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Members of Myanmar forces, officials to be sent back today

STAR REPORT

The 330 members of Myanmar border guards and other officials who fled to Bangladesh to escape conflict in the Rakhine State will be sent back today.

The Myanmar nationals, including the Border Guard Police, will be handed over to the Myanmar authorities at the Naval Jetty Ghat in Cox's Bazar's Inani under the overall supervision of the Border Guard Bangladesh, according to a statement.

A ship of the Myanmar Navy will arrive in Bangladesh's territorial waters following high-level talks between the two countries. The ship will stay in the deep sea while the shelter seekers will be moved to ship in boats, they added.

The Myanmar nationals – which comprise security and BGP personnel, police and immigration officials – started fleeing to Bangladesh on February 4 as the ongoing fighting between the junta forces and a rebel group called Arakan Army escalated

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Standstill traffic on all streets, including the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, at Farmgate in the capital last night. Many city dwellers said people going out in droves on a weekday to celebrate Pchela Falgun, Valentine's Day and Saraswati Puja, which coincided, caused citywide gridlocks.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Turncoats to be disqualified

PTI warns citing Pakistan charter, set to announce its candidate for PM today

AGENCIES

Former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party yesterday warned that the incoming government was being formed through "horse-trading". "I want to tell the turncoats that you will be disqualified under the spirit of Article 63 of the Constitution," PTI's senior lawyer Babar Awan warned. "We have the statements and affidavits of all these people."

Article 63-A outlines the process to disqualify a lawmaker who votes against the party line in the assembly during the election of the prime minister or chief minister, vote of confidence or no-confidence and budget, reports Dawn online.

"The majority is standing today [...] the future of the country lies in the hands of Pakistanis, not any mafia and those trying to impose a mafia in the country will be defeated," Awan added.

Meanwhile, PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan said on Tuesday night that the name of the party's prime ministerial candidate would be announced by today [Thursday]. The PTI has already decided to field its candidates for constitutional positions, he added.

Independent candidates belonging to Imran Khan-led PTI are in the lead with 92 seats, followed by PML-N (79)

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Intact Roman era egg found in UK

CNN ONLINE

Researchers have cracked one of the mysteries hidden within a Roman egg, discovering that it still contains its liquid almost two millennia after it was first laid.

"This is the oldest unintentionally preserved avian egg I have ever seen," Douglas G D Russell, senior curator of birds' eggs and nests at the Natural History Museum (NHM), who was consulted about best preserving the ancient egg, told CNN in a statement Monday. "That makes it fascinating."

He pointed out that there are older eggs with their contents still inside them, like a series of mummified eggs at the NHM, probably excavated in Egypt in 1898, but no other known examples of naturally preserved eggs that are this old.

The egg was first discovered in 2010 alongside three others in Aylesbury, England – about 80 kilometres northwest of London – during an excavation conducted by charity Oxford Archaeology, Edward Biddulph, senior project manager at Oxford Archaeology, told CNN Monday.

Pottery and other finds uncovered alongside the egg were dated to the late 3rd century AD, allowing archaeologists to estimate its age too, Biddulph added.

Nestled in a pit that had been used to supply water for malting and brewing until around 270 AD, archaeologists believe that the eggs had been left there as gifts to the gods once the pit had fallen into disuse, Biddulph said.



Food prices hiked even before Ramadan

Home ministry says in report; blames syndication among goods importers

SUKANTA HALDER

Though there is currently no supply crunch in the country, a section of unscrupulous importers and traders have already hiked the prices of essentials, creating an artificial crisis to make extra profits ahead of Ramadan, said a home ministry report.

This trend of raising prices may have an adverse impact during Ramadan, expected to begin on March 11, and if measures are not taken to stop it, the market may become volatile during the month of fasting, it said.

The ministry's Public Security Division prepared the report last month and sent it to the ministries of commerce, agriculture, and food, and the Directorate of National Consumers Right Protection (DNCRP), and some other authorities concerned. It also made recommendations to ensure the market's stability.

Every year, the prices of essentials, such as edible oil, sugar, chickpeas, pulses, dates and onions, invariably rise ahead of Ramadan as their demand rises.

The prices of chickpeas, dates, and soybean oil have already seen a surge in Dhaka much ahead of Ramadan, due to the price hike of some commodities in

the international market, adding more pressure on the low- and limited-income groups, who are already grappling with price hikes.

The Daily Star has seen a copy of the report, which highlighted a comparative analysis of the prices of these items, price differences in the local and international markets, supply-demand situation, and stock and import pipelines of the major importers.

Analysing the opening Letter of Credit (LC) of various products from July to December 2022 and 2023, the report said fewer LCs were opened for soybean oil, palm oil, sugar, lentils, chickpeas and dates than the previous year.

However, the rate of opening LCs increased this January, centring the month of Ramadan.

"There will be no supply shortage in the market if the LC goods are offloaded at the right time," it said.

According to the report, unscrupulous importers of the country increase the prices of their products in the domestic market as well in the international market.

In many cases, they use the price hike in the international market as an excuse to increase it in the domestic market even before the goods are supplied, which takes around two months according to the import order.

Such dishonest activities of traders and importers play a big role in the price hikes of goods.

On the other hand, even when the prices of goods decrease in the international market, the impact on the domestic market is not visible.

There is also a lack of competition in the

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PRODUCT NAME	20 JANUARY 2024 (PRICE)	20 JANUARY 2023 (PRICE)
Sugar	Tk 140 to Tk 145	Tk 110 to Tk 120
Chickpea	Tk 90 to Tk 95	Tk 85 to Tk 90
Coarse rice	Tk 50 to Tk 52	Tk 46 to Tk 52
Dates	Tk 250 to Tk 420	Tk 150 to Tk 450
Local onion	Tk 75 to Tk 80	Tk 30 to Tk 35

SOURCE: HOME MINISTRY REPORT

According to it, the price of sugar jumped from Tk 110 to Tk 120 per kg in January last year, which increased to Tk 140-145 in January this year.

On the first day of Ramadan last year, which was on March 24, the price increased from Tk 115 to Tk 120.

Meanwhile, the price of the local variety onions saw a jump during this time period from Tk 30-35 to Tk 75-80 per kg, the report said.

INDONESIA POLLS Prabowo claims victory after vote counts

Rival candidates allege cheating, vow to probe

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesia Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto yesterday declared victory in a presidential election after unofficial vote counts showed him with a huge lead that could see him win in a single round.

Political veteran Prabowo, a former special forces commander, had about 58 percent of votes according to four pollsters, based on ballots counted in a sample of voting stations nationwide.

His rival candidates, however, allege cheating, and vowed to investigate reports of electoral violations.

In a rousing speech before supporters that drew huge applause, Prabowo vowed to create a government consisting of "the best Indonesians" and said it was a victory for all of the people.

Rivals Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo trailed with about 25 percent and 17 percent respectively, according to independent pollsters conducting "quick counts", which in previous elections have proven to be accurate.

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Haate Khori, a ritual marking the start of a child's education, being performed during Saraswati Puja, a religious event of the Hindus, at the Jagannath Hall premises of Dhaka University yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Cases against Yunus may represent misuse of laws: US

People 'of Grameen Bank' still at Grameen Telecom building

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The cases against Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus may represent misuse of the labour laws to harass and intimidate him, a US State Department spokesperson said.

Matthew Miller, during a briefing on Monday, said this when a journalist asked him about his perspectives on the intrusion of at least 20 unidentified individuals into at least two offices at the Grameen Telecom building in Dhaka's Mirpur.

"Regarding the multiple criminal cases filed against Dr Muhammad Yunus, we note that the labour case was tried with unusual speed," Miller said adding that the Anti-corruption Commission of Bangladesh has also approved a charge sheet allowing additional cases.

"We share the concerns voiced by other international observers that these cases may represent a misuse of Bangladesh's labour laws to harass and intimidate Dr Yunus."

"We worry that the perceived misuse of labour and anti-corruption laws could raise questions about the rule of law and dissuade future foreign direct investment," Miller said.

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Ukraine destroys Russian warship in Black Sea Says Kyiv

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine destroyed a Russian landing warship off the coast of occupied Crimea in an operation with naval drones that breached the vessel's port side yesterday and caused it to sink, Kyiv's military spy agency and armed forces said.

There was no immediate comment from Russia, which said earlier that it had destroyed six drones in the Black Sea. The Kremlin declined to comment.

"The Ukrainian Armed Forces, together with the Defence Ministry's intelligence unit, destroyed the Tsezar Kunikov large landing ship. It was in Ukraine's territorial waters near Alupka at the time of the hit," the military said on Telegram messenger.

The Black Sea resort town of Alupka lies not far from Yalta on the southern edge of Crimea, which Russian forces seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency said the warship appeared to have been loaded when it sank and

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