

## **17 killed, 400 injured in China port explosions**

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**Beijing:** At least 17 people have been killed and over 400 injured in two massive explosions followed by heavy fire at a warehouse containing chemical and toxic materials in the northern Chinese port city of Tianjin, state media reported on Wednesday.

The blasts ripped through the Ruihai warehouse, which stores dangerous goods, at 11.20 PM local time yesterday, following a fire report half an hour earlier.

Fireballs erupted then ignited more explosions in companies nearby, according to rescuers, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Official television CCTV showed footage of massive explosions in the city.

More than 10,000 people were reportedly evacuated from the nearby areas.

Tianjin, a major port city is located about 150 kms from Beijing.

It said 17 people were killed and over 400 injured in the incident.

The TV report said the fire still yet to be contained as firefighters can not use water to put it out due to presence of chemicals and instead has to use sand and other materials to contain it.

Xinhua also reported two firefighters were "out of contact" and another four injured during the rescue.Â

There are people trapped inside the blast site and rescue operation is still going on.

The injured have been sent to several hospitals nearby.

Xinhua reporters saw blood everywhere on the floors of hospitals.

Lu Yun, head of Taida Hospital, which has admitted some 150 injured people, told Xinhua that the injuries were mostly from broken glass or stones.

Some of the injuries are serious.

The shockwaves were felt kilometres away, with window glass of buildings shattered.

The rolling doors and window glass of Donghai Road terminal station of Jinbin light railway, which serves as a major link between the Binhai New Area and the downtown Tianjin, were broken. Its roof also partially collapsed.

Minor fires and blasts could still be seen from a far distance early today.

As soon as the explosion was under control, some taxi drivers and private car owners have voluntarily helped with sending the wounded to hospitals.

Some hotels have provided free accommodation to residents displaced by the blast. Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have asked all-out efforts to save the injured and minimise casualties in the Tianjin blast.

Two firefighters called to the scene were reported missing, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, adding that 10 emergency teams and 35 fire trucks were battling the blazes.

Hospital staff said most of those that arrived overnight had been discharged.

Tianjin is a major port and industrial area to the south-east of the Chinese capital, Beijing, and home to 7.5 million people.

- PTI