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### Nazrul's 126th birth anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 126th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be celebrated across the country today with solemn respect and renewed admiration for the poet whose fearless voice stood against injustice, exploitation, and communalism.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, in a message on the eve of the day, paid tribute to the poet's memory and prayed for the eternal peace of his soul.

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**CURSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ...** A toddler looks at the water as it inches toward the eroding edge of a fragile shanty on a coastal islet flanked by the Sutarkhali and Shibsa rivers in Khulna's Dakop upazila. With rising seas and relentless tidal surges now part of daily life, the Sundarbans stand in silent witness across the water. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## 21 more pushed in through Sylhet border

### In Kurigram, BSF formally hands over 22 to BGB

**STAR REPORT**

Twenty-one Bangladeshi citizens were detained by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday after they were pushed into Bangladesh from India through the Dona border in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila.

The detainees include 12 men, four women, and five children, confirmed Lt Col Md Zubayer Anwar, commanding officer of BGB's Zakiganj Battalion (19 BGB).

"One of our patrol teams found them divided into two groups near the border at around 6:00am," he said.

"During interrogation, the detainees informed us that they were staying in India illegally. Later, they were caught and pushed into Bangladesh," he added.

They are from Kurigram, Natore, and Rajshahi; after initial verification of their identities, they were handed over to the Kanaighat Police Station, the BGB official added.

Contacted, Kanaighat Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Awal said, "The detainees will be handed over to their relatives after figuring out their detailed identities and addresses."

Earlier on May 14, some 16 Bangladeshis were similarly

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## UN fears 427 Rohingya perished at sea on May 9-10



**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**

An estimated 427 Rohingya may have perished in the sea in two boat tragedies off the coast of Myanmar on May 9 and 10, said UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

In a statement issued Friday, the UNHCR said details are still being confirmed, but reports suggest that some 514 Rohingya were travelling on two separate boats. The first boat carried 267 people. Of them, over half reportedly left from refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, while the remainder departed from Rakhine state in Myanmar.

"The boat sank on May 9, with only 66 survivors. The second boat carried 247 Rohingya – also refugees from Cox's Bazar camps and those fleeing Rakhine state – and capsized on May 10, with just 21 survivors," UNHCR said in the statement from Geneva.

The agency is working to verify details concerning the survivors. There are reports of a third boat, carrying some 188 Rohingya, which was intercepted leaving Myanmar on May 14.

"This would be the deadliest tragedy at sea involving Rohingya refugees attempting to find safety this year," it said.

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## Nearly 9 out 10 victims of rape were children

Shows ASK report on incidents from Jan-April

**NILIMA JAHAN and TANJILA TASNIM**

Khuki (not her real name) was just three years old – too young to grasp the gravity of the crime committed against her, or the extent of the harm it caused.

But the trauma left her little body trembling.

"She's afraid of her own father and brothers now," said Khuki's mother, her voice cracking. "We had to move to a new home upon the doctor's advice. But she is still in constant fear."

Now under psychiatric care, the child is slowly being reintroduced to play and social interaction by her mother.

On a quiet afternoon in early March, Khuki had gone downstairs – as she often did – to buy chocolates from the shop below her home in Moulvibazar.

When she did not return on time, her mother went looking for her and caught the 18-year-old shopkeeper in the act of raping her daughter.

Khuki's mother, a former nurse, has since left her job to provide full-time care. Despite the accused's arrest, the family continues to face pressure to settle the case in exchange for money.

Khuki's story is one of many in a growing epidemic of child rape in Bangladesh.

Between January and April this year, 87.56 percent of reported rape victims with known ages were children aged zero to 18 – nearly nine out of 10 victims – according to the latest data from Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

Of 342 rape cases reported during this period, age data was available for 201 victims. Of them, 176 were minors: 40 were aged between zero and six; 65 between seven and 12; and 71 between 13 and 18.

ASK classifies children under the legal definition provided by the Children Act-1974 and the Children Act-2013 – anyone up to the age of 18. Age zero means a child under the age of one.

**According to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's monthly media-monitoring report, 389 rape incidents were reported in the first quarter of this year, with 72 percent of the victims aged between zero and 18.**

The pattern is similarly grim in gang rape cases.

Of 84 reported incidents, age data was available for 32 victims – 20 of whom were minors, including one under six.

Attempted rape figures also reflect the severity of the crisis. Of 85 cases, 78 victims – 91.76 percent – were children, with 25 under the age of seven.

According to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's monthly media-monitoring report, 389 rape incidents were reported

in the first quarter of this year, with 72 percent of the victims aged between zero and 18.

Similarly, of 91 gang rape cases, 51 – or 56 percent – involved minors.

The report also noted a sharp spike in rape incidents in March, which saw 163 reported cases, including 125 (nearly 77 percent) involving minors. In April, 111 cases were reported – 83 of them (72 percent) involved children.

Additionally, ASK data showed that Dhaka topped the list of reported incidents, with 45 cases, followed by Gazipur (20) and Narayanganj (17).

Clinical psychologist Ismat Jahan, head of the National Trauma Counselling Centre, confirmed the growing trend. "Many of our regional centres are seeing more cases [of child rape]."

She highlighted the long-term psychological impact on children – depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal tendencies.

"Children re-experience trauma repeatedly during investigations and court proceedings. Many lose the ability to trust and later struggle with relationships. Some engage in self-destructive behaviour or risky activities in adolescence."

In March, leading rights organisations including ASK, Breaking the Silence, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Plan International Bangladesh, and Save the Children jointly condemned the rise in child sexual abuse.

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## Adnan's 'Ali' makes history at Cannes

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

In a historic moment for Bangladeshi cinema, Adnan Al Rajeev's short film "Ali" has received a Special Mention at the highly esteemed 78th Cannes Film Festival yesterday.

The film, which was the first Bangladeshi entry to be officially selected for the Short Film competition, has now garnered further international recognition, marking a significant milestone for the nation's burgeoning film industry.

"Ali", directed by Adnan Al Rajeev and produced by Bangladesh's Tanveer Hossain

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## Israeli strikes kill 15 more in Gaza

**AFP, Gaza City**

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes killed at least 15 people yesterday across the Palestinian territory, where Israel has ramped up its military offensive in recent days.

Civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP the dead included a couple who were killed with their two young children in a pre-dawn strike on a house in the Amal quarter of the southern city of Khan Yunis.

To the west of the city, at least five people were killed by a drone strike on a crowd of people that had gathered to wait for aid trucks, he said.

At Khan Yunis's Nasser Hospital, tearful mourners gathered around white-shrouded bodies outside.

"Suddenly, a missile from an F-16 destroyed the entire house, and all of them were civilians – my sister, her husband and their children," said Wissam Al-Madhoun.

"We found them lying in the street. What did this child do to (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu?"

The Israeli military said it was unable to comment on individual strikes without their "precise geographical coordinates".

In a statement, the military said that over the past day the air force had struck more than 100 targets across the territory, including members of "terrorist organisations in the Gaza Strip, military structures, underground routes and additional terrorist infrastructure".

Israel resumed operations in Gaza on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire.

Gaza's health ministry said yesterday that at least 3,747 people had been killed in the territory since then, taking the war's overall toll to 53,901, mostly civilians.

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**Dhaka South City Corporation has recently initiated the beautification of the Hanif Flyover in the city's Jatrabari. A worker is seen painting a flag on a pier yesterday.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Teen killed in gang feud, 4 arrested

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj**

A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death during a clash between two groups of youths on Thursday night in Narayanganj's Siddhirganj.

The deceased, Abdullah Khan Rayhan, used to work at an auto workshop with his father.

Rayhan was first taken to a hospital in Narayanganj and then to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.

Police have arrested four people and are looking for other suspects, said Inspector Mizanur Rahman of Siddhirganj Police Station.

The arrestees are Muhammad Hridoy, 30, Al Amin, 20, and two 18-year-old boys, he added.

Rayhan's father Muhammad Shamim filed a murder case yesterday morning, accusing the arrestees, four others, and seven to eight unnamed individuals.



Rayhan