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Israel hits 40 targets in Gaza

24 Palestinians killed; ceasefire efforts stall

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli airstrikes hit around 40 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day, the military said yesterday, hours after Hamas rejected an Israeli ceasefire offer that it said fell short of its demand to agree a full end to the war.

Gaza's civil defence agency said 24 people, including 10 from the same family, had been killed in two strikes.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said on Telegram that "our crews recovered the bodies of 10 martyrs and a large number of wounded from the house of the Baraka family and the neighbouring houses targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Bani Suhaila area east of Khan Yunis," in the southern Gaza Strip.

Bassal later announced that a separate strike hit two houses in northern Gaza's Tal al-Zaatar, where crews had "recovered the bodies of five people".

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A Palestinian man inspects the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

India reacts to Shafiqul's comments on Murshidabad violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

India has reacted sharply to the remarks of Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam who urged New Delhi to take steps to protect the Muslim population of Murshidabad in West Bengal.

A statement from India's external affairs ministry termed his comments a "barely disguised and disingenuous attempt to draw a parallel with India's concerns over the ongoing persecution of minorities in Bangladesh".

"We reject the remarks made by the Bangladesh side with regard to the incidents in West Bengal," the ministry's spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in the statement issued yesterday in response to media queries on Shafiqul's comments.

"Instead of making unwarranted comments and indulging in virtue signalling, Bangladesh would do better to focus on protecting the rights of its own minorities," Jaiswal said.

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Bangladesh tops sea arrivals to Italy

UNHCR data shows 2,589 reached Italian shores in first two months of 2025

MD ABBAS

The number of Bangladeshis crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy doubled in the first two months this year compared to the same period last year.

According to the latest data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2,589 Bangladeshis landed in Italian shores in January and February this year while 1,206 went to the European country in the two months last year.

The sharp rise has alarmed migration experts, who warn that the trend reflects both deep-rooted socio-economic challenges at home and the lure of dream jobs there.

"All of them embarked from Libya," said the UNHCR's February edition of the Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard, which was published on Thursday.

Libya has long served as a gateway for human smuggling networks operating in North Africa.

February alone saw 1,383 Bangladeshis arrive in Italy, up from 1,206 in January. In contrast, only 585 Bangladeshis arrived in January last year and 621 in February that year.

With this surge, Bangladesh became the top nationality arriving in Italy by sea between January and February this year.

Regarding this trend, Asif Munier, a Dhaka-based labour migration specialist, told The Daily Star, "This is not just a migration issue. It's a reflection of growing despair."

"Many young Bangladeshis are unemployed or underemployed. Those who cannot migrate through legal channels -- mostly young people -- take risky routes in hopes of a better future. But most of them

fall into the trap of brokers who sell them dreams of Europe."

The journey to Europe typically begins with travel to Libya -- often through legal or semi-legal means -- and ends in a hazardous sea crossing arranged by transnational trafficking networks.

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