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UN voices worry over opposition activists' arrests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, expressed concerns about the detention of opposition leaders and activists and allegations that the justice system is being used to "harass" human rights advocates, journalists, and civil society leaders.



"In Bangladesh, I am concerned that thousands of opposition party leaders and activists remain in detention, and that a number of deaths in custody have been reported since October", Türk said on Sunday, while outlining the human rights situations across the world at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council.

He said, "While I condemn any form of political violence, I urge a swift review of all these cases, with a view to their release, to encourage political dialogue and reconciliation."

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Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Bangladeshi couple shot dead in South Africa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A Bangladeshi couple were shot dead in South Africa's Johannesburg Sunday evening.

The deceased were identified as Md Mohin Bhuiyan, 32, and his wife Runa Akhter, 25, of North Manikpur village in ward 4 of Arjuntala union under Noakhali's Senbagh upazila.

Abdul Jabbar, member of Arjuntala Union Parishad, confirmed news of the deaths to The Daily Star, quoting Mohin's brother.

According to him, armed criminals shot Mohin and his pregnant wife in Johannesburg. Both of them died on the spot.

Later the locals took them to a nearby hospital where the doctor declared them dead. Their two children survived the incident.

"The two younger brothers of the deceased in South Africa reported the matter to their family members back home in Noakhali on Sunday. We don't know anything more than that," he added.

Md Mofiz Bhuiyan, younger brother of Mohin, said, "My elder brother first migrated to South Africa in 2008. Then

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Rice at Tk 15 per kg for 50 lakh families

Decides govt on 2nd day of DC confce; essential items, meat, egg to be sold at low prices in city during Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will provide 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice to 50 lakh families at subsidised prices and sell meat, eggs, and other essential items at low prices in Dhaka during Ramadan.

The announcement came yesterday during the second day of four-day DC Conference-2024 at the Osmani Auditorium in the capital. Twenty-four ministries and divisions exchanged their views in eight sessions of the conference.

After a session with DCs, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder told reporters that allocation for rice is being made under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme to support consumers during the Ramadan.

Dealers have been asked to distribute the rice among the beneficiaries by March 10, he said.

The rice will be sold at Tk 15 a kg as part of the food-friendly programme, which the minister hopes will keep the rice market stable during Ramadan.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Md Abdur Rahman announced that meat

and eggs will be sold at low prices from 30 designated outlets set up on trucks across Dhaka from March 10 until the day before Eid-ul-Fitr.

He told reporters that beef would be sold at Tk 600 per kg, mutton at Tk 900, dressed broiler chicken at Tk 280, and eggs at Tk 10.50 per piece.

Meanwhile, the Road Transport and Highways Division in another session asked the DCs to hold the meeting of District Road Safety Committee twice, instead of once, a month, aiming to ensure road safety.

It also told them to take necessary steps to make the journey of holidaymakers smooth and hassle free ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the division, told this newspaper that the road safety committee is supposed to convene its meeting once a month.

"But we requested the committee to hold the meeting twice a month for ensuring road safety. If they cannot solve a problem, they have been asked to write to us so that we can solve it."

The secretary, who was present in the

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Polish national found murdered at Ctg hotel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday recovered the body of a foreign national from a hotel in Chattogram city after hotel staff found the man lying in a pool of blood in his room.



Zdzislaw Michal Czeryba, 58, was a Polish national, according to his passport.

He was the quality control officer of a buying house in Dhaka. He recently went to Chattogram to conduct quality checks at a readymade garment factory, police said.

Mustafizur Rahman, deputy commissioner (south) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star, "Zdzislaw came to Chattogram on February 24. The hotel staff found his body lying in a pool of blood in his room and informed the police.

"Police found injury marks on the back of his head and other parts of the body, which indicate that it might be a murder. His room was also found ransacked," he added.

Gaza 'powder keg' can spark wider war

Says UN rights chief; mediators seek truce as US VP calls for 'immediate ceasefire'

AFP, Geneva/Palestinian Territories

The Gaza war between Israel and Hamas is a "powder keg" with the potential to spark broader conflict in the Middle East, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said yesterday.

Türk said it was imperative to take all possible measures to avoid a wider conflagration.

Meanwhile, mediators in Cairo persisted yesterday with efforts towards a Gaza truce after Israel's top ally the United States stepped up pressure for a halt in fighting and more aid to enter the besieged Palestinian territory.

Volker Türk in his global update to the United Nations Human Rights Council said, "the war in Gaza has already generated dangerous spillover in neighbouring countries."

"I am deeply concerned that in this powder keg, any spark could lead to a much broader conflagration. This would have implications for every country in the Middle East and many beyond it."

He said that overlapping emergencies made the spectre of spillover conflict very

real, and cited the examples of Yemen and Lebanon as places where the Gaza war is having a wider effect.

"The military escalation in southern Lebanon between Israel, Hezbollah and other armed groups is extremely worrying," Türk said.

The UN high commissioner for human rights said almost 200 people had been killed in Lebanon and some 90,000 internally displaced.

There was also extensive damage to health facilities, schools and vital infrastructure.

"Incidents in which civilians, including children, paramedics and journalists, have been killed in attacks must be fully investigated," said Türk.

Some 80,000 people have also been displaced from areas in northern Israel along the country's border with Lebanon, he added.

"It is imperative to do everything possible to avoid a wider conflagration," he said.

Bombardments and combat killed 124 more people within 24 hours, said the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Gaza has been devastated and

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States can't bar Trump's candidacy

Rules US SC



REUTERS, Washington

The US Supreme Court handed Donald Trump a major victory yesterday, barring states from disqualifying candidates for federal office under a constitutional provision involving insurrection and reversing Colorado's exclusion of him from its ballot.

The justices unanimously overturned a Dec 19 decision by Colorado's top court to kick the former president off the state's today's Republican primary ballot after finding that the US Constitution's 14th Amendment disqualified him from again holding public office.

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Scientists reveal secrets of Earth's magnificent desert star dunes

REUTERS



They are among the wonders of our deserts: star dunes, the vaguely pyramid-shaped sand formations up to about 1,000 feet (300 metres) tall with arms stretching out from a central peak to give them a star-like appearance when viewed

from above.

Scientists yesterday unveiled the first in-depth study of a star dune, revealing the internal structure of these geological features and showing how long it took for one of them to form - more quickly than expected but still a process unfolding over many centuries.

The study focused upon a star dune in eastern Morocco called Lala Lallia, meaning "highest sacred point" in the local Berber language, situated within the Sahara Desert in a small sand sea called Erg Chebbi about 3 miles (5 km) from the town of Merzouga, close to the border with Algeria.



Bangladesh batter Jaker Ali Anik looks to the heavens after reaching his maiden T20I fifty in 25 balls while chasing a 207-run target against Sri Lanka in the first T20I of the three-match series in Sylhet yesterday. Jaker smashed six sixes and four boundaries for a 34-ball 68 but couldn't take his side home as the Tigers fell three runs short.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers fall short despite Jaker heroics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite two statement-making fifties from Jaker Ali Anik and Mahmudullah Riyad, Bangladesh fell agonisingly short in the first T20I against Sri Lanka as the Tigers began the three-match series with a three-run defeat at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

In chase of a daunting 207-run target, two heroic knocks -- Mahmudullah's 31-ball 54 and a 34-ball 68 from Jaker, playing his first game with the senior team -- helped Bangladesh's revival following a top-order meltdown. But the Tigers could not go all the way, managing 203 for eight in the high-scoring thriller.

Jaker had represented the country in three T20Is previously, but those were with a second string side during last year's Asian Games. Despite an impressive Bangladesh

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