

## Gaza's hungry await aid

REUTERS, Geneva/Jerusalem

Crowds of men ran through rubble-strewn Gaza City streets past fires and bullet-riddled cars in hope of reaching a rare aid convoy, risking their lives to get food for starving families as famine looms five months into Israel's military campaign.

Last week the Palestinian health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Israeli forces killed 118 people trying to get aid from a convoy near Gaza City with survivors saying they were shot at.

The deaths drew a new focus on what has gone wrong with aid in Gaza, where the UN complains of "overwhelming obstacles", while Israel says it is doing all it can and that the UN is ultimately responsible for delivery.

"Is there a father in the world who can see his children writhing in hunger in front of him and remain silent, even if the price is risking his life?" said Ahmed al-Talhani, looking for the aid in Gaza City, shouting and gesticulating as he spoke in a video obtained by Reuters. "Trucks have crushed people, tanks crushed people, shells rained down on people, machine guns were fired over people's heads. Does this satisfy anyone," he said. Despite hunger approaching catastrophic levels in parts of Gaza, and large quantities of aid sitting waiting in warehouses to be delivered, the flow of supplies has slowed to a trickle.

Some convoys have been seized by people seeking food, and any convoys moving into northern Gaza require Israeli coordination for safe conduct through checkpoints and areas with fighting. "All we are asking for is safe passage so that we can deliver aid," said Jenny Baez, emergency response officer at UNRWA. Before the conflict, Gaza relied on 500 trucks entering daily. The Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA said on Friday that during February an average of nearly 97 trucks were able to enter Gaza each day.



Palestinians run along a street as humanitarian aid arrives in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 2023 deadliest for migrants in 10 years: IOM

AFP, Geneva

At least 8,565 people died on migration routes worldwide in 2023, making it the deadliest year since records began a decade ago, the UN's International Organization for Migration said yesterday.

"The 2023 death toll represents a tragic increase of 20 percent compared to 2022, highlighting the urgent need for action to prevent further loss of life," the IOM said in a statement.

Last year's total surpassed the previous record reached in 2016, when 8,084 people died during migration.

The Mediterranean ocean crossing continues to be the deadliest route for migrants, with at least 3,129 deaths and disappearances registered last year.

Slightly more than half of the total migrant deaths in 2023 came as a result of drowning, with nine percent caused by vehicle accidents, and seven percent in violence.

## Detentions foil Delhi protest Indian farmers say

REUTERS, New Delhi

Dozens of protesting Indian farmers were detained en route to New Delhi yesterday, forcing them to call off their plan to converge on the capital in their demand for higher crop prices, protest leaders said.

Protest leaders had planned to resume the protest yesterday. Farmers started moving towards Delhi but had been stopped by police in some states, said a statement from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), or United Farmers' Front, one of the two groups leading the protests.

Fifty farmers from one district in the northern state of Rajasthan were taken into custody on Tuesday night while others travelling to Delhi by train from the same state were detained at a police station yesterday, farmer leaders told reporters. Rajasthan police denied detaining any farmers.

## 7 killed in occupied Ukraine

Says Moscow, jails journalist for criticising offensive, dismisses ICC arrest warrants

AFP, Moscow

Seven people were killed yesterday in separate incidents in the eastern Ukrainian region of Lugansk under Russian control, Moscow-installed authorities announced.

Five civilians were killed when the bus they were travelling in hit a mine and two more were killed by alleged Ukrainian shelling, authorities said.

"There was a tragedy in the city of Kirovsk in the Lugansk People's Republic - a bus travelling to a cemetery exploded on a mine," governor Leonid Pasechnik said.

"Five people were killed," he added in a comment on social media.

Another official said separately that Ukrainian forces had shelled the town of Kreminka around 70 kilometres (43 miles) further north, killing two civilians.

Most of Lugansk is controlled by Russian forces. It is one of four regions that Moscow claimed to have annexed in 2022, in votes not recognised by Kyiv or its allies.

Meanwhile, a Russian court sentenced a journalist to seven years in prison for criticising the Ukraine offensive in social media posts.

Roman Ivanov, 51, was found guilty of spreading "false information" about Russia's armed forces and punished under Moscow's strict military censorship laws.

Moscow has used laws against "discrediting" the armed forces or publishing "false information" to stamp out public criticism of its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine.

"Peace and freedom," Ivanov shouted as he left the courtroom after the sentence. The Kremlin yesterday said it did not

recognise the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants for two senior Russian officers over their actions in the Ukraine conflict.

The court accused lieutenant general Sergei Kobylash and navy admiral Viktor Sokolov of targeting Ukraine's power infrastructure with strikes between October 2022 and March 2023.

"We don't recognise this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute that established the ICC, he said.

"This is not the first decision, we also know that there are also various closed processes going on there, which are kept secret," he continued.

The court issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin in March last year, a ruling that Moscow called "void". Russia levelled its own warrant against the ICC's president in response.

## Repatriate 'IS bride' UN experts urge Britain

AFP, Geneva

A group of United Nations experts yesterday urged Britain to repatriate a woman stripped of her citizenship after leaving the country aged 15 to marry an Islamic State fighter. Shamima Begum, now 24 and living in a refugee camp in northern Syria, lost an appeal last month against the decision to remove her British citizenship. A group of five UN special rapporteurs voiced deep concern at the February 23 ruling, and urged Britain to provide Begum with protection - including repatriation - and review the decision to revoke her citizenship. "Begum remains stripped of her citizenship, vulnerable, and denied assistance and protection as a possible victim of trafficking," the experts said. "Protections owed to victims of trafficking and those at risk of trafficking, especially children, must be respected to be meaningful," they said. Begum, whose family is of Bangladeshi origin, left her east London home for Syria with two school friends in 2015.

## 720 educational institutions

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The fire service classifies buildings as "highly risky" or "risky" based on certain criteria, such as the number of staircases for entries and exits, width of the staircases, the number of fire extinguishers present, availability of fire hydrants, and the capacity of water reservoirs.

Bangladesh Government (BG) Press High School was marked "highly risky".

Located in Tejgaon - the industrial area of the capital - the school has two buildings, one with three floors and another with four.

Around 1,200 students of the school use a single staircase in each building.

During a visit on Tuesday, these correspondents found no fire extinguishers, emergency exits, fire buckets, or fire hydrants on the school campus, though the school was listed as "risky" for potential fire hazards since 2017.

Anjuman Ara Lajju, the school's headmaster, was surprised that the school was listed as risky.

"We were unaware of the potential risks. We would have taken steps to rectify

the situation if we had known earlier."

Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (operation & maintenance) of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said there was no way the school authorities were not informed as the inspection itself requires approval from them.

Dinomoni Sharman, deputy director of the fire service, reiterated, "It's not possible to issue letters to all the institutions. But we describe the risky condition in the presence of the headmasters during our inspection."

"We try to make them aware of the safety measures [that need to be taken] like multiple staircases, presence of fire extinguishers and fire buckets."

In 2018, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology in Tejgaon was also marked "highly risky". There are over 6,000 students and around 2,500 of them attend classes regularly.

Although the university has fire extinguishers, a number of those were found with no expiry date stickers.

Ahsan Habib, an engineer supervising the structure, told The Daily Star, "May be the stickers aren't there, but all the extinguishers have expiry dates."

"There was also no central fire safety alarm earlier. We have already submitted an updated fire safety plan to the fire service. Once it's approved, we will take proper steps."

Lt Col Tajul Islam said, "We don't have the authority to conduct drives by ourselves. We do it jointly with Rajuk and the city corporation concerned."

"We are working tirelessly to create awareness among students by providing training at different schools and colleges."

The Daily Star found two government schools - Narinda Govt High School and Dhaka Govt Muslim High School in Laxmibazar - with fire safety equipment.

The fire service issued warnings to these institutions five years ago, but no measures were taken.

Md Delwar Hossain Mazumder, chief engineer at Education Engineering Department, told The Daily

Star, "We handed over the school and college buildings around 20 to 25 years ago. Fire safety issues like stairs, entries, and exits were not on the list nor discussed."

"However, these measures will be taken during the constructions of new school buildings."

The Education Engineering Department is tasked with the development of educational infrastructures.

About taking measures in the older buildings, he said, "Once we hand over a building, the sole responsibility to maintain it lies with the school authorities. We can provide technical support if they seek our assistance."

Delwar also said they have informed the Rajuk about the fire safety issues in school and colleges. "Rajuk will now see whether the building needs complete re-construction or if retrofitting is enough."

Anisur Rahman Miah, chairman of the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), said most of the schools in the capital are located in residential areas.

## Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

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tenure as president in 2011. It sought an opinion by the top court on revisiting the death sentence awarded to the PPP founder.

"Our family waited 3 generations to hear these words," Bhutto Zardari said later in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. The court will issue a detailed order later.

"It is an admission of colossal miscarriage of justice under Zia's martial

law regime," said Yousuf Nazar, London-based political commentator and a close aide of the late Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter and also a former prime minister. She was assassinated in 2007.

Rights groups say Haq's 11 years of dictatorship were marked by an assault on democracy, persecution and jailing of PPP workers and public flogging of opponents and critics.

## Secy off to Paris

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Interestingly, the government yesterday appointed Nabirul Islam, additional secretary to the public administration ministry, as the secretary to the housing and public works ministry, which was Kazi's post.

Contacted, former secretary Badiur Rahman said, "It seems there is no

accountability whatsoever. Why did the government permit a secretary to attend such an insignificant event just days before retirement?"

"If the government had not approved, would this secretary have been able to go?" he said, adding, "A lot more is going on behind the scenes that would shock people if they knew."

## HRW details

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Former detainees described a bare and brutal existence inside the immigration detention centres, also called depots, with limited food and hygiene supplies, frequent water shortages, strict and unpredictable rules and the ever-present threat of punishment.

"We would get beaten when we asked for more food, took an extra mug of water to shower or asked for a blanket for the cold," said a Rohingya refugee previously detained at the Belantik immigration depot.

"If we made any noise, we would be punished, like hanging from the wall, pushups, squats, walking like ducks, or standing under the hot sun for hours," said an Indonesian woman held in the Tawau immigration depot.

The Malaysian government has denied the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR access to

immigration detention centres since August 2019, leaving the organisation unable to review asylum claims or protect detainees registered as refugees.

Malaysia has also not ratified the Refugee Convention, the HRW report said.

Children detained in the immigration centres face the same abuses as adult detainees, including denial of medical care, inadequate food and ill-treatment. Malnutrition is widespread, the report said.

The Malaysian government's immigration detention of children contravenes international law, HRW said, while calling upon the country to reduce reliance on immigration detention and move toward abolishing it entirely.

"Malaysia should seriously consider adopting measures used by other countries that better manage immigration objectives," Bauchner said.

## Teacher bought illegal arms

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When Arafat Amin Tamal, a third-year student, said he had some birds, Rayhan brandished his pistol and said this was his pet. That was when the gun was fired, said the SP, adding that Tamal, who was shot, gave a similar narrative.

Police said Rayhan's Facebook page had pictures of a firearm and that he had downloaded many videos on firearms into his phone.

Rayhan was suspended yesterday. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a gazette notification in this regard.

WHO IS RAYHAN

Rayhan was the vice president of the Rajshahi

Medical College unit of the pro-ruling party Chhatra League when he was a medical student there.

"I was afraid of him as I knew that he carried a pistol with him. I always avoided him," a doctor at the college said wishing not to be named.

The then BCL leaders and some teachers covered for him, the doctor said.

RMC Principal Prof Nawshad Ali said, "Rayhan would express his anger over trivial issues."

Students often complained about him, he added.

"It was surprising that he passed the MBBS exams as a regular student and got

recruited by the government through the BCS exams..."

Before Rayhan got the government job, he worked as a medical officer at North Bengal Medical College in Sirajganj, sources said.

Johurul Haque Raza, a teacher at the college, said Rayhan allegedly threatened a senior doctor and was subsequently removed.

After he got the government job, he was first appointed to Godagari upazila Health Complex in Rajshahi before being transferred to Sirajganj, sources said.

Rayhan joined Shahid M Monsur Ali Medical College in March last year. Amirul Hasan

Chowdhury, principal of the college, said that in October last year they learnt Rayhan carried firearms and stalked female students.

He said no one lodged any complaints against the teacher.

Asked why they did not inform the police, Amirul said they called him in, and he was about to be served with a license.

He said Rayhan was served two show-cause notices, which he did not respond to, and that he was about to be served with a third.

Sources said Rayhan had been living alone after his wife left him around three years ago months after their marriage.

## Tigers bounce back

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with the decision as there were some heated arguments between the skipper Charith Asalanka and the umpire.

Since then, both Soumya and Liton Dastook advantage of the Powerplay, adding 68 runs for the opening stand before the former was eventually dismissed on 26 off 22 balls. Liton, on the other hand, departed after adding 36 off 24 balls, striking five fours and a six.

The platform given by Liton and Soumya was properly capitalised on by Shanto and Hridoy in the middle as the duo dominated the Lankan bowlers till they reached the target comfortably in 18.1 overs.

Earlier, it was a better performance from the Tigers' bowlers compared to the first T20I as the hosts managed to restrict Sri Lanka to 165 for five in 20 overs after electing to bowl.

Taskin Ahmed gave the early breakthrough, removing Avishka Fernando for naught in the second over of the innings with a return catch.

But Sri Lanka fought back with a 66-run second-wicket stand between Kamindu Mendis and Kusal Mendis before the latter was dismissed by Soumya after a 22-ball 36.

Since then the Bangladesh bowlers kept picking wickets at regular intervals, denting the flow of the Sri Lankan batters.

## In Memoriam



It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Mr. A.B.M. Jahangir Kabir, a distinguished former Member of the Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service from the 1966 batch. He peacefully departed this life on Monday, 4th March in Dallas, surrounded by his devoted son, Nazir, daughter Nadira, and cherished grandchildren, Jolie and Jaane. Following Janaja prayers, he found his final resting place at the Muslim graveyard in Dallas. Born in the serene village of Batajora, Sandwip, Chittagong, Mr. Kabir began his educational journey at St. Gregory's School, Dhaka and later attended Chittagong City College. Throughout his professional career, he contributed significantly, serving in roles at Norwich Union Life Insurance Company and Burmah Eastern Oil Company as a Senior Executive. Alongside his friend Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelly, he co-founded the consulting firm SJ Associates. A true philanthropist at heart, Mr. Kabir extended his generosity to family members, neighbors, and anyone in need of educational, medical, or other forms of support. Known for his amiable personality, he was universally liked. He leaves behind his brother Zahurul Kabir, along with a multitude of cousins, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, other relatives and well-wishers who mourn his departure. In remembrance of Mr. A.B.M. Jahangir Kabir, may his soul rest in eternal peace. Nazir, Nadira, Jolie, Jaane and Zahurul Kabir