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# Star

SECOND EDITION

## THE DAILY

## ON FRIDAY

DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 10, 2023

"The occupiers can only terrorise civilians. That's all they can do. But it won't help them."

President Volodymyr Zelensky on Russian missile strikes across Ukraine



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## Writing was on the wall

Negligence, greed of owners ultimately led to Siddikbazar tragedy, say police



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The loss of at least 22 lives in Tuesday's explosion at Siddikbazar in Gulistan area is the result of sheer greed and negligence of the owners of the building and the shop in its basement, found primary investigation of the police.

As per the Rajuk-approved design, the basement was supposed to be used as car parking.

But the building owners, without complying with the building code, rented it out to a trader who enclosed the entire 1,800-square-foot basement with glass, leaving no space for air passage, said police.

The proprietor of the shop named "Bangladesh Sanitary" had installed two heavy-duty ACs but those were not serviced since 2010, said DMP's Additional Commissioner Harun Or Rashid.

"It was the responsibility of the building owners to use the basement for car parking. There was no air ventilation system there and those who rented the basement never

**"It was the responsibility of the building owners to use the basement for car parking. There was no air ventilation system there and those who rented the basement never raised any questions."**

DMP's Additional Commissioner Harun Or Rashid

raised any questions," he said at a press briefing at DMP Media Centre yesterday.

"Their negligence caused so many deaths and injuries. So, the building owners and the shop owner cannot avoid responsibility."

The additional commissioner at the briefing disclosed the arrest of two building owners, Wahidur Rahman, 46, and his brother Matir Rahman, 36, and proprietor of Bangladesh Sanitary Abdul Motaleb Mintu.

They were held under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows police to arrest anyone without warrants.

A case over so many people's deaths and injuries for their negligence would also be filed anytime, said Mashur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB's Lalbagh division.

Meanwhile, fire service officials recovered a body from the site around 12:15pm yesterday.

The deceased was Mehedi Hasan Swapan, a manager of the shop in the basement, claimed his brother-in-law Abdus Sattar Babul.

After recovering the body, fire service officials said there were no more bodies trapped in the rubble of the Siddikbazar building.

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**Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto notched his third T20I fifty as the Tigers won the three-match T20I series opener against England by six wickets at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The 24-year-old seemed largely in control during his 30-ball 51 -- his second fifty on the trot that was laced with eight fours -- that helped set the tone for Bangladesh's first T20I win against England.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tigers show authority in win over England

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Chattogram

Bangladesh put in a massive effort with the ball to come back into the game after being put under the cosh before batters showed an approach that signaled the coming of a new Bangladesh in the T20I format, leading the Tigers to a convincing six-wicket win against world champions England in the first T20I of the first bilateral T20I series between the two sides.

Either the way Jos Buttler came out of his shell after being dropped with England looking good to post 200 or the way Bangladesh got back into the game could be the story of the match. The way some that some just found their feet on the international stage after being away from the international set-up for long period or the way Najmul Hossain Shanto

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## Deaths won't stop as justice a mirage

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ZYMA ISLAM

Over the past decade, there has not been a single conviction in any major fire, and in most cases, the affected establishments went back to business as usual the minute media attention shifted.

Legal experts said the main reason for this is that the victims are poor and vulnerable and the perpetrators are influential enough to manage the cases. Between 2020 and 2022, there were 13,726 fires in industrial and commercial establishments. The number includes cases of fires caused by boiler explosions or gas leaks.

At least 256 people died in these incidents, and of them 13 were firefighters killed in industrial fires. The fires also caused losses worth at least Tk 291 crore.

Yet, the count of convictions is zero. "When it comes to investigations, things don't move. Witnesses refuse

to show up at court to testify because of the fear of reprisal," said Jyotirmoy Barua, a human rights expert.

"The court is still only a place for the rich and the powerful," he said.

Khandaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the government is still at the stage where it is assessing the safety concerns at factories. Apart from garment industries, no remedial steps have been taken for any other industries or commercial establishments.

"We do not see them [government] take any big steps and even after large disasters, most [factories or businesses] have been given the permission to reopen and operate.

"A reason why unsafe factories continue to operate is because the Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishments and the fire service do not have the power to shut down factories," said Moazzem.

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**2010** Fire at Nimtoli killed 123 people, no case was filed

**2012** Tazreen Fashion fire killed 112, owner politically awarded

**2013** Rana Plaza tragedy killed 1,140, only one in jail

**2016** Tampaco Foils fire killed 34, factory reopened

**2019** Fire in FR Tower killed 26, investigation ongoing

**2019** Chawkbazar fire killed 71, witness deposition yet to start

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## Rajuk not sure if building design was followed

MOSTAEFA YOUSUF

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha still doesn't know whether the seven-storey building in which an explosion on Tuesday claimed 22 lives was constructed as per the approved design.

The Detective Branch of police obtained copies of two designs from the owners: the one from 1983 mentions that it is a five-storey commercial building, but the other, which is likely to be the revised design, is illegible.

The revised design might have mentioned that it is a seven-storey building, but officials do not know that for sure.

Hamidul Islam, director (Zone 05) at Rajuk, said the technical committee was looking for the documents and a possible revised design to be able to say whether the design was followed during construction.

An official, requesting anonymity, said Rajuk lost around 10,000 documents to a termite infestation in 2003. The files of the ill-fated building could be among those.

Referring not to be named, a DB officer who is in the team searching for the documents in Rajuk, said construction work did not start until 1990 even though

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## BUSINESS

### FOREX RESERVES SLIP TO SIX-YEAR LOW

Bangladesh's foreign currency reserves have slipped to a six-year low of \$31.15 billion after the central bank cleared import bills to the tune of \$1.05 billion with a number of Asian countries, official figures showed.

This means the reserves have fallen by about 30 percent from \$44.14 billion recorded in March last year.

The current level of the reserves is the lowest since the financial year of 2016-17 when it stood at \$33.49 billion.

STORY ON B1



Two rescuers at the scene of an explosion at the seven-storey building on North South Road yesterday. Dhaka South City Corporation has put up a banner on the structure declaring it risky and prohibiting people from entering it. The blast on Tuesday left at least 22 people dead and over 100 others injured.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## MONEY FOR ATMS Tk 9cr of Tk 11.25cr looted from vehicle recovered: DB 7 people detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives claimed to have recovered about Tk 9 crore from the capital's Khilkhet area yesterday, hours after robbers looted Tk 11.25 crore from a microbus of a private security agency in Turag area.

They also detained seven people, including two directors of Money Plant Link Private Ltd, from different parts of the capital.

The money was being taken to Ashulia EPZ area to refill Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited's auto-teller machines (ATMs) when the robbery happened.

"We recovered about Tk 9 crore from three trunks and seized a microbus from Khilkhet. Drives are underway to recover the rest of the money," said Harun or Rashid, chief of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, while briefing reporters in Khilkhet in the evening.

However, Money Plant Managing Director Joshoda Jibon Debnath and Turag Police Station Inspector (investigation) Shariful Islam said that about Tk 3.90 crore was recovered from the three trunks.

The DB chief said, "It was a planned incident. We will see why the security agency officials let the robbers take away the money so easily. The robbers had been following the agency's transportation of money for a long time. The staffers of the agency were not carrying any arms."

The robbery took place in Turag area around 7:30am

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