

GAZIPUR CYLINDER FIRE 2 more die from burn injuries

Death toll rises to five

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more patients, who suffered burns in the Gazipur gas cylinder fire on March 13, died during treatment at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery yesterday.

Ariful Islam, 35, died around 5:00am and Mohidul Islam, 30, passed away around 6:45am, while receiving treatment at the institute's intensive care unit, said Torikul Islam, resident surgeon.

Ariful, a garment worker, and Mohidul, an employee at a warehouse, had 70 and 95 percent burns of their bodies respectively, he said.

With these two, the number of deaths due to the fire is now five.

On March 13, at least 32 people, including women and children, were injured after a leaky gas cylinder caused a fire in Gazipur's Kaliakair.

Currently, 26 people are undergoing treatment at the hospital while one has been discharged after recovery.

Most of the patients are in critical condition, doctors said.

US destroys Houthi drones over Red Sea

AFP, Washington

The United States shot down a drone fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels toward the Red Sea and destroyed more of their weaponry on Saturday, its military said yesterday.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that the Houthis on Saturday launched two drones towards the Red Sea, a commercially vital seaway that the Iranian backed rebels have targeted dozens of times in the past four months.

CENTCOM forces "successfully engaged and destroyed one" drone while the other is presumed to have crashed into the Red Sea, the statement said, adding that there were no reports of damage or injuries from ships in the area.

The statement came after the Houthis had earlier claimed a drone attack on a US destroyer in the Red Sea, adding that the strike "achieved its goals."

Later Saturday night, CENTCOM "destroyed five unmanned surface vessels and one" drone in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen in "self-defense," the statement continued.

JnU student, asst proctor 'partly involved'

FROM PAGE 1

extent of their involvement. We have carried out our responsibility, now the Kotwali Police Station in Cumilla will carry on the investigation."

The duo has already been handed over to Kotwali police, he added.

A Cumilla district police team formally received the two accused from DMP, said Firoz Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Model Police Station.

Cumilla Court Inspector Mujibur Rahman said they were yet to receive them. "No papers or documents to produce them before a court were submitted yet by Cumilla police."

HER COMPLAINT, HIS THREAT

In November 2023, Abontika filed a written complaint with the university's proctor office, detailing harassment by Amman and requesting intervention to ensure her safety.

The complaint documented her experience of long-term harassment and her pleas for security measures.

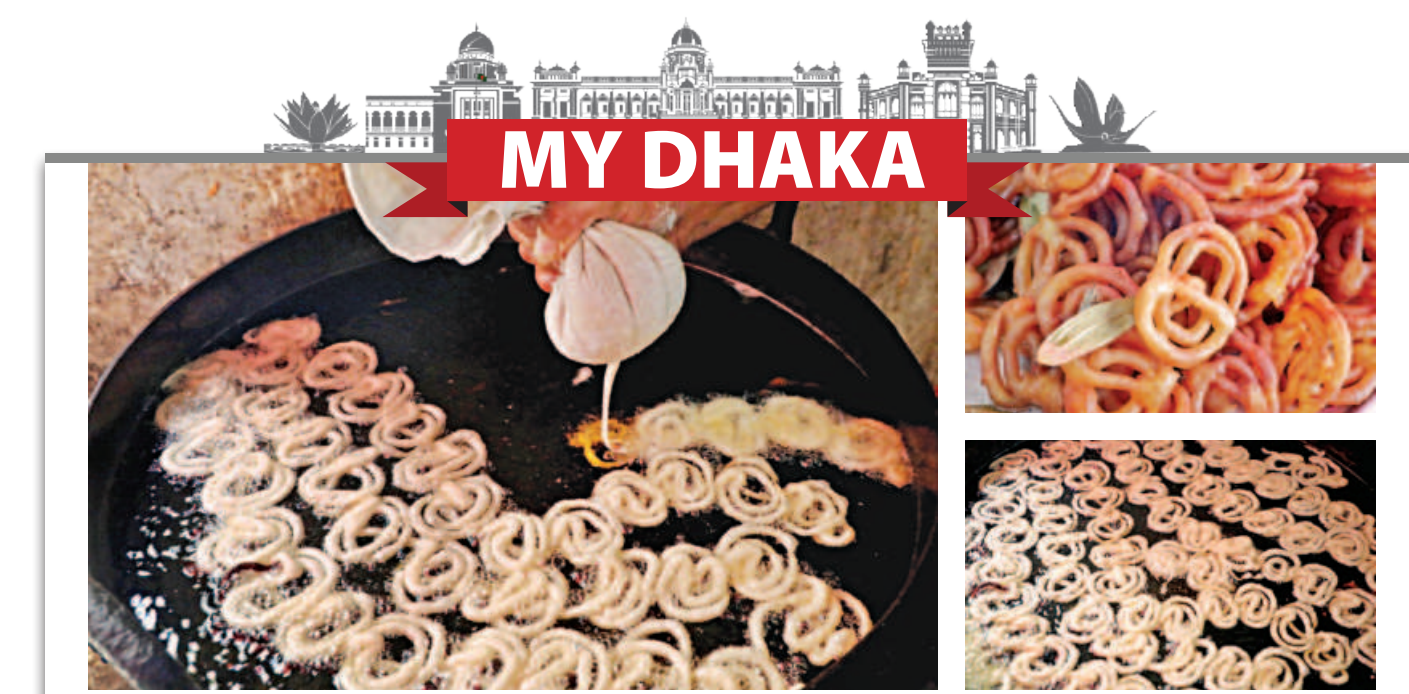
In it, Abontika alleged that during her first year at the university, Amman had proposed a romantic relationship, which she had declined.

He had since then allegedly subjected her to persistent harassment. "Amman threatened to create a situation that would force me to take my own life," the complaint said.

Abontika further alleged that the harassment intensified in 2022 and Amman reportedly threatened to spread rumours about her online to damage her reputation. She also reported that he made inappropriate remarks whenever they encountered each other.

Following her father's death in April 2022, Abontika claimed the situation had gotten worse.

When she threatened to take action, Amman allegedly responded with, "Are you planning to file a complaint to the proctor against me?"



MY DHAKA

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

THE JILAPI CRAZE Crunchy, sweet, and irresistible

RBR

Jilapi or *jelebi*, Ramzan or Ramadan; whichever way you say it, #jilapis is now a trending post on social media. And why not? It is the quintessential iftar delicacy second to none.

A jilapi can be enjoyed hot or cold; even if a day-old. It is a sweet that is traditionally consumed during Ramadan and despite the cult following, no two jilapi connoisseurs agree on which is the best jilapi in town.

Supriti Sarkar loves the *chikon* jilapi (the thin variant) from Jaipur Sweets in Dhanmondi Road 27. "Mohakhali Khabar Dabar Restora has sesame sprinkled *jilapi*, which are thick and fleshy."

To Supriti, Premium Sweets, however, has the best *chhanar* jilapi — a modified version prepared with cottage cheese.

"These are few of the best in town but hands down for me the winner is the *chikon* jilapi with *rabri* from Mithaiwala."

Al-Hassan, always locked in friendly banter with Supriti, feels that *gurer* jilapi — dipped in molasses instead of sugar syrup — is worthy of a mention.

"This may seem like a recent addition to the Dhaka food scene, but actually has enjoyed a niche following for some

time now."

Hassan also likes the thin jilapi fried with a hint of *ghee*.

However, their friend Mashhur prefers the shahi jilapis from a small, obscure shop in Mouchak Supermarket.

And then there is Chawk Bazaar's large Shahi jilapi, big enough to satiate the sugar cravings of an entire family! Surprisingly, none of the three friends are fond of this delicacy from the Chawk.

There are many variations in the recipe of jilapi, and although not tried anymore, the one from the Nawabi kitchen is said to have been dipped in clarified honey perfumed with rose water, musk, and camphor.

Most connoisseurs agree that the *ghee* used to make jilapi often makes all the difference in taste.

Avishek Sinha, CEO of signature by Khazana, a popular restaurant that specialises in iftar delicacies during the month of fasting, said, "We stick to the classic *deshi* ghee, especially made for us in Ishwardi. And we use the best saffron from Kashmir. We have three dedicated chefs who churn out almost 100 kg of jilapis every day."

Business is also good for Altaf Miah, a street vendor in Uttara, who does brisk business during this season.

The thick jilapis he sells are quite the

rage in the lane on which he has set up his pop-up stall. The neighbourhood favourite comes with a price tag of Tk 10 per piece.

Having sung all the praises for this Nawabi dish, we also need to keep in consideration what the doctor advises.

"Jilapi is a red flag for diabetic patients and given the fact that it is made from white sugar syrup, white flour, and, in many instances, with *ghee* [clarified butter], the average person should also consume it only in moderation," advised Dr Tanjina Hossain, associate professor of endocrinology and metabolism at Green Life Medical College, throwing a healthy damper on our love for jilapi.

"Even a small jilapi can have as many as 150 calories, while big ones can have up to 300 calories. On top of that, it's fried in oil that has been used for a long time. Prolonged exposure to heat can cause the formation of trans fat, which is carcinogenic, in oils through an oxidation process."

"Iftar desserts can be milk based like rice pudding or vermicelli and with fruits. It will give you the energy you need after day-long fasting for both diabetic and non-diabetic people," she added.

So, as the doctor prescribes, "only in moderation" is the keyword when it comes to these crispy sugary swirls.

On days you do indulge in this, relish on a plateful of hot jilapi, just out of the pan, served with a dollop of *rabri* (thickened milk).

As you bite into the coiled, sugary goodness of the deep-fried batter with milk, you'll know why it is a must-have!



Violence, pre-polls environ undermined its quality

FROM PAGE 1

weakened the quality of elections, they said in their final report on the polls.

The NDI-IRI technical assessment team (TAM) was deployed to Bangladesh between December 20 and February 1.

The NDI-IRI report is not something to be accepted or rejected, said Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud.

"They have published their report and we are looking at it. The report should have also included the incidents where the BNP caused violence and burnt people to death," he told reporters after an event at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

The election period had less physical and online violence compared with previous election cycles, primarily due to the absence of nationwide partisan competition and the state's increased focus on election security, the report said.

The Bangladesh government took several actions, yet many stakeholders made credible accusations that state security services and other government institutions at times unevenly enforced

election rules to favour the ruling Awami League, it said.

The scale of the government's efforts to arrest opposition members and restrict or disrupt opposition political activities was not satisfactorily justified and generated a widespread perception of politicised law enforcement during the election period, it said.

Stakeholders also noted that women voters and voters from other vulnerable groups faced economic pressure to vote, which included threats of eviction or loss of state welfare.

Election violence by non-state actors took two primary forms. The first was between competing candidates and supporters. The second form of non-state election violence was driven by the opposition's boycott effort.

Female candidates told the TAM that they were subject to insults and threats in public and online, particularly from male opponents and their followers, and said that state officials did not respond to their complaints.

Election violence targeting religious minorities was lower than in past

elections. Hindus specifically still faced notable intimidation and violence during the campaign, the report said.

Prominent newspapers and social media platforms included some space for critical statements and reporting on the ruling party and state institutions. However, the fear of government retaliation led to self-censorship in the media.

Journalists also faced election violence from the ruling party and opposition during campaign events and protests.

Leaders across the sociopolitical spectrum — including political parties, the government and civil society — have a responsibility to reform the rules, practices and norms of electoral politics toward nonviolence, said Manpreet Singh Anand, NDI's Regional Director for the Asia-Pacific.

"Election violence is a key deterrent of citizen participation," said Johanna Kao, IRI's Senior Director for the Asia-Pacific Division.

The TAM said all actors — including political parties, government

institutions, civil society and citizens — should play an active role in reforming the rules, practices and norms of electoral politics toward nonviolence, it said.

The independence and oversight of Bangladesh's elections can be improved with new mechanisms, including establishing a code of conduct for security personnel and updating legal frameworks to provide prompt and independent adjudication and review of election violence-related cases.

Chattogram

FROM PAGE 1

assistant engineer of Bangladesh Railways (Cumilla region), said the derailment may have occurred after excessive heat deformed the tracks.

Meanwhile, a top BR official said that a local found three bearing plates and a bag, containing some books and an ID card, on the spot and handed those over to the railway authorities.

The man told the officials that he saw some boys roaming the tracks ahead of the accident, and after he chased them away, he found the bearing plates and the bag.

Contacted, Hasan Chowdhury, superintendent of Chattogram Railway Police, said railway officials have lodged a complaint in this regard and an investigation is underway.

Train services on both lines — connecting Chattogram to Dhaka, Sylhet and Jamalpur — were suspended after the accident, said Murad Ullah Bahar, OC of Cumilla's Laksham Railway Police Station.

"Train communications on these routes will resume after the Bijoy Express is salvaged," he told The Daily Star.

A relief train from Brahmanbaria reached the spot around 8:30pm and started salvage operation, said Saiful Islam, Chattogram divisional railway manager, adding that another was heading there from Chattogram.

A probe body, led by Anisur Rahman, divisional transport officer (Chattogram), was formed to investigate the accident.

As of filing this report around 10:00am, the rails links were yet to be restored.

Only eight industries to get new gas lines

FROM PAGE 1

new connections to the industries that are located outside of industrial zonal areas.

On December 6 last year, the government formed a 14-member committee to formulate a policy guideline.

The committee, headed by Md Shameem Khan, director general of the hydrocarbon unit of the energy and mineral resources division, already had 2-3 sittings with the stakeholders, including the business community and government officials.

At least two more sittings are needed to finalise the guideline, Khan told The Daily Star.

Asked about the list of economically vital industries, he declined to comment.

"We will be able to comment only after submitting the documents," Khan added.

Production is insufficient in comparison to the huge demand for natural gas, the draft guideline said.

As a result, industrial production

is being hampered. Besides, the use of LPG in the industries are increasing.

By 2030, the demand for LPG will increase by threefold, according to the draft guideline.

The members of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh will supply LPG to industries.

The cost of installation of storage facilities for bulk LPG for industries is Tk 1 lakh per tonne and there are additional costs for vapourising, according to Md Liaquat Ali, general manager (Technical Operations) of JMI Industrial Gas.

The price of LPG will be different from the domestic consumers, read the guideline, adding that the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission will set the price from time to time.

Following a directive of the High Court, the BERC started fixing the bottled LPG price in April 2021, but there are serious allegations that no distributor follows the price.

The BERC never made any

punishment to any of the operators. It only issued three show-cause notices last year.

To attract LPG usage in industries, the draft policy called for tax cuts.

"It seems that the government is trying to increase the LPG operators' business by setting a policy guideline," said M Shamsul Alam, the vice-president of the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh.

The government had obligations to provide connections to all, he said.

"But later they gave the domestic and transport sectors to the private entities. But they didn't make the market competitive and didn't strengthen the regulatory body. A group of businesses made the sector an oligopoly. They are selling LPG as they wish — they don't follow the BERC rate and are making predatory profits."

With this decision, the small and cottage industries will struggle as their primary energy expenses will shoot up, Alam added.