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## Shab-e-Barat on February 25

UNB, Dhaka

The Muslim community in Bangladesh will observe the holy Shab-e-Barat on the night of February 25 as the Shaban moon has been sighted.

As the moon was sighted yesterday, the month of Shaban will begin today. Therefore, the public holiday on the occasion will be on Feb 26.

Shab-e-Barat falls on the 14th night of the month of Shaban, 15 days before the arrival of Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims.

Muslims offer special prayers at mosques and homes, families exchange bread and sweets, and give handouts to the poor on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee held at Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office yesterday evening.

Additional Secretary of Ministry of Religious Affairs Md Awal Hawladar presided over the meeting.

The announcement was made after analysing data collected from the district administrations, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh Meteorological Department, and Space Research and Remote Sensing Institute.



Devotees offering the Akheri Munajat at the Biswa Ijtema on the Turag. Thousands of people joined the prayers led by Maulana Yusuf bin Saad, the son of Indian cleric Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi, around 11:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Ijtema ends with Akheri Munajat

STAR REPORT

The second phase of the 57th Biswa Ijtema ended with the Akheri Munajat (final prayers) yesterday on the banks of the Turag river, drawing hundreds of thousands of Muslim devotees, including foreigners from 66 countries.

Maulana Yusuf bin Saad, the son of Indian cleric Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi, led the prayer at 11:00am.

Prior to the Munajat, he delivered a sermon on the importance of Islam based on the holy Quran and Hadith.

The day began with a sermon by Indian Tabligh leader Mufti Maksud, after the Fajr prayer, with Maulana Abdullah of Bangladesh providing the Bangla translation.

Security at the event was stringent, with a significant presence of law enforcement and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) ensuring the safety of the devout amidst this massive gathering.

Traffic adjustments were made around the Ijtema ground to facilitate the smooth flow of devotees.

The second phase of Ijtema commenced on Friday after the Fajr prayers, with the grounds quickly filling with hundreds of thousands of worshippers, eager to participate in the sermons and prayers that define this spiritual assembly.

This phase witnessed the loss of seven lives. This follows 14 earlier deaths in the first phase, reports UNB.

Since its inception in 1967, the Tabligh Jamaat has hosted this gathering, which was split into two phases in 2011 to accommodate the increasing number of participants.

This year's first phase concluded on February 4.

## A walk in nature is good for your brain: study

CBC NEWS ONLINE

A walk in nature really is good for your mental health, including your ability to focus attention, according to researchers at the University of Utah.

A recent study, published in Scientific Reports, found that a 40-minute walk in nature helped people recover from a demanding mental task, and restored the ability to focus.



Psychologists have theorized that humans have evolved to benefit from the sights, sounds and smells of the natural environment. The idea, known as biophilia, suggests that we have a connection to nature that is beneficial to our physical and mental health.

Most of us spend more time in urban environments — inside buildings or walking on pavement — instead of a forest floor, and our lack of exposure to natural environments means we could be missing out on the physical and mental health benefits of quiet time in the natural environment.

Taking time to simply look at clouds, trees, rivers or vast landscapes involves no decision-making and appears to allow the brain to relax, recover, and function more effectively afterwards, the study said.

The researchers want to continue the study to see how cellphone use while walking in the woods affects mental performance afterwards.

## Australia clinch ICC U-19 WC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Australia clinched their fourth ICC Under-19 World Cup trophy, beating record five-time champions India by 79 runs in a lopsided final at the Willowmoore Park in Benoni, South Africa yesterday.

The young guns from Australia, who had seen their seniors beat India in the final of the Men's ODI World Cup in India in November last year, cruised to the fourth title in the event after winning the toss and putting up 253 for seven in 50 overs.

A 55 from Hajras Singh and 40-plus scores from opener Harry Dixon, skipper Hugh Weibgen and Oliver Peake helped the boys in yellow to a decent score.

Raj Limbani's three wickets and two crucial strikers in the middle by Naman Tiwari helped India keep Australia's total to a gettable one.

India, who had romped into the final with a 100 percent record, never got going in their chase, having lost six wickets inside 26 overs for just 96 runs on the board.

The young men in blue were eventually bowled out for 174 runs in 43.5 overs, with Mahli Beardman and Raf MacMillan taking three wickets each and Callum Vilder taking two wickets for Australia.

Opener Adarsh Singh (47) and lower-order batter Murugan Abhishek (42) made the only notable contributions for the losing side.

Earlier, Bangladesh got eliminated from the competition from the Super Sixes phase.

AGENCIES

Any Israeli ground offensive in Rafah on the Gaza border will "blow up" the hostage exchange negotiations," Hamas-run Aqsa Television channel quoted a senior Hamas leader as saying yesterday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said it had ordered the military to develop a plan to evacuate Rafah and destroy four Hamas battalions it says are deployed there.

Most of the displaced have sought shelter in Rafah, on the border with Egypt, but after fruitless ceasefire talks, Netanyahu this week said Israeli forces would fight on until "total victory."

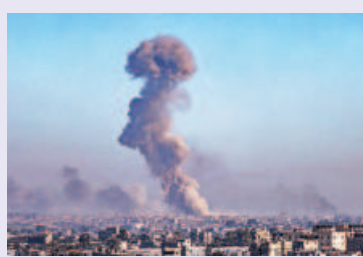
In an interview to ABC News aired yesterday, Netanyahu reiterated his intention to extend Israel's military operation against Hamas into Rafah. He also promised "safe passage" to civilians displaced there.

It remains unclear however, where the large number of people pressed up against the border with Egypt and sheltering in makeshift tents can go. When asked, Netanyahu would only say they are "working out a detailed plan."

A total of 28,176 Palestinians have been killed and 67,784 have been injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday. Some 112 Palestinians were killed and 173 injured in 24 hours, the ministry added.

## Offensive in Rafah will 'blow up' hostage talks

Hamas warns Israel; Netanyahu promises 'safe passage' to Palestinians ahead of operation



British, Dutch FMs express concern over possible assault on Rafah

Israeli forces prevent oxygen from reaching Al-Amal Hospital

Death toll in enclave now 28,176

A possible assault on Rafah prompted international concern, including posts on social media from British Foreign Secretary David Cameron and Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot, reports Reuters.

"Deeply concerned about the prospect of a military offensive in Rafah — over half of Gaza's population are sheltering in the area. The priority must be an immediate pause in the fighting to get aid in and hostages out, then progress towards

a sustainable, permanent ceasefire," Cameron said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes on the Gaza strip over the past 96 hours have killed two Israeli hostages and seriously injured eight others, Hamas' armed-wing, the Al Qassam Brigades, said yesterday over the group's Telegram channel.

At least 40 Palestinians have been killed and dozens more injured in overnight Israeli bombardment of residential areas across Rafah city, according to Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has detailed the events that preceded the delivery of oxygen cylinders to Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis by the Israeli occupation forces that have been keeping the medical facility under siege for weeks.

A report by Israeli daily Haaretz said that the government is using the offensive on the Gaza Strip as a distraction to build more settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

"We know that these settlements are illegal under international law," said Al Jazeera's Rory Challands, speaking from occupied East Jerusalem.

According to Ir Amim, an Israeli NGO that monitors illegal settlement activity, 17 settlement plans have been advanced since October 7, or about 8,000 housing units.

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## BNP chalks out six-day programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has announced a six-day programme to press home their demands, including releasing party chairperson Khaleda Zia and jailed top leaders, reducing prices of daily commodities, and cancelling the January 7 election.

"The party will conduct mass contacts and distribute leaflets in all metropolises on February 13 to 14 to gain public support," BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told a press conference in Nayapaltan central party office yesterday.

He added that the party would organise prayers at mosques across the country on February 16 seeking peace for those who died along the borders with Myanmar and India.

The party will also hold mass contacts and distribute leaflets in all district towns the next day, followed by in upazilas, thanas, municipalities, and unions on February 18 to 19, said Rizvi.

Rizvi said, "We are requesting that all activists and leaders conduct the six-day programme, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties. Everyone will work together to implement the events."

Rizvi said the aim of the BNP's ongoing one-point movement is to "empower the people, not to come to power."

"For the last 16-17 years, the

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Australia players celebrate the last wicket of India in the final of the ICC Under-19 World Cup at the Willowmoore Park in Benoni yesterday. The Aussies won the match by 79 runs to clinch the title for fourth time.

PHOTO: AFP

## BNP leader Quayum released in Malaysia

STAR REPORT

MA Quayum, a senior BNP leader living in Malaysia on a second-home visa, has been released after nearly a month in detention.

On January 12, Malaysian police arrested him at his home in Ampang Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, on charges of irregular stay.

On February 8, Quayum was released from the immigration detention centre in Putrajaya, said his daughter, Arnita Tasneem.

"I am grateful to the Malaysian immigration authorities. My father told me that the immigration officials treated him well while he was in detention."

After a letter from the Malaysian Immigration Department on January 24, Quayum's lawyers argued that his deportation to Bangladesh would risk his life.

Malaysian human rights body Suara Rakyat had then said the arrest and detention of Quayum were especially unwarranted as he

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