

# NEWS

## 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. Nayek 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

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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”.

## BNP sticks to demand for polls by December

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simultaneous roadmaps to July killing trials, political reforms, and clear plans for parliamentary and constituent assembly polls. 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.

Mosharraf, 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. Standing Committee members Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Abdul Moyeen Khan and Salahuddin Ahmed were also part of the BNP delegation. Khosru said they argued that the election is possible even before December. Asked if the government has given any assurance in response to the party’s demands, Salahuddin said, “Perhaps they will respond through the press wing, so we will wait. Once the press wing says something, we will respond accordingly.” In its written statement to Yunus, the BNP said, “It should have been a top priority to consider whether the government’s various statements and actions regarding the humanitarian corridor and the Chattogram port are truly serving national interests. “Additionally, the people of this country do not believe that an interim government has the authority to make such long-term and nationally significant policy decisions. “To maintain the neutrality of the interim government, we believe that some controversial advisers – whose statements and actions have tarnished the government’s image – should be removed. The national security adviser has already become a subject of controversy, and to uphold the government’s reputation, he must be relieved of his duties.” The BNP hoped that the government would soon take steps to administer the oath of office to Ishraque Hossain as the mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation. “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. 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 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.”

Shafiqur said that before the election, certain reforms and judicial processes must be visible to the public. “If the election takes place without completing the reforms, the people will not be able to fulfil their expectations through this election.” Asked if the chief adviser assured the party of meeting its demands, Shafiqur said Yunus listened to them attentively. “We are confident that the chief adviser has taken everything positively.” NCP Convener Nahid Islam said Yunus was “disappointed” because the promises made during the uprising – of a new Bangladesh through reforms – are being “undermined by some parties”. “He feels pressured to concede to certain demands, which hampers his ability to work. We urged him to stay committed to the people’s call for reforms and not to bow to political tactics,” Nahid said.

The NCP also demanded that the government announce the July Charter within the timeframe given by the government. It also raised concerns over the slow pace of rehabilitation for the families of those killed or injured in the July uprising. About the BNP’s demand for the resignation of two student advisers, Nahid said, “We clearly stated that the student advisers joined the government as representatives of the uprising, not of any political party or NCP.” 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. Asked if the ongoing political crisis would be resolved, the press secretary said, “I’m not sure what crisis you are referring to. What I can say is that today’s meetings were held in a very cordial atmosphere.” Yunus is likely to hold a joint meeting with more than 10 political parties today.

## Nearly 9 out of 10 victims

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They warned that the trend reflects deep-rooted vulnerabilities and threatens the nation’s moral and constitutional fabric. Following the widely discussed rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Magura, the government amended the Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain (Women and Children Repression Prevention Act), reducing the investigation period from 30 to 15 days and the trial period from 180 to 90 days. A provision was also introduced for special tribunals to try child rape cases separately. However, rights activists criticised the reactive approach. Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said, “This is not just a legal failure – it’s a societal collapse. Men don’t even see girls as children anymore. Until that mindset changes, no law will fix this.” Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, called

the crisis a “social disease”. “Without self-realisation, no law will prevent such brutality.” Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua criticised the government’s overreliance on punitive legislation. “Harsh laws alone won’t solve this problem. In fact, they may worsen it – murders following rape have increased since the death penalty was introduced. That law was rushed to pacify public outrage. What we need is rational legislation and social awareness. “The government must address root causes and take measures such as introducing self-protection education for girls from an early age and raising awareness in uneducated communities across the country. This isn’t solely the state’s responsibility – we all have a role to play in tackling this crisis.” At a press conference in March, the aforementioned rights groups made several proposals, including the formation of a dedicated Child

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

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“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 Anandamoyeer Agomoney. 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.

## Adnan’s ‘Ali’ makes history

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and the Philippines’ Kristine De Leon, competed for the prestigious Palme d’Or in the short film category alongside entries from around the globe. Its “Special Mention” underscores the film’s artistic merit and compelling storytelling, bringing immense pride to Bangladesh. Filmed in Sylhet in November 2024, “Ali” delves into a personal journey, exploring an “unavoidable truth” presented in a simple, beautiful, and sincere manner, according to director Adnan Al Rajeev. Executive producer Habibur Rahman Tarek had expressed confidence from the outset that the film’s narrative would resonate with international audiences. The film was produced under the banner of Catalogue, a production

company co-founded by Adnan Al Rajeev, Tanveer Hossain, Kristine De Leon, and Arvin Belarmino. Catalogue’s mission is to foster filmmaking connections across South and Southeast Asia. Notably, another film from the same production house, “Agapito” from the Philippines, also secured a spot in Cannes’ main short film competition, further solidifying Catalogue’s international presence. This Special Mention for “Ali” at one of the world’s most prestigious film festivals is expected to inspire a new generation of Bangladeshi filmmakers and elevate the country’s profile on the global cinematic stage. It reinforces the growing capacity of Bangladeshi artists to produce work of international standards.

## Making army controversial

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proud institution into controversy. Everyone should refrain from making any remarks about the army.” Shafiqur noted that Bangladesh was currently passing through a critical juncture and called on the interim government to convene an all-party meeting. “Pushing the nation towards uncertainty through conflict and mudslinging is not acceptable in any way,” he said, urging for unity to overcome the current situation. The Jamaat ameer termed the current issues relating to the proposed humanitarian corridor and management of Chattogram port “highly sensitive”. “No matter how complex the problem is, a satisfactory solution

can be reached through discussion. That is why we have urged the interim government to call for an all-party meeting.” “From the beginning, we have been calling for a framework for reforms and a roadmap for the election. But these have yet to be presented before the people. We urge the government to swiftly share these roadmaps with the public to restore their confidence.” Regarding the national election, the Jamaat ameer said, “We accepted the timeline given by the chief adviser from the very beginning. Jamaat-e-Islami has always tried to extend its cooperation from the start.” He also urged other political parties and organisations to cooperate with the interim government.

## Lack of reform priorities led to political chaos

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training or labourers’ welfare are now abandoned, Taslima called for those institutes to be active and alongside establishing a permanent labour commission to solve their complaints. There should be a national minimum wage commission to determine minimum wage for all sectors, she also said, adding the labour activities should be incorporated in the students’ curriculum to make them feel hardship in their life. She also stressed for ensuring

decent working environment and adequate wage for labourers. She further called for dissolving provisions in the Labour Act that discourage engaging workers in their unions or rights organisations. Writer and researcher Altaf Parvez termed the Labour Reform Commission’s report as a practical one. “Around 122 labourers have died during the July uprising. They engaged in the movement in hope that their discrimination may end in future. But the labour reforms were

not the government’s top priorities,” he said. “We didn’t move forward with any reform in the last eight months, which is now creating chaos on the issue of holding national elections. It was supposed to happen. If the government set priorities on labour rights, and other issues which need major reforms, they would get all the political parties on their side,” he said. If the financial gap between the rich and poor is not reduced, no reforms will be sustainable, he added.

## Lightning alerts 20-30 minutes in advance

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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 haor 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

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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).