are common on roads around the world," he said.

AL seeks to keep BNP at bay Holds programmes in the capital today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League will hold counter programmes today as the BNP and like-minded parties will stage protest rallies in the capital and other divisional headquarters.

The BNP, at its January 16 rally, announced that it will hold the protest programmes today, as the Baksal rule was introduced on January 25, 1975.

The party termed the day "democracy killing day".

The rallies are also aimed at drumming up support for the party's 10-point demand, including the resignation of the ruling AL government, dissolution of parliament and formation of a neutral caretaker government.

Although the AL leaders say they will hold the rallies to mark the Mass Uprising Day and not to counter the BNP's protests, insiders say the AL programmes will be held to "take control of the streets".

Earlier, the AL organised its programme marking Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Homecoming Day on January 11 during the BNP's mass sit-in programme. The actual date of the homecoming, however, is January 10.

This time as well, the party is observing Mass Uprising Day today -- one day after the actual date.

AL, its associate bodies and other pro-AL organisations will stage rallies at five different places in the capital.

The party's two Dhaka city units will organise two separate rallies -- one in front of the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue at 11:00am and another at the Banani Model School field at 3:00pm.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, is likely to attend the events.

Dhaka South Jubo League will organise a rally at the Jatrabari intersection and the while the Dhaka North unit will hold one in Mohakhali Kachabazar area.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University Chhatra League will stage a rally in Shahbagh.

Leaders and activists of AL's two Dhaka city units held several meetings and instructed their activists to stay on the streets from morning.

Wishing anonymity, several leaders told this newspaper

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Swallowing yaba for a living

Smuggling drugs inside human stomach on the rise, say DNC officials after arresting 5 carriers

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It takes around 4 hours to swallow 54 small packets of yaba for 41-year-old Josna Khatun. Each packet contains 50 pills.

"I gobbled those packets with Banana. I was about to vomit when I tried to swallow those. But I managed somehow, thinking of the payment that was promised to me," Josna told this correspondent after a team from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested her from Dhaka yesterday.

Hailing from Pabna, Josna said she still bears the pain of carrying the yaba pills inside her stomach. The smugglers offered to pay Tk 10,000 for carrying a thousand pills from Cox's Bazar to Dhaka.

For the successful delivery of the 54 packets, Josna was supposed to get a payment of Tk 25,000. She went to Teknaf from Pabna two days ago after getting in touch with the syndicate.

Inside a house in Teknaf, she gobbled the packets along with four others -- Selina Khatun, 27, Jony Sheikh, 21, Md Hasan, 40, and Babul Hossain, 32.

They reached Dhaka yesterday morning on a passenger bus. The syndicate members in Dhaka were supposed to receive the five from Sayedabad bus stand and take them to a hotel to bring out the tablets from their stomachs.

Based on a tip, the DNC team

We have recovered around 4.66 lakh yaba pills in 2022. The number was 1.80 lakh in 2021. Around 35 to 40 percent of the pills were smuggled inside human stomach, which was around 20 to 25 percent in 2021.

People will die from an "abnormal overdose" of the drug if any of these packets leak or burst inside their stomachs. It can be life-threatening if anyone carries a huge number of yaba pills in this manner.

Md Rasheduzzaman
Deputy Director of DNC (Dhaka-north)

Dr Shoebur Reza Choudhury
Chief Consultant of Central Drug Addiction Centre

managed to arrest the five from the bus stand and recovered around 8,000 pills, Mehedi Hasan, assistant director of DNC, told The Daily Star.

"We are now conducting a drive to locate and arrest other members of the syndicate," he said.

Another arrestee Selina said she managed to gobble around 40 packets, which contain around 2,000 pills. She was promised a payment of Tk 20,000.

According to DNC officials, the number of cases of carrying yaba inside a human's stomach has sharply increased in recent times, compared to previous years.

"We have recovered around 4.66 lakh yaba pills in 2022. The number was 1.80 lakh in 2021. Around 35 to 40 percent of the pills were smuggled inside a human stomach, which was around 20 to 25 percent in 2021," Md Rasheduzzaman, deputy director of DNC Dhaka-north, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, pills were also smuggled inside onions, red chilis, tins, tiffin boxes, shoes, or mobile batteries. However, smugglers and carriers were getting busted following these methods, said the official.

"Despite the technique being life-threatening, syndicates have managed to get the carriers on board by promising Tk 10,000 to Tk 30,000 per consignment," he said.

On January 5 this year, the DNC (Dhaka north) arrested Shahidul Islam, 30, and his associate Mitu Akter, 29, and recovered around 7,500 pieces of yaba from their stomach.

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'Show austerity in energy use'

Ministers instruct deputy commissioners at conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy commissioners have been asked to show more austerity in energy consumption at district and upazila levels to tackle the upcoming challenges in the power sector.

They were also instructed to play a role in collecting due power bills from different government organisations at the field level.

They were given the instructions yesterday at the three-day DC conference, which is taking place at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

We've set priorities. Hospitals, irrigation, agriculture, fertiliser productions and industries, for instance, have been given top priorities. These sectors will be brought under strict monitoring to ensure uninterrupted power.

Nasrul Hamid
State minister for power

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the conference from the Prime Minister's Office.

In the afternoon sessions, DCs took part in meetings with different ministries, including those of power, finance, education, and disaster management. The ministers gave the directives at that time.

Talking with the media after a session, State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid said, "Deputy commissioners and divisional commissioners are asked to keep regular communication with the power division to ensure uninterrupted power for irrigation."

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PRESIDENTIAL POLLS EC likely to announce schedule today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is likely to announce the schedule for the presidential election today.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal came up with the announcement yesterday after holding a meeting with Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

It is a custom that the CEC meets the Speaker ahead of the announcement of the schedule for presidential election, Habibur told reporters at his EC office.

He said they had a discussion on the election and then it was decided that the EC will announce the election schedule soon.

"We [election commissioners] will hold a meeting in the morning tomorrow [today]. After that meeting, we will unveil the election schedule..." said the CEC.

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Bangladesh must strengthen its diplomatic efforts

Say foreign policy analysts on regional cooperation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As the world faces unprecedented geopolitical and economic challenges following the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, Bangladesh needs to ramp up its diplomatic efforts for regional cooperation in South and Southeast Asia and beyond, say foreign policy analysts.

The observations came at a seminar, titled "Strengthening Bangladesh's Foreign Relations with Neighbours in the Evolving Global Order", organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) yesterday.

Speakers said South Asia is one of the least integrated regions of the world. Its exports are mostly to the West and the supply chain was affected during the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, which should prompt the regional countries to redefine the approaches for promoting regional trade and investment.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President M Humayun Kabir said generally, all countries prioritise prosperity and security in their foreign relations.

Humayun Kabir, also a former ambassador, said Bangladesh has made significant improvements in socio-economic spheres but now faces challenges as it is graduating from LDC in 2026.

He suggested coordination among various

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Sharp rise in child deaths from road crashes, drowning: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Significantly more children died in road crashes and drowning incidents last year, when compared to the previous one, found a report of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

The report, which used newspaper reports, revealed the finding during a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

As per the report, 196 children died in road crashes in 2022. The death toll was 96 the previous year.

The number of children who drowned to death stood at 1,419 in 2022, while it was 405 in 2021, mentioned the report.

Meanwhile, the report found that 560 children were raped in 2022, while 81 were subjected to gang rape, 288 got murdered and 317 died by suicide after rape.

Ninety-eight children faced an attempt to rape in 2022, mentioned the report.

Moreover, 14 house-holds were victims of rape, of whom, three were wounded and two died by suicide. Four of them were murdered, and two were reported



Speakers at the conference at Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

to have died under mysterious circumstances.

The report, "Condition of Bangladeshi Children 2022: Analysis on Newspapers", was based on the reports published in eight daily newspapers from 2021 to 2022. The newspapers are Prothom Alo, Daily Jugantor, Samakal, Daily Ittefaq, Kaler Kantho, The New Age, The Daily

Star and Dhaka Tribune.

Unfortunately, around 80 percent of victims do not get justice due to delays in trial, stated the report.

Mentioning the spike in child marriage during Covid-19, MJF coordinator Shahana Huda said the ratio decreased a little after the pandemic, but the actual number is yet to be estimated, as these are

not widely reported in media.

"Children aged 13 years and below are more prone to abuse, as they do not complain about such crimes, due to their lack of knowledge of where to seek help," she added.

In her welcome speech, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said as per the analysis of

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