

# INTERNATIONAL

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Displaced Palestinians cross the Netzarim corridor as they make their way to the northern parts of the Gaza Strip yesterday. The Israeli military completed its withdrawal from the Netzarim Corridor on a key highway in Gaza yesterday, as part of an ongoing ceasefire deal, a Hamas official told AFP.

PHOTO: AFP



## Baltic nations link with EU power grid

AFP, Vilnius

The three Baltic states successfully connected to the European power grid yesterday after severing Soviet-era links with Russia's network, a shift that EU chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed as "freedom from threats and blackmail".

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania -- former Soviet states that are now EU and Nato members -- have been planning the switch for years but had been particularly keen to do so since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

The small Baltic countries fear that they too could be targeted. The staunch Ukraine supporters had also worried that Russia would weaponise the electricity grid against them.

"Moments ago, I received great news," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda told reporters in Vilnius, alongside his Estonian, Latvian and Polish counterparts and von der Leyen.

"The synchronisation of the Baltic states' electricity system with the continental European system has been successfully completed... We have achieved full energy independence," he said.

Nausėda also posted a video to X of the moment he received confirmation of the grid connection. "Goodbye Russia, goodbye Lenin," he said on the phone, before von der Leyen and others applauded.

Von der Leyen told reporters 'today history is made'.

"Electricity lines with Russia and Belarus are being dismantled. These chains of power lines linking you to hostile neighbours will be a thing of the past," she said.

"This is freedom, freedom from threats, freedom from blackmail."

A total of 1.6 billion euros (\$1.7 billion) -- mostly EU funds -- have been invested in the synchronisation project across the Baltic states and Poland.

The Baltics integrated into the European grid via Poland.

## Palestinian state in Saudi territory?

Arab nations slam Netanyahu's 'racist' remark

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries yesterday condemned remarks by Israel's PM who appeared to suggest in an interview that a Palestinian state could be established on Saudi territory.

Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks, which some Israeli media characterised as a joke, came with the region already on edge after US President Donald Trump proposed taking over the territory and displacing Gazans abroad.

Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit said on Sunday that the thinking behind Netanyahu's remarks "is unacceptable and reflects a complete detachment from reality", adding that such ideas are "nothing more than mere fantasies or illusions".

The Saudi foreign ministry stressed its "categorical rejection to such statements that aim to divert attention from the continuous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian brothers in Gaza".

A ministry statement welcomed "the condemnation, disapproval and total rejection announced by the brotherly countries towards what Benjamin Netanyahu stated regarding the displacement of the Palestinian people".

In a television interview on Thursday, right-wing Israeli journalist Yaakov Bardugo was discussing with Netanyahu the prospect of diplomatic normalisation with Saudi Arabia when he appeared to misspeak, attributing to Riyadh the stance that there would be "no progress without a Saudi state".

"Palestinian state?" Netanyahu

corrected him.

"Unless you want the Palestinian state to be in Saudi Arabia," the Israeli premier quipped. "They (the Saudis) have plenty of territory."

Netanyahu went on to describe the talks leading up to the so-called Abraham Accords, in which several Arab countries normalised ties with Israel, concluding: "I think we should allow this process to take its course."

In another interview with Fox News aired late Saturday as the premier was wrapping up a visit to Washington, Netanyahu defended Trump's proposal, which has sparked concern and

condemnation across the Middle East and the world.

I think that President Trump's proposal is the first fresh idea in years, and it has the potential to change everything in Gaza," Netanyahu said, adding that it represents a "correct approach" to the future of the Palestinian territory.

"All Trump is saying, 'I want to open the gate and give them an option to relocate temporarily while we rebuild the place physically,'" Netanyahu said.

Trump "never said he wants American troops to do the job. Guess what? We'll do the job," Netanyahu declared.

Israel seized the Gaza Strip in 1967 and maintained a military

presence in the territory until 2005, when it pulled out settlers and its troops.

But the suggestion of a state for Palestinians outside the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank prompted an outpouring of regional condemnation, including from Qatar, Egypt and the Palestinian foreign ministry, which described the remarks as "racist".

Jordan's foreign ministry condemned them as "inflammatory and a clear violation of international law", stressing that the Palestinians have the "right to establish an independent, sovereign state" alongside Israel.

The foreign ministry of the UAE denounced Netanyahu's comments as "reprehensible and provocative" in a statement, calling them "a blatant violation of international law and the United Nations charter".

For Palestinians, any attempt to force them out of Gaza would evoke dark memories of what the Arab world calls the "Nakba" or catastrophe -- the mass displacement of Palestinians during Israel's creation in 1948.

In its statement, Saudi said "this extremist, occupying mentality does not understand what the Palestinian land means" to Palestinians. Such a mindset, it added, "does not think that the Palestinian people deserve to live in the first place, as it has completely destroyed the Gaza Strip" and killed tens of thousands "without the slightest human feeling or moral responsibility".



## Thai hostages freed from Gaza arrive in Bangkok

AFP, Bangkok

The families of Thai farm workers held hostage in Gaza for over a year wept with joy and hugged their loved ones as they arrived in Bangkok yesterday.

The five Thais smiled as they walked into the arrivals hall at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport after being freed on January 30, as part of a ceasefire deal aimed at ending the Gaza war.

The five -- Watchara Sriaoun, Pongsak Tanna, Sathian Suwantham, Surasak Lannau and Bannawat Saethao -- landed in Bangkok at 7:30am and were met by a small group of overjoyed relatives and officials from the ministry of foreign affairs.

Pongsak told reporters that he was at a "loss for words" as he saw his family.

## India's statement

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against humanity. Dhaka also requested New Delhi to prevent Hasina from issuing statements.

Last week, Mofa summoned Indian Acting High Commissioner in Dhaka Pawan Badhe to lodge a protest over Hasina's comments.

On Feb 7, Indian MEA summoned Bangladesh Acting High Commissioner to India, Nural Islam, and conveyed that "India desires a positive, constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh."

Regarding reports that a few Bangladeshis were getting involved in the Russia-Ukraine war, Rafiqul said the foreign ministry has ordered the Bangladesh mission in Moscow to probe the matter.

According to media reports, several Bangladeshi victims of human trafficking gangs were involved in the war.

"We learned that an agency sent some Bangladeshi to Russia and forced them to be involved in the war. We asked the Bangladesh embassy in Russia to investigate the matter," the spokesperson said.

Law enforcers also arrested an agent in Bangladesh and were instructed to take actions against any travel or recruiting agents involved in such crimes.

The government instructed the airports and immigrations to be

cautious.

Rafiqul said earlier, Sulaiman Kabir, a Bangladeshi, was forced to take part in the Russia-Ukraine war. He later took shelter in the Bangladesh embassy in Moscow, which later arranged his repatriation home.

"If anyone in trouble contacts the Bangladesh embassy, it will take measures to repatriate them home."

Asked if the foreign ministry flagged it to the Russian government, the spokesperson said this is human trafficking, and the government has no role in it. "We have alerted all the agencies concerned."

In the wake of a war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, some structures have been destroyed by the bombing, but Bangladeshi peacekeepers were unhurt, he said.

Rafiqul said a cargo plane of Bangladesh Air Force has been transferred to Uganda and three helicopters have been destroyed by the bombing, but Bangladeshi peacekeepers were unhurt, he said.

Except for the Bangladeshi peacekeepers, there are no Bangladeshi citizens residing in Congo, he said.

The latest UN figures suggest 2,900 people have been killed since early January as a result of the hostilities between rebel group M23 and armed forces of the DR Congo, while around 700,000 are estimated to have been displaced and thousands more injured.

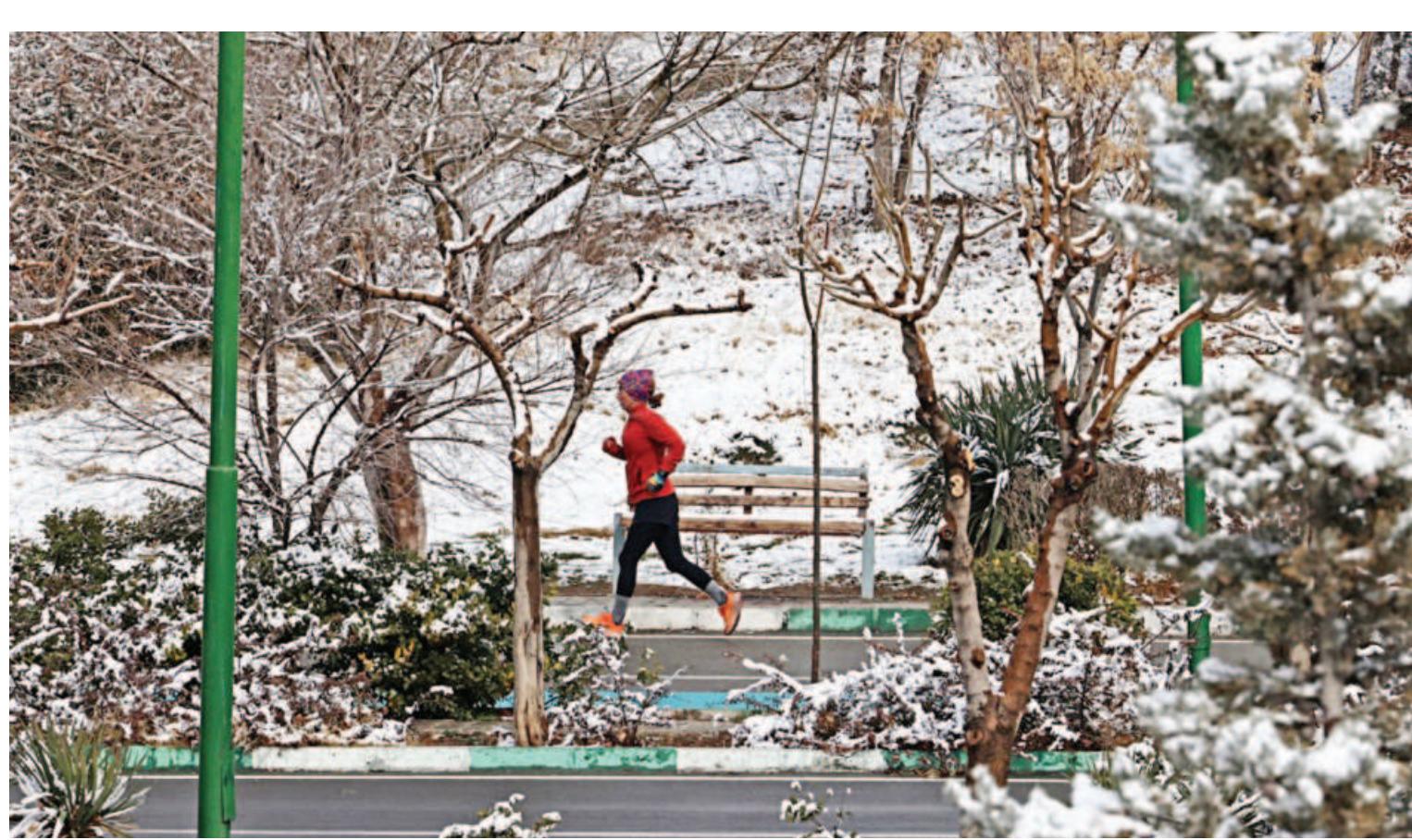
## Qulkhani Announcement



Enam A Chaudhury

29/06/1937 - 03/02/2025

The Qulkhani of Late Janab Enam A. Chaudhury will be on Tuesday, February 11th, 2025, after ASR prayers at Gulshan Central Mosque (Azad Masjid Gulshan). All Friends, colleagues, and relatives are requested to attend and pray for the departed soul.



A woman jogs on a snowy day in Tehran yesterday. Authorities in Iran ordered schools and offices in at least 10 provinces to close yesterday to conserve energy amid a severe cold snap and heavy snowfall, state media reported.

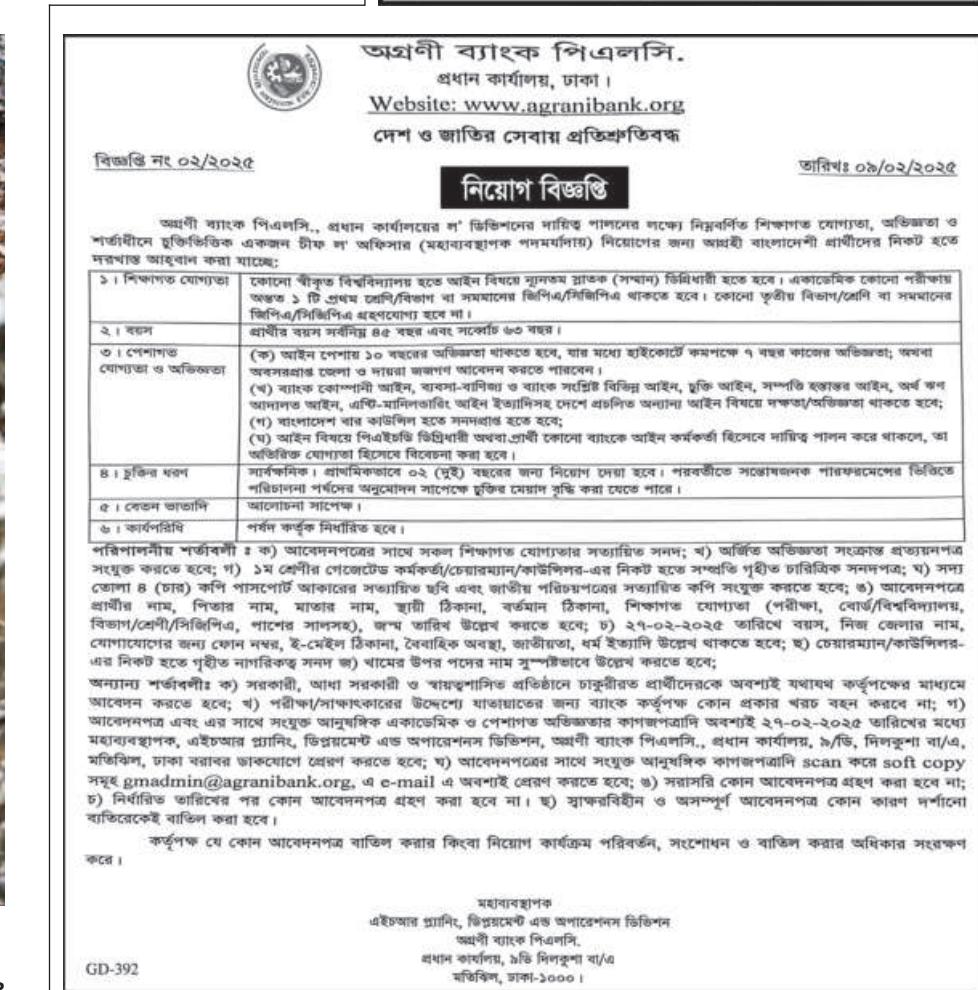


PHOTO: AFP