



Flames rising high at Gargaria Masterbari Bazar in Sreepur of Gazipur on Thursday night after construction workers of Dhaka-Mymensingh highway dual-carriageway project accidentally ruptured an underground gas pipe. *Top*, the broken pipe. *Bottom*, the devastation at the bazar. PHOTO: ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE

One dies

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Construction workers who were digging earth along Dhaka-Mymensingh highway to expand the width of the road accidentally ruptured the pipe.

The fire soon engulfed the Gargaria Masterbari Bazar and gutted at least 80 shops and two houses. Five people received burn injuries while trying to douse the blaze.

Two other critically injured have been undergoing treatment at the burn unit of the hospital.

As the news of death spread, locals took to the streets and blocked Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for two hours and vandalised several vehicles.

Sreepur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Aziz Haider Bhuiyan said on information, police and high officials of the local administration rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The locals withdrew the blockade following the assurance of compensation for the burn victims and the affected traders.

Tosharaf Hossain, station officer of Sreepur Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the loss caused by the blaze could go up to around Tk 20

Fartpack!

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inserted into the cow's digestive tract and convert it into enough energy to run a car for 24 hours.

The tube running to the animals' stomachs collects the gas inside the backpacks, which are then hung from the roof of the corral for analysis.

The systems have been under development by Argentina's National Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA) for a number of years and are still at proof-of-concept stage.

INTA's Pablo Sorondo told Ben Schiller at FastCoExist that the project is not ongoing, but he hopes the technology will one day be used on a much larger scale.

"Imagine a future farm with a couple of these cows used to provide energy to satisfy the farm's needs," he said.

A cow weighing 1,210 lb (550 kg) is thought to produce 800 to 1,000 litres of emissions each day.

Cows are by far the biggest producers, contributing to around 25 percent of all methane produced on the planet.

As one of the biggest beef producers with some 55 million heads of cattle, around 30 percent of Argentina's total greenhouse emissions could be generated by cows.

BJP gaining ground as polling advances

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A decision by the Election Commission to reprimand a senior Modi aide, Amit Shah, for making speeches deemed to stir tensions with minority Muslims underlined critics' assertions that the party is a divisive force.

However, the EC yesterday lifted the ban on Shah. Speaking earlier this month in Uttar Pradesh, Shah was recorded telling voters to reject parties with Muslim candidates. He also said Muslims in the area had raped, killed and humiliated Hindus.

But in the latest large opinion poll, taken in the first week of April, the BJP and its allies were forecast to win a narrow majority in the 543-seat lower house of parliament, compared with previous surveys predicting that they would fall short.

"Modi could be the change we need," said software engineer Murali Mohan, after casting his vote in a suburb of Bangalore, the centre of India's outsourcing sector and the capital of Karnataka.

"I want to see constructive work, economic development in this country," said Mohan, 39.

Voting took place in 121 constituencies across 12 states on Thursday.

The next round of voting is on April 24. Voters of 117 constituencies in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry will vote that day.

Voting runs until May 12 and results are due on May 16.

Despite his pro-development image, Modi is arguably the most divisive figure in Indian politics today.

Launching another scathing attack on the BJP, Congress president Sonia Gandhi yesterday said that the saffron party's acts were threatening the democratic fabric of the country, PTI reported.

Addressing a rally at Bhatgaon town in Sarguja Lok Sabha constituency, she said: "The BJP is crossing all the limits to capture power in this election. Their behaviour is extremely dangerous for the democratic set-up in our country. Elections will come and go, but the way they are doing things and lying to the people of this country, will hamper democracy."

Without naming Narendra Modi,

Sonia cautioned the people that no democracy could be safe in the hands of one man.

Modi's image remains tarnished by Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat, the western state where he is chief minister, on his watch 12 years ago. More than 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, were killed in the violence.

Modi denies accusations that he failed to stop the riots and a Supreme Court inquiry found he had no case to answer.

"People have forgotten what Modi did to people of this country. I think saving people's lives is more important than development," said Shafina Khan, a 21-year-old Muslim teacher in Kamshet village in Maharashtra who voted for the Nationalist Congress Party, a Congress ally.

Congress, led by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, is forecast to suffer its worst-ever defeat after a decade in power due to the economic slowdown, high inflation and repeated graft scandals. The party has ruled India for more than 50 of its 67 years of independence.

A former media adviser and a former coal secretary have both released books in recent days that

paint Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as a well-intentioned but weak figure who answers only to party president Sonia Gandhi.

"It's only a dynasty, like previously we had kings ruling," said PV Padmanabhan, a 79-year-old retired electricity board official who has voted in every Indian election, and was lining up to vote at the eastern Bangalore polling station.

"They have to give it to somebody else. (Leaders) should not only come from Nehru's family."

Indian elections are notoriously hard to forecast due to the diverse electorate and a parliamentary system in which local candidates hold great sway. Opinion polls wrongly predicted a victory for a BJP-led alliance in elections in 2004 and underestimated Congress's winning margin in 2009.

Voter turnout has averaged 68 percent so far, the Election Commission said on Wednesday, versus 58 percent across the whole election in 2009.

"It is because of the people's unrest against the establishment," Nitin Gadkari, a BJP leader and the party's former president, told Reuters.

Avalanche kills 12 sherpas

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searches for the missing climbers until today.

Assisted by rescue helicopters, at least seven people were plucked alive from the ice and snow with the injured sent by helicopter to a hospital in the capital.

More than 4,000 climbers have scaled Everest's summit since it was first climbed by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa in 1953. The route they took is the one hit by the avalanche yesterday.

Kathmandu-based climbing company Himalayan Climbing Guides Nepal confirmed that two of their guides were among the dead and four were missing.

"When our guides left base camp, there was no snowfall, the weather was just fantastic," operations manager

Bhim Paudel told AFP.

Dozens of guides from other companies crossed the icefall safely before the avalanche struck, Paudel said.

Every summer, hundreds of climbers from around the world attempt to scale peaks in the Himalayas when weather conditions are at their best.

Everest is on the border between Nepal and the Chinese region of Tibet and can be climbed from both sides.

In the past, some accidents have been blamed on overcrowding or on ill-prepared commercial climbers taking unnecessary risks in a bid to reach the summit before returning home.

Yesterday's accident underscores the huge risks borne even by experienced Sherpas, who carry tents, bring food supplies, repair ladders and fix ropes to

help foreign climbers who pay tens of thousands of dollars to summit the peak.

A trekking workers' union told AFP its vice-president, Dorje Khatri, who had summited Everest at least eight times, was among the missing.

More than 300 people have died on Everest since the first summit in 1953.

Nepal's worst-ever climbing disaster happened in 1995 when a huge avalanche struck the camp of a Japanese trekking group near Mount Everest, killing 42 people including 13 Japanese.

The impoverished Himalayan country is home to eight of the world's 14 peaks over 8,000 metres. Nepal's government has issued permits to 734 people, including 400 guides, to climb Everest this summer.

Stones thrown at Kejriwal

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another proposer. Pappu's tea stall was one of the prominent venues for Modi's famous 'chai pe charcha' programme last month.

Kejriwal made it a point to include Pappu's tea stall and Keshav's paan shop in his public contact programme during which he is inviting questions and suggestions from the public.

Meanwhile, AAP yesterday claimed that the sudden spurt in the growing attacks from the Bharatiya Janta Party on Arvind Kejriwal at Varanasi is a clear reflection of the frustration in the Narendra Modi camp.

In a press release, the AAP said that in less than 12 hours, BJP workers under guidance from their state

and national leadership had twice attempted to disrupt Kejriwal's campaign in Varanasi.

After Thursday night's condemnable incident, the BJP workers yesterday morning once again tried to disrupt Kejriwal's padyatra in the city by raising slogans, using unparliamentary language and showing obscene gestures in presence of the residents. The BJP is now showing its true colours and attempts by its workers to prevent Kejriwal from campaigning reflects the true ideology of the saffron party, which is based on intolerance and fascism, said the AAP statement.

Kejriwal has been attacked several times in the recent past in a number of places in his party's campaign trail.

Pak school

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alleged links with militants.

A paper sign on one of the doors proclaims Bin Laden a "Shahid" (martyr). Bin Laden was killed in a raid by US commandos in 2011.

Pakistani troops raided the mosque in 2007. Dozens died later in clashes.

The BBC's Shumaila Jaffrey in Islamabad says there are no chairs or any table in the library - just two computers on the floor. The library is in a huge complex in the heart of Islamabad, part of which is still being built.

A spokesman for the madrasa said the new name was a tribute to Bin Laden, who was "a hero".

The chief cleric there is Maulana Abdul Aziz. He warned that "if the government makes madrasas and mosques its target then Sharia (Islamic law) allows us to retaliate - if anyone will be harsh with us, they should not expect flowers in return".

He also uses the library as his office. It has about 2,000 books - all of them related to Islam.

There are books about Sharia, Jihad and interpretations of the Quran in Arabic, Urdu and English, our correspondent reports.

Deadline June; 30pc converted

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traditional kilns by adopting the Zigzag technology. But the designs of those kilns were later found faulty.

"It takes around Tk 60-70 lakh to convert an FCK into Zigzag kiln. An Asian Development Bank fund is available to brick manufacturers for the conversion," he told The Daily Star.

But the manufacturers could not avail the facility, as some agencies pointed out faults in the designs of the existing Zigzag kilns, said Mizanur.

About 30 percent of the existing registered kilns already adopted the Zigzag technology, he added.

Khondoker Neaz Rahman, project manager of the UNDP's Green Brick Project, said only big dust particles of smoke get dissolved in water in the

Zigzag technology.

"The smoke that comes out of chimneys in Zigzag kilns still contains fine dust particles as well as polluting gases such as carbon-dioxide and sulphur dioxide," he said.

The UNDP project recommends the Hybrid Hoffman Kiln (HHK) as the most energy-efficient technology for manufacturing bricks.

The UNDP has provided technical support to five traditional kilns in installing the HHK technology and ten more are in the pipeline, said Neaz Rahman.

Another 52 new concerns have taken bank loans to set up manufacturing units using the HHK technology, he added.

Kiln owners, however, stress the

need for identifying a more sustainable technology that will help them financially.

"I had invested Tk 25 lakh in the FCK and then spent another 70 lakh for the Zigzag kiln. What if the government says it is not good enough after a couple of years? Where will we get the capital to transform our kilns by using new technology every two or three years?" he questioned.

With around 70 percent of the kilns yet to be converted, the government is likely to extend the June 30 deadline as it had done thrice since January 2012.

Brick manufacturers and experts, however, think that extending deadline can bring no sustainable solution.

"Rather than extending deadlines,

the government first should decide on the most energy efficient non-polluting technology and then give us, say, five years' time to adopt the new technology," Mizanur suggested.

Endorsing his views, Neaz Rahman said instead of forcefully shutting down non-compliant brick kilns once the deadline expires, the government should encourage the owners to use energy-efficient technologies to produce better quality bricks. It will help phase out the traditional kilns.

Around 16 lakh people, mostly unskilled labourers belonging to the vulnerable section of the society, would lose jobs for five to six months during the peak season if the government shuts the kilns, he argued.

Same group kidnapped Ilias Ali

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what made him think so.

Ilias, former lawmaker and organising secretary of the BNP, and his driver Ansar Ali were kidnapped from Banani in the capital on April 17, 2012 and remain missing since then.

Armed kidnappers picked up Siddique on Wednesday afternoon from Delpara area in Fatullah of

Narayanganj and freed him around 33 hours later on Thursday night.

"The two incidents were of the same nature. Both the incidents had a common objective -- to deprive citizens of their rights," Rizvi said.

Ilias Ali was kidnapped as a warning to the BNP so that it refrains from anti-government movement and Siddique's abduction was aimed at

keeping people from free thinking, he observed.

He went on to say that the Sheikh Hasina-led government would never disclose the names of Siddique's kidnappers because it would be disgraceful for them to reveal the facts.

Pointing to the recent capture of an ISI agent by Indian intelligence agency the Research and Analysis

Wing (RAW) in Dhaka, Rizvi said the RAW disregarded Bangladesh's law by "abducting" a Pakistani agent from Bangladesh and taking him to India.

Referring to BNP's long march to Teesta Barrage on March 22, Rizvi said people would give a strong reply to the government if it obstructs the peaceful programme.

Stick to my plan

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the Biman authorities tomorrow [today] as they are responsible for ground handling," he added.

Former managing director of Biman Kevin Steele had expressed his dismay at the poor ground handling service, including improper handling of luggage, at the airport before he quit his job.

He already took steps to improve the cargo handling service through a joint-venture initiative with foreign companies.

"A proposal to introduce the joint-venture programme is being scrutinised by the Biman Board," Steele had told The Daily Star.

Same old Biman

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(Marketing and Corporate Affairs Dept) of Huawei, said "I collected my luggage 45 minutes after I handed it over to the immigration centre at the airport."

"When I got it back, I found the zipper broken and my iPad and some other valuables worth around Tk 1 lakh were missing," he added.

Mahbubur Rahman, station manager of China Eastern Airlines, told The Daily Star that they received complaints about the missing valuables from the passengers.

"We will issue a letter mentioning complaints of the passengers to the Biman authorities tomorrow [today] as they are responsible for ground handling," he added.

Kevin Steele, the outgoing managing director of Biman, earlier expressed his dismay at the poor ground handling service, including improper handling of luggage, at the airport.

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Sued for rallying

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Yesterday's demonstration was organised by Green Voice, a platform of youth environmentalists, in front of the National Museum in Shahbag around 9:30am. From there, the protesters marched to the playground.

"The club is digging up the turf to build structures. It had done so previously as well," said a leaflet circulated by the organisation.

The Daily Star found that a tennis court is being built on the turf for private use of the club's members.

The occupation of the playground continues defying a 2011 High Court order that had asked the then Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to reclaim the field from the club and reopen it for the public. The HC had given the DCC 15 days to implement its order which was delivered on March 15 that year, according to the leaflet.

The court came up with the order following a writ petition filed by the Bapa and the IEB in 2004.

The DCC then moved the Supreme Court with an appeal claiming that it could not reclaim the field, read the leaflet.

On May 27 last year, the Supreme Court asked the DCC to explain why it should not be charged with contempt of court.

The Green Voice also urged all to make sure that all the playing fields in the capital were freed from illegal occupation, and local committees were formed to take care of the fields.

Contacted, Bapa leader Iqbal Habib said, "The club had the audacity to file a case as the state machinery has always supported the occupation of the field."

Kamrunnahar Dana said she stayed at home yesterday as she was sick, but the club authorities implicated her in the case.

The Daily Star phoned club President Manzur Quader, but he refused making any comment on the issue.