

21 more pushed

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pushed back through the same border and later handed over to their relatives after police confirmed their identities.

According to BGB Headquarters, a total of 528 people have so far been pushed into Bangladesh since May 7. Of them, 450 were detained by the BGB and 78 by the Bangladesh Coast Guard.

Meanwhile, in Kurigram, 22 Bangladeshi nationals, including women and children, who were detained by India's Border Security Force (BSF) for staying there illegally, were formally handed over to BGB at Balatari border early yesterday.

The handover followed a flag meeting between the two border forces at 1:30am near pillar 932 along the Balatari border in Phulbari upazila.

The Indian side was led by Assistant Commandant SHL Simti of the BSF Battalion-3, while Major Hasnain, second-in-command of the BGB Battalion 15 in Lalmonirhat, represented Bangladesh.

Following verification of their identities, the 24 detainees — comprising eight men, eight women, and eight children — were officially repatriated and later handed over to their families through local representatives.

Naek Subedar Saidur Rahman said

the BSF had initially gathered a group of people at the Karola camp, as they had been working in India without legal permits.

Upon hearing the information, Lt Col Mehedi Imam, commander of the Lalmonirhat BGB battalion, issued a strong message to the BSF, saying that no one would be allowed to enter Bangladesh without proper verification of citizenship.

In response, the BSF submitted a list of 24 individuals believed to be Bangladeshi nationals. After their identities were confirmed, a flag meeting was arranged, and the group was accepted and subsequently reunited with their families.

Shahidul Islam, brother of one of the returnees, said, "My brother went to Delhi in search of work 20 years ago. On his way back, he was detained by the BSF. We are grateful to the BGB for their efforts in bringing him and three of his family members back."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Major Hasnain of the BGB 15 Battalion said, "The repatriation was carried out through proper procedures and in cooperation with local authorities."

[Our correspondents from Sylhet and Lalmonirhat contributed to the report.]

Israeli strikes kill 15 more in Gaza

FROM PAGE 12
United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said on Friday that Palestinians were enduring "the cruellest phase" of the war in Gaza, where a lengthy Israeli blockade has led to widespread shortages of food and medicine.

Limited aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip restarted on Monday for the first time since March 2, amid mounting condemnation of the Israeli blockade.

The World Food Programme said 15 of its trucks were looted late Thursday night, calling on Israel "to get far greater volumes of food assistance into Gaza faster".

"Hunger, desperation, and anxiety over whether more food aid is coming, is contributing to rising insecurity," it said.

The Gaza City municipality, meanwhile, warned yesterday of "a potential large-scale water crisis" due to a lack of supplies needed for urgent repairs.

It said damage from the war had "affected the majority of Gaza's water infrastructure, leaving large portions of the population vulnerable to severe water shortages".

Affairs Directorate — similar to the Department of Women's Affairs — to coordinate inter-ministerial protection efforts.

They also urged a range of reforms, including taking steps to break families' silence regarding cases of abuse, strictly enforcing child protection laws, introducing school-based safety training, improving mental health and rehabilitation services, and ensuring stronger police accountability.

Further recommendations included community engagement involving parents, teachers and local leaders; strengthened victim support including legal aid and witness protection; and operational child help desks in all police stations.

To improve emergency response, they proposed streamlining national helplines — 109, 1098, and the police headquarters hotlines — to reduce confusion and ensure regular, transparent reporting on complaints and follow-up actions.

Nazrul's 126th birth anniv today

FROM PAGE 12
"On the occasion of the 126th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, I pay my deepest respects to his memory," Prof Yunus said, as reported by BSS.

Kazi Nazrul Islam is a shining star of Bangla literature," he added, saying that the poet was born when the subcontinent was still bound by the chains of subjugation.

The poet's rebellious nature roared against injustice. He wanted to break the chains of the tyrant with his sharp pen, said Prof Yunus.

Recalling the poet's imprisonment for sedition during British rule, the chief adviser said Nazrul chose poetry as the language of protest, which earned him the title of the rebel poet, reports BSS.

In January this year, the interim

government officially declared Nazrul the national poet through a gazette notification.

The central theme of Nazrul's work was the triumph of humanity and a powerful protest against oppression, communal hatred, and inequality, Prof Yunus said.

"His creations gave people courage in every movement, from the anti-British struggle to the Liberation War," he said, adding that Nazrul stood against religious bigotry and championed gender equality.

Prof Yunus expressed hope that the poet's life and ideals would continue to guide the people in building a non-communal and just society. He also wished success for all commemorative events across the country.

Born in 1899 in Churulia, West Bengal, Nazrul later joined the British Indian Army and went on to become a journalist, composer, and filmmaker. His newspaper Dhumketu was banned by the British, and he was jailed for his poem Anandamoyer Agomony.

UNB reports that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, along with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and local administrations, will host a three-day celebration in Cumilla starting May 25. The inaugural event will include the Nazrul Award 2023 and 2024, with Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki as the chief guest.

The national poet Nazrul passed away on August 29, 1976, and was laid to rest next to Dhaka University's central mosque, as per his wishes.

Lightning alerts 20-30 minutes in advance

FROM PAGE 3
Netrokona, Sylhet, Chapainawabganj, Chattogram, Naogaon, Dinajpur, and Sirajganj.

Dr Shameem Hassan Bhuiyan, deputy director of BMD, said lightning accompanies thunderstorms and is categorised into three types — cloud-to-cloud, cloud-to-air, and cloud-to-ground — the last of which directly affects humans.

He said a storm warning centre has recently been established on the BMD premises and has shown promising results in detecting lightning strikes in advance. Radars in Dhaka and Rangpur are also providing relevant data.

"The key challenge is how to deliver timely alerts to those at risk before the lightning strikes," he said. "National broadcasts via radio and TV aren't enough, we need targeted alerts in specific zones."

Dr Bhuiyan said the BMD plans to use mobile network towers to send area-specific alerts through SMS broadcast mode. "We will use voice SMS to send alerts 20 to 30 minutes in

advance so people can take necessary precautions," he added.

He emphasised the importance of public training, saying, "People must be educated on what actions to take after receiving alerts. NGOs, INGOs and disaster management authorities need to step in with training and guidelines."

He said hilly areas are especially vulnerable because tall trees, which can act as natural lightning conductors, do not grow well in waterlogged conditions, leaving field workers exposed during dry seasons.

Lightning was declared a natural disaster in Bangladesh in 2016. Since then, authorities have attempted various strategies to reduce associated risks. In 2017, the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) initiated a plan to plant 3.8 million palm trees across rural areas, as these trees can serve as natural lightning arresters.

However, due to poor maintenance, the project was scrapped in 2022 by the former state minister for disaster

management.

The ministry also proposed installing 6,793 lightning arresters and constructing 3,398 lightning shelters in 15 high-risk districts. However, Razwanur Rahman said the project lacked sustainability and failed to secure approval.

Dr Shameem said installing thousands of arresters and shelters is economically unfeasible. "It's doable at individual homes but not at scale. It's too costly," he said.

Regarding palm trees, he said, "They take time to grow, and many landowners refuse to allow them. Planting them along roadsides is risky, as the area within four metres of a lightning-struck tree remains dangerous."

The DG of the Department of Disaster Management said they are still negotiating with mobile operators and cannot comment on costs at this stage.

They will select the most vulnerable areas for the lightning warning system, he added.

Star wins 2nd place at INMA Media Awards

FROM PAGE 3
users with industry-aligned courses achieving 85 percent learner satisfaction.

The judges at the award ceremony praised The Daily Star's bold move into the EdTech space through a purpose-driven and scalable vertical. They highlighted Keeron's affordability, media-to-EdTech innovation model, and career-centric learning pathways as best-in-class.

The award was received by Md Tajdin Hassan, chief business officer of The Daily Star and chief operating officer of Keeron, alongside Mizanur

Rahman, chief financial officer of The Daily Star, on stage at the World Congress of News Media in New York at the Edison Ballroom this Thursday (EDT).

The 2025 INMA Global Media Awards received 839 entries from 286 news media brands across 49 countries, showcasing the industry's most groundbreaking initiatives. From this highly competitive pool, only 199 finalists were shortlisted, representing the best of global media innovation across 20 award categories in two distinct segments — national/international and regional.

Today, INMA recognised 60 winners, awarding first, second, and third place in each category, with select exceptions where judges exercised discretion.

Themes at the forefront this year included AI in newsrooms, public good campaigns, truth telling, youth engagement, and audience-first product strategies.

In the "Best Commerce Product or Service" category, other finalists alongside The Daily Star included media houses from Germany (Funke Digital), Switzerland (Ringier), Kenya (Legit), and Norway (Verdens Gang).

BNP sticks to demand for polls by December

FROM PAGE 1

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said on Friday that Palestinians were enduring "the cruellest phase" of the war in Gaza, where a lengthy Israeli blockade has led to widespread shortages of food and medicine.

It also demanded that all national and local elections held during Sheikh Hasina's regime be declared "invalid".

The talks came two days after Yunus vented his frustrations over some recent developments and expressed desire to step down.

He had talked about how ongoing protests were continuing to hinder the government's core tasks — pushing reforms, ensuring justice for the July killings, and preparing for a free and fair election.

After the meetings last night, CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said all three major political parties voiced their confidence in the leadership of Yunus and support for a free, fair, and peaceful election under his administration.

He said the chief adviser reaffirmed his commitment to holding the election between December and June. "He is a man of his word. What he says, he does," Shafiqul said at a press conference in front of Jamuna.

Reaffirming their support for the chief adviser at the meetings, the BNP said it never sought his resignation, while the NCP urged Yunus to remain in office until he honours the commitment he made in the wake of the July uprising.

Mosharrat, who led the BNP delegation, said, "The BNP has never demanded the resignation of the chief adviser; rather, from the very first day, it has been fully cooperating with this government."

He said the topics of reform, justice, and election came up, and the BNP leaders said these three were not interrelated.

Reform is an ongoing process and will continue, he said, adding, "We expect this government to propose reforms based on consensus among all parties, and that process will remain active. If the people entrust us with power in the future, we will make efforts to continue implementing those reforms."

He said leaders and activists of the BNP were affected the most — personally, politically, and family-wise — during the Awami League rule.

"That is why the BNP demands justice the most. If the trial process remains incomplete, the BNP, if in power, will complete it through independent judicial process," he said.

The agitation that emerged in society regarding this issue, along with blockades for different demands, seems to have subsided for now. However, we seek a permanent resolution."

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman

said if reforms are completed, the election can be held by mid-February.

If the reforms take some more time,

the election can be held after Eid-ul-Fitr.

"If the election lingers, it will be difficult to make it a free and fair one," he said.

The Jamaat chief said if all come

forward and provide meaningful support to the reform process, then, a meaningful election can be ensured through effective reforms.

"The act of besieging the Election

Commission to press for local

government elections appears to

be intentional and mysterious," it said about the NCP's recent

demonstrations.

Press Secretary Shafiqul said both

Jamaat and NCP supported the

timeframe that the election will be

held between December and June.

But the two parties expressed

concern about the current electoral

environment, saying they do not

believe a level playing field exists

under the present structure.

The press secretary said the

Consensus Commission is expected

to conclude its work by mid-July,

and a "July Charter" will be adopted

afterwards.

"Work is underway to finalise the

document," said Shafiqul.

The chief adviser also confirmed

that the trial of the July killings will

begin later this month.

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would be resolved, the press secretary

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