

INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 20, 2025

BAISHAKH 7, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

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HUNGER IN GAZA 'Deprivation by design': UN

92 killed by Israel in two days

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes killed at least 92 people in the Gaza Strip in the last 48 hours, the health ministry said yesterday, as UN said the tiny Palestinian territory is being subjected to "deprivation by design".

The death toll from the Israeli aggression has risen to 51,125 martyrs and 116,724 injuries since October 7, 2023," the ministry said in its statement, adding that since Israel resumed hostilities on March 18, 1,783 have been killed.

According to Al Jazeera, at least 39 people have been killed yesterday in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip.

After 18 months of devastating war and an Israeli blockade on aid since March 2, the United Nations has warned of a dire humanitarian situation for the 2.4 million inhabitants of the Palestinian territory.

Hamas on Thursday accused Israel of using "starvation as a weapon" against Gazans by blocking aid supplies.

The heads of 12 major aid organisations warned on Thursday that "famine is not just a risk, but likely rapidly



unfolding in almost all parts" of the territory.

Jonathan Whittall, an official with the UN humanitarian affairs office (OCHA), said in a video message recorded yesterday that Israel's continuous blockade of Gaza has been disastrous for all areas of life in the Strip.

"In Gaza today, people are being deprived of the basic necessities of life," he said from Rafah, in southern Gaza.

It has been almost 50 days of total aid blockade.

"This is deprivation by design," he said.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has warned of plans by settler organisations circulating on Hebrew-language platforms that discuss attacking and demolishing Al-Aqsa Mosque and constructing a temple in its place.

In a statement published on X, the ministry said it considers the plans a "systematic incitement to escalate the targeting of Christian and Islamic holy sites in occupied Jerusalem".



People gather at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the day of the Holy Fire ceremony in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran, US end talks in Rome

Agree to meet next week; talks held in 'constructive atmosphere'

AGENCIES

Iran and the United States yesterday agreed to hold another round of talks next week over Tehran's nuclear ambitions, Iranian state TV reported, as they ended their second round of negotiations in Rome over their decades-long standoff.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff negotiated indirectly through an Omani official who will shuttle messages between the two sides, Iranian officials said, a week after a first round of indirect talks in Muscat that both sides described as constructive.

Araghchi and Witkoff interacted briefly at the end of the first round, but officials from the two countries have not held direct negotiations since 2015 under former US

I'm for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon. They can't have a nuclear weapon. I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific.

DONALD TRUMP

President Barack Obama.

Araghchi, in a meeting with his Italian counterpart ahead of the talks, said Iran had always been committed to diplomacy and called on "all parties involved in the talks

to seize the opportunity to reach a reasonable and logical nuclear deal".

"Such an agreement should respect Iran's legitimate rights and lead to the lifting of unjust sanctions on the country while addressing any doubts about its nuclear work," Araghchi was quoted as saying by Iranian state media.

He said in Moscow on Friday that Iran believes reaching an agreement on its nuclear programme with the US is possible as long as Washington is realistic.

Tehran has however sought to tamp down expectations of a quick deal, after some Iranian officials speculated that sanctions could be lifted soon. Iran's utmost authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said this week he was "neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic".

Portrait of a Gaza boy wins Press Photo of the Year

CNN ONLINE

A striking portrait of a young Palestinian boy who lost both arms in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City has been named Press Photo of the Year.

Photographer Samar Abu Elouf, who is also from Gaza, met nine-year-old Mahmoud Ajjour three months after an explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other. Ajjour and his family were evacuated to Doha, Qatar, where Abu Elouf is based, to receive medical treatment.

"One of the most difficult things Mahmoud's mother explained to me was how, when Mahmoud first came to the realisation that his arms were amputated, the first sentence he said to her was, 'How will I be able to hug you?'" Abu Elouf wrote in her accompanying notes on the image, which was taken for and published in The New York Times.

The photo is a stark reminder of the long-term costs of the war in Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands and led to widespread destruction and displacement of its residents. The UN's Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates about half of those killed are women and children.

"This is a quiet photo that speaks loudly. It tells the story of one boy, but also of a wider war that will have an impact for generations," said Joumana El Zein Khoury, executive director of World

Press Photo, in a press statement.

The jury observed three central themes – conflict, migration, and climate change – in the entries this year, says Lucy Conticello, director of photography for Le Monde's M magazine and one of the judges.

"Another way of seeing them is as stories of resilience, family, and community," Conticello said in a press statement. The contrast in the winning photo – light and dark, beauty and pain – captured the attention of the judges, she added.

The winning photo was selected from nearly 60,000 entries submitted by 3,778 photographers across more than 140 countries.

Two other works were selected as runners-up: an otherworldly image of Chinese migrants warming themselves by a fire after crossing the US-Mexico border, and a haunting image of a young man walking to his village, once accessible by boat, along a desert-like riverbed in the Amazon.

Sarjis, Hasnat take flak at NCP meet

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raised concerns about Sarjis's perceived lavish lifestyles, extravagant motorcade in his locality in March, alleged financial irregularities involving Tanvir, and repeated instances of sensitive party matters being aired publicly on social media by Hasnat and Sarjis.

Sarjis and Hasnat also faced criticism for independently taking positions on various issues and allegedly "dealing" with matters without prior party consultation.

In response, Sarjis defended himself, saying his family bore the cost of his motorcade and that his lifestyle was "nothing new". He said he sometimes rents luxury cars for security reasons and claimed that most of the social media allegations were exaggerated.

According to party sources, the NCP leadership agreed to draft a social media usage policy to prevent further controversies.

"We agreed on principle about prioritising party

over person," a joint convener of NCP told The Daily Star. "A decision was also taken to discuss issues related to the party on the party forum before making any statements online."

The meeting, chaired by NCP Convenor Nahid Islam and moderated by Member Secretary Akhter Hossen, also addressed organisational matters.

It decided to take steps to meet the Election Commission's registration requirements within the next month, formulate the party's future programmes, and finalise state reform proposals.

NCP has divided the country into 19 organisational zones to facilitate party activities across 64 districts.

The meeting decided that district committees will consist of 31 to 51 members, and upazila

committees will have between 21 and 41 members. The minimum age for a convener will be 40.

A press release issued after the meeting said the party discussed ongoing global issues, including the Israeli violence in Gaza, India's Waqf act protests, and domestic ones such as trial for Awami League men who took part in killings during last year's uprising, border killings and rising commodity prices.

The new "discipline and investigation" committee will be formally constituted today, the release added.

Meanwhile, the party's Dhaka city unit is set to launch protests this week, pressing for the trial of Awami League members over the July killings, state reforms, and the formation of a constituent assembly.

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