**"It is a political, moral, economic and financial crisis whose first victim is the Lebanese population"-** French President Emmanuel Macron

2020 has been a year of woes. From Coronavirus, civil unrest, cyclones to bomb blasts, this year had it all. Just when it seemed that it couldn't get worse, Beirut has a massive explosion in a warehouse killing at least 157 civilians and wounding thousands, as of 6 August 2020. The explosion was so intense that it was compared to the infamous 'Nuclear attack in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.'

**When did the blast happen?**

The explosion took place at 6:07 p.m. local time Tuesday (4 August 2020) near Beirut's port and central district, close to many highly-populated areas and tourist sites. The blast was even felt in Cyprus, around 240 kilometres — or about 150 miles — away, and generated seismic waves equivalent to a magnitude 3.3 earthquake.

**Blast seems horrific, what about casualties and damage caused?**

As of 6 August 2020, At least 137 people were killed, and 5,000 were wounded in a massive explosion that shook Beirut on Tuesday, according to Lebanon's health minister. The death toll could shoot up as it has been reported that there are over hundreds still missing. The misery doesn't stop here, over 3000,000 people have been displaced from their homes

Beirut's governor Marwan Abboud told reporters that the explosion had resulted in an estimated $3 to $5 billion in damage. A crater created by the explosion appeared to be roughly 124 meters, or 405 feet, in diameter — well over a football field in length.

The explosion was so tragic that authorities declared Beirut a "**disaster city**" and imposed a two-week state of emergency.

**This seems pretty bad, but how did this explosion take place in the first place?**

It's still unclear what exactly caused the explosion. Lebanon's prime minister said that an investigation would focus on an estimated 2,750 metric tons of explosive ammonium nitrate stored at a warehouse.

**Hold on, what is this ammonium nitrate thing? Isn't it some harmless chemical used in fertilisers?**

Ammonium nitrate has several different uses, but the two most common areas, agricultural fertiliser and as an explosive.

It is highly explosive when it comes into contact with fire - and when it explodes, ammonium nitrate can release toxic gases including nitrogen oxides and ammonia gas.

Since it is so flammable, there are strict rules on the safe storage of ammonium nitrate. Among the requirements are fire-proofed storage sites, and non-existence of drains, pipes or other channels in which ammonium nitrate could build-up, and create an additional explosion hazard.

**How have other countries reacted to this? How did India react?**

Lebanon's prime minister also called for international help: "I make an urgent appeal to friendly and brotherly countries... to stand by Lebanon and to help us heal our deep wounds," Hassan Diab said.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted: "The pictures and videos from Beirut tonight are shocking. All of my thoughts and prayers are with those caught up in this terrible incident.

"The UK is ready to provide support in any way we can, including to those British nationals affected."

US President Donald Trump sent his deepest sympathies after what he called "a terrible attack". And his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo offered assistance, tweeting: "We are monitoring and stand ready to assist the people of Lebanon as they recover from this horrible tragedy."

France said it was sending aid and resources to Lebanon.

Iran would "render assistance in any way necessary" Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted, while Saudi Arabia expressed its full solidarity with Lebanon.

Israel said in a statement that it had "approached Lebanon through international security and diplomatic channels and has offered the Lebanese government medical and humanitarian assistance".

The German foreign ministry said the blast had been felt at its embassy in the city.

"We cannot for the moment exclude German nationals figuring among the dead and wounded," it said in a statement.

Coming to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his grief on Twitter. He tweeted: "Shocked and saddened by the large explosion in Beirut city leading to loss of life and property. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families and the injured".

**How bad is the situation in Lebanon?**

Lebanon is experiencing political turmoil, with street demonstrations against the government's handling of the worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

Many blame the ruling elite who have dominated politics for years and amassed their wealth while failing to carry out the sweeping reforms necessary to solve the country's problems. People have to deal with daily power cuts, a lack of safe drinking water and limited public healthcare.

There has also been tension on the border with Israel, which said last week that it had thwarted an attempt by Hezbollah to infiltrate Israeli territory. But a senior Israeli official has told the BBC that "Israel has no connection" to the Beirut blast.

The blast happened close to the scene of the huge car bombing which killed ex-PM Hariri. Tuesday's blast also came days before the long-awaited verdict in the trial at a special court in the Netherlands of four men accused of orchestrating the attack.

This article is not intended to be boring like History textbooks. I don't want you all to sympathise with Lebanese, as they would have got a lot of those in the last few days. Rather, as a human being, I would want to ask you a simple question: What can you do to help them? You might say that it is infeasible for you to help people whom you never met. You might also argue that you alone can't be much help to Lebanese. I just want to remind you of one simple thing- **This phase has been tough for all of us.** There is still a major chunk of people around us, who are working day and night rigorously to make their ends meet. If you are financially sound, I request you to donate a small portion to needy people. Even if you are unable to help someone financially, stand and support them mentally in these challenging times.

We can't stop mishappenings, but we can surely come back stronger and ensure that the same mistake doesn't repeat in future. As they say, **when** **life gives you lemons**, **make lemonade**.