

## A day turned dark in Uttara

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- A Monitor Special

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Dhaka : A calm school day turned into a nightmare when a Bangladesh Air Force F-7 BGI training jet crashed into Milestone School and College in Uttara shortly after 1:00 pm. The aircraft, which had taken off from AK Khandker Air Force Base, suffered a sudden technical failure and plummeted into the campus, setting off a chain of horror.

The jet smashed through the school's main gate and lower buildings, erupting in a massive explosion that sent fire and thick smoke into the air-and panic across the capital.

Panic, courage, tragedy

The crash occurred during class hours. Many students-some as young as six or seven-were in their classrooms or corridors. The explosion shook nearby buildings and shattered windows. Within seconds, chaos engulfed the school compound.

Parents, teachers, and passersby rushed in without hesitation. Some used rickshaws and vans to transport injured children. Others formed human chains to pull students from the burning rubble. Firefighters, police, and rescue teams arrived within minutes, while helicopters hovered overhead to assess the scene and evacuate the most critically wounded.

## Human toll

Authorities have now confirmed that at least 35 people have died in the incident. Among them are students, teachers, school staff, and the jet's pilot, Flight Lieutenant Md Toukir Islam. The confirmed death toll has steadily risen as victims succumb to their injuries in hospitals across the city.

More than 170 others were injured, many of them suffering from severe burns, blunt trauma, and smoke inhalation. Dozens remain in critical condition. Emergency wards in Dhaka's hospitals remain overwhelmed.



### Pilot's final moments : Tragic debate

Eyewitnesses and initial reports suggest that the pilot may have tried to avoid crashing into residential blocks by veering toward the open school field. Some describe him staying with the aircraft until the very last moment.

However, military insiders and analysts now believe that the pilot may have ejected seconds before impact, but too late to survive or steer the aircraft away from populated structures. His intentions remain debated-but the outcome remains tragic.

### Aftermath, official response

A high-level investigation by the Bangladesh Air Force and Ministry of

Defense has been launched. Authorities are analyzing flight data and eyewitness accounts to determine what caused the malfunction and whether proper emergency procedures were followed.

Interim Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus expressed profound sorrow and declared a National Day of Mourning. Flags were lowered to half-mast, and emergency funds have been released for the victims' families.



Debris of the crashed aircraft at Milestone School and College premise (above), and parents crying over the survival uncertainty of their kids at a hospital following the accident (below)

Rescue operations, supported by the military, RAB, police, and fire brigade, continued into the night as teams cleared wreckage and searched for missing or trapped individuals.

In remembrance

Across the country, candlelight vigils and prayer services were held for the victims. Students from other schools marched in silence. Blood donation drives sprang up in Dhaka and nearby districts. Celebrities, athletes, and public figures joined grieving families in calling for justice and reform.

The faces of lost children-some barely in third grade-now circulate across social media and front pages. The pain is national. The grief, immeasurable.

What comes next

Investigation : The full technical report is pending, but early findings point to a critical failure of onboard systems.

Airspace Safety Review: Aviation authorities are under pressure to review military flight routes and urban airspace regulations.

Policy Reform: There are growing calls for moving high-risk aviation activity away from dense urban centers like Dhaka.

Final question

How many more classrooms must burn before action is taken?

The July 21 crash will be remembered as one of Bangladesh's darkest peacetime tragedies. Whether it becomes a turning point-or just another forgotten headline-depends on what is done next.

Let this be the last time parents wait outside burning school gates. Let it be the last time our skies turn against us.