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A boy kisses his homeland as people walk along Gaza's coastal al-Rashid Street to cross the Netzarim corridor from the southern Gaza Strip into the north yesterday. Displaced Palestinians began returning to northern Gaza after a breakthrough in negotiations between Hamas and Israel.

PHOTO: AFP

Gaza residents stream home to the north

Israel opens roadblocks after breakthrough over hostage

REUTERS, Cairo

Tens of thousands of Palestinians streamed along the main roads leading north in Gaza yesterday after Hamas agreed to hand over three Israeli hostages later this week and Israeli forces began to withdraw from a main corridor across the enclave.

A mass of people, some holding infants in their arms or carrying bundles of belongings on their shoulders, headed north on foot, along a road running by the Mediterranean Sea shore.

"It's like I was born again and we were victorious again," said Palestinian mother, Umm Mohammed Ali, part of the miles-long throng that processed slowly up the coastal road.

Witnesses said the first residents arrived in Gaza City in the early morning after the first crossing point in central Gaza opened at 7:00 am (0500 GMT). Another crossing opened around three hours later, letting in vehicles.

"My heart is beating, I thought I would never come back," said Osama, 50 a public servant and father of five, as he arrived in Gaza City. "Whether the ceasefire succeeds or not, we will never leave Gaza City and the north again, even if Israel would send a tank for each one of us,

» 650,000 Palestinians waiting to get to their homes in north

» Israeli strike kills two Palestinians in West Bank

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AIRPORT PROJECTS Tarique Siddique, 18 others sued for Tk 812cr embezzlement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed four cases against Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former military adviser to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina; Mohibul Haque, former senior secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism; Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, former chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB); and 16 others over embezzlement from various airport-related projects.



Tarique Siddique

They are accused of embezzling Tk 812 crore from four development projects at three airports.

The commission's Director General Md Akhtar Hossain disclosed the information during a press conference at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

He said the cases were filed under multiple sections of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

According to the case statements, around Tk 200 crore

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PRIMARY EDUCATION REFORM Classroom size of 30 for better learning

Govt committee to propose in report due this week

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government committee on primary education is set to recommend a classroom size of 30 so that teachers can give extra attention to weaker students to help with their learning.

Additional classes can be arranged before or after school hours for weaker students, The Daily Star has learnt from the nine-member committee formed to suggest ways to improve the quality of primary and non-formal education.

The committee, which was formed by the primary and mass education ministry in September last year, will also propose appointing an adequate number of teachers at the primary schools.

Until then, "para-teachers" would be appointed to serve as teaching assistants.

The move will also cut down students' dependency on private coaching and notebooks, said a committee member.

The Primary Education Completion Exams (PECE), which was

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» Categorise schools into good, average, weak groups

» Increase teachers' salaries, status

» Make training system more practical

» Have midday meals for all students

India should return Hasina, respecting rule of law

Says special adviser to ICT chief prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British lawyer Toby Cadman, special adviser to ICT chief prosecutor, has expressed optimism about India's cooperation in extraditing Hasina so that she may face trial for alleged involvement in crimes against humanity during the mass uprising that led to her ouster on August 5, 2024.

"It's a matter for India to decide... whether it wants to stand on the side of impunity or whether it wants to stand on the side of the rule of law. We certainly hope it will choose the latter."

The prominent human rights lawyer made the remarks yesterday while addressing journalists outside the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), after the court issued arrest warrants for eight individuals, including two Awami League leaders and six police officers, in connection



Toby Cadman

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Colombia bows down to Trump's tariff threats

Agrees to accept deported citizens sent on US military aircraft

AFP, Washington

Colombia on Sunday backed down and agreed to accept deported citizens sent on US military aircraft, hours after President Donald Trump threatened painful tariffs to punish the defiance to his mass deportation plans.

Colombia's leftist president, Gustavo Petro, had earlier said he would only take back citizens "with dignity," such as on civilian planes, and had turned back two US military aircraft with repatriated Colombians.

Trump, less than a week back in office, responded furiously and threatened sanctions of 25 percent that would quickly scale up to 50 percent against Latin America's fourth largest economy.

Petro initially sought to hit back and impose his own tariffs on US products, but by the end of the volatile Sunday he had backed down.

Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo told a late-night news conference that his country had "overcome the impasse" and would accept returned citizens.

A White House statement said that Colombia has agreed to "unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia returned from the United States, including on US military aircraft, without

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» Sanctions threat is on hold: Washington

» Trump's immigration crackdown hiking tensions in LatAm

EU ready to support reform process in Bangladesh

Says its president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) is ready to support a reform process in Bangladesh, which should be peaceful and inclusive, respectful of democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, and lead to transparent, inclusive and credible elections.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, made the comments, in a recent letter to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The letter shared by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing yesterday also said the EU looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Bangladesh.

The president of the European Commission expressed

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Fortune Barishal batter Dawid Malan plays one on the off-side during his 37-ball 63 against Khulna Tigers, helping his side to a five-wicket win in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday. The win took the defending champions level on points with leaders Rangpur Riders while Khulna remained in fifth position on the seven-team table.

PHOTO: STAR

Kutubbagh Urs fence vandalised, 'cattle taken away'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group, identifying themselves as the "Conscious Muslim Citizen Society", vandalised the fence erected for an Urs, a religious gathering, and allegedly took away cattle from Kutubbagh Darbar Sharif in the capital's Farmgate area yesterday.

The incident took place around 2:00pm, Golam Azam, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, told The Daily Star. No case has been filed yet in this connection, he added.

The group under the banner of "Conscious Muslim Citizen Society" and the Imam Khatib Ulema Council, Tejgaon held a human chain near the Farmgate Metro Rail Station, adjacent to Kutubbagh Darbar Sharif. They marched towards Khamarbari afterwards.

At that time, a group of people, armed with sticks, damaged a part of the fence made of corrugated iron sheets near the ramp of the elevated expressway, according to witnesses.

In a video clip, a man was heard saying, "We would not vandalise their den, but we will force the followers of Kutubbagh to dismantle it."

"We will not allow the activities of Kutubbagh to continue," he said, warning of tougher actions if the darbar sharif does not stop its activities.

A follower of Kutubbagh Darbar Sharif said the attackers took away the donated cattle.

"We hold the Urs every year. Now, we are being prevented from conducting it," said another follower.

"This is a historic Urs that attracts people from all religions and castes. We have permission from the

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