



Displaced Palestinians walk along a road near the rubble of houses destroyed by Israeli bombardment at the Nuseirat area in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Thousands more chemicals in plastic than previously thought Finds report

REUTERS, London

At least 3,000 more chemicals exist in plastics than previously estimated by environmental agencies, a report published on Thursday found, raising questions over pollution and consumer safety.

While the United Nations Environment Programme (Unep) had previously identified around 13,000 plastic chemicals, the report by a team of European scientists found more than 16,000 chemicals in plastics — a quarter of which are thought to be hazardous to human health and the environment.

"To robustly solve plastic pollution, you actually have to look at the full life cycle of plastics and you have to address the chemicals issue," said report co-author Jane Muncke, managing director of the Swiss nonprofit Food Packaging Forum.

That's because plastic chemicals can leach into water and food.

"We're finding hundreds, if not thousands, of plastic chemicals in people now and some of them have been linked to adverse health outcomes," Muncke said.

Such impacts include fertility issues and cardiovascular disease. A quarter of the identified chemicals lack basic information, the report said.

## EU chief 'congratulates' Putin on win as vote starts

AFP, Brussels/ Moscow

EU chief Charles Michel yesterday sarcastically congratulated Russia's Vladimir Putin on winning reelection against no real opposition — as voting was only just beginning.

"Would like to congratulate Vladimir Putin on his landslide victory in the elections starting today," European Council President Michel wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"No opposition. No freedom. No choice."

Putin looks certain to claim a new term that will extend his iron grip over Russia for another six years.

The vote from yesterday to Sunday comes as the West has sought to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine and after the Kremlin has ruthlessly crushed all genuine opposition at home.

Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of deceased Putin foe Alexei Navalny, has called on the West not to recognise election results.

A victory by Putin would see his reign outstretch that of Soviet tyrant Joseph Stalin, making his rule the longest in Russia since Catherine the Great.

Meanwhile, he first day of voting in Russia's presidential election was marred by acts of vandalism at polling stations, with at least nine arrests for pouring dye

into ballot boxes and arson attacks.

Vladimir Putin is set to secure another six years in the Kremlin after a three-day vote he has cast as a show of Russians' loyalty and support for his military assault on Ukraine, now in its third year.

Despite authorities warning that election day protesters faced heavy punishment, at least nine were arrested



for acts of vandalism at polling stations.

In Moscow, video showed a woman setting a voting booth alight, filling a polling station with smoke, while another showed a woman pouring green dye into a ballot box.

Four others in the Russian regions of Voronezh, Karachay-Cherkessia and Rostov were detained for similar offences, while in Saint Petersburg and

the Siberian region of Khanty-Mansi, women were detained for throwing Molotov cocktails at polling stations.

A man was detained for lighting fireworks inside a polling station in the Ural city of Chelyabinsk, while in Russian-occupied southern Ukraine, an explosive device was detonated at a voting site.

Close to the border with Ukraine, a wave of Ukrainian drone and artillery strikes killed two people in the Belgorod region.

In power as president or prime minister since the final day of 1999, victory in the three-day vote would allow Putin to stay in power until 2030 — longer than any Russian leader since Catherine the Great in the 18th century.

On the eve of the vote, Putin urged Russians to back him in the face of a "difficult period" for the country.

The Kremlin leader's confidence is riding high.

His troops have secured their first territorial gains in Ukraine in nearly a year and his most strident opponent of the last decade, Alexei Navalny, died in an Arctic prison colony last month.

In Moscow, a few dozen residents queued in the morning sun to be among the first in the capital to cast their ballots.

"It's important to vote, for Russia's future," said 70-year-old Lyudmila.

## Nervous system disorders now top cause of illness in world: study

AFP, Paris

Conditions affecting the nervous system — such as strokes, migraines and dementia — have surged past heart disease to become the leading cause of ill health worldwide, a major new analysis said yesterday. More than 3.4 billion people — 43 percent of the global population — experienced a neurological condition in 2021, far more than had previously been thought, the analysis found. The study was carried out by hundreds of researchers led by the US-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), which has become a global reference for health statistics. Lead study author Jamie Steinmetz of the IHME said the results showed that nervous system conditions are now "the world's leading cause of overall disease burden". Cases of these conditions have soared by 59 percent in the last three decades, she said, with the increase mainly driven by the fact that the world's population was ageing and growing fast. The researchers looked at how 37 different neurological conditions affected ill health, disability and premature death across 204 countries and territories from 1990 to 2021. This data was used to estimate how many years of healthy life were lost to each condition, called disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). More than 443 million years of healthy life were lost to nervous system disorders globally in 2021, an 18-percent increase from 1990, the study found.

## Bangabandhu calls on Yahya

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that an Interim Arrangements Order (effectively a provisional constitution) could be in force during the interim period between the withdrawal of martial law and the framing of a constitution. He further argued that this arrangement could be made by the same order by which the president revoked martial law. This argument was to feature prominently in ensuring negotiations, shares Kamal Hossain. [Kamal Hossain, Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice, UPL 2013, pg. 91-92]

INDIA BANS MILITARY AIRCRAFT FLIGHTS

The New York Times reported today that India banned flights of military aircraft belonging to any nation over the Indian territory to East Pakistan. Pilots of civilian planes of other nations flying from West Pakistan to East Pakistan was told to make a "technical stop" in India, apparently to insure against transport of arms and military forces.

It may be mentioned here that India earlier had barred flights of Pakistani military and civil aircraft following the hijacking and blowing up of an Indian airliner last month by Kashmiri insurgents in Lahore. Mujib termed the incident of hijacking "a conspiracy by the Pakistan government to postpone the transfer of power" while Bhutto hailed the allegedly "Pakistani" hijackers as "national heroes". The Pakistan government conducted a judicial inquiry subsequently which found that the hijackers were Indian agents from the India-occupied part of Kashmir. [GW Choudhury, The Last Days of United Pakistan, UPL 2011, pg. 162]

## Indian SC to hear pleas

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understanding of India's pluralistic traditions and the region's post-partition history are best not attempted," he added.

There were no grounds for concern about the treatment of minorities, Jaiswal said, adding, "Votebank politics should not determine views about a laudable initiative to help those in distress."

## Netanyahu okays plan

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Abbas "expressed deep concern over an imminent Israeli military offensive in Rafah, which could result in a new massacre and further displacement of the Palestinian people in Gaza," the official Wafa news agency reported.

The German foreign ministry said "a large-scale offensive in Rafah cannot be justified".

"Over a million people have sought refuge there and have nowhere to go," it said on X. "We need a humanitarian ceasefire now, so that the dying ends and the hostages are finally released."

On the ground, witnesses reported air strikes and fighting in the southern Gaza Strip's main city Khan Yunis as well as areas of the north where humanitarian conditions have been particularly dire.

Israel yesterday said it would send a delegation to Qatar for fresh talks on a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza, keeping faint hopes for a truce alive despite rejecting a long-awaited counter-offer from Hamas.

Negotiators failed this week to reach a ceasefire agreement for the Gaza war in time for the Ramadan Muslim holy month. But Washington and Arab mediators are still determined to reach a deal to head off an Israeli assault on Rafah and let in humanitarian aid to stave off mass starvation.

More than two weeks after receiving an Israeli-approved proposal for a truce, Hamas gave mediators on Thursday its first formal counter proposal in more than a

month. Like previous proposals from both sides, the offer, reviewed by Reuters on Friday, foresees dozens of Israeli hostages being freed in return for hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli jails, during a weeks-long ceasefire that would let in aid.

It also calls for talks in a later stage on ending the war, seen as anathema to Israel which says it will negotiate only over a temporary truce.

Though Israel did not accept, its description of the terms as "still unrealistic" was notably milder than the language it used about the previous Hamas offer last month, which Netanyahu called "completely delusional" and "from another planet".

The United Nations has repeatedly warned of looming famine, with only a fraction of the supplies needed to sustain Gaza's 2.4 million people being let in.

With fewer aid trucks entering by road, efforts have multiplied to get relief in by air and sea.

Gaza's health ministry said Israeli troops opened fire from "tanks and helicopters" as Palestinians gathered at a roundabout in Gaza City in the north, killing 20 people and wounding dozens on Thursday.

The Israeli military denied it had fired on the crowd. "Armed Palestinians opened fire while Gazan civilians were awaiting the arrival of the aid convoy," and then "continued to shoot as the crowd of Gazans began looting the trucks", an army statement said.

## Russian strikes

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City officials said Moscow had targeted Odesa with the Iskander missiles launched from the Crimean peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

The strikes came on the first day of presidential elections in Russia, which is also hosting the vote in several occupied regions of Ukraine, angering Kyiv.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that his military would respond to a string of Ukrainian attacks on Russia that he described as an attempt by Kyiv to derail presidential elections.

Russian border regions this week have been targeted by fatal Ukrainian bombardments and faced repeated incursions by pro-Kyiv militias comprised of anti-Kremlin Russians.

"These strikes by the enemy do not and will not go unpunished," Putin said in televised comments at a meeting with his security council.

"I am sure our people, the people of Russia, will respond to this with even greater unity," he said.

He claimed that Ukrainian assault groups had attempted to gain control of Russian territory at least three times in the Belgorod border region and also in the neighbouring territory of Kursk.

## JnU student

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and an assistant proctor of the university had verbally abused her after she complained about the classmate.

She added that both should be held responsible if she died by suicide.

The JnU authorities suspended the male student and removed the assistant proctor from his post amid the demonstration, according to JnU Proctor Mohammad Jahangir Hossain.

He added that a five-member probe body was formed to investigate the matter.

JnU Vice-Chancellor Prof Sadeka Halim met the protesting students and assured them of proper investigation.

## Lalmonirhat AC Land

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land mutation at the office.

Meanwhile, members of Kurigram Journalists' Forum yesterday formed a human chain near college intersection in the district town protesting the incident. They demanded an end to all forms of harassment of journalists.

The protestors said although journalists work in the public interest, some government officials think they are above accountability and get furious when they see newsmen collect information about their misdeeds.

## ICT Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arieff passes away

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He was hospitalised with pneumonia on March 12, said Dana, adding that his father had been suffering from old-age complications for a long time.

Born in Chapainawabganj on August 28, 1931, Tipoo obtained his master's degree in law from Dhaka University.

He started practicing law at a Rajshahi court in 1958. He was elected president of Rajshahi Bar Association several times.

Tipoo, also a freedom fighter, rose to fame after becoming a lawyer for the prosecution in the much-talked-about Niharbanu murder case in the 1980s.

On January 27, 1976, Nihar, a final-year student of political science at Rajshahi University, went missing on her way home in Ranibazar area from the campus. Five months later, police recovered her body that was buried under the ground floor of a house in the city's Kolabagan area.

He was the general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra Union for two years since 1954.

Tipoo, the joint convener of the Rajshahi chapter of Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad, was one of the

founders of Shaheed Minar on the Rajshahi College premises. The lawyer was hired by Awami League President Sheikh Hasina for her cases during the rule of the 2008 caretaker government.

In 2010, he was appointed as the chief prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal formed to try the accused who committed crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

His body was taken to Chapainawabganj last night.

His first namaz-e-janaza will be held at his village home in Kamalakantapur of Shibganj upazila at 8:30am today and the second one at Rajshahi College ground at 11:00am, according to his daughter Dana.

"My father spent most of his life in the two districts. His body will be taken home so that locals can pay their tribute," she said.

Tipoo's body will be taken back to the capital for burial at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial Graveyard in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound grief at his demise.