



# Bangladesh air second worst in the world

IQAir says Dhaka third most polluted capital



## STAR REPORT

Bangladesh was the world's second most polluted country in 2024, with average smog levels exceeding World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines by more than 15 times, according to data compiled by Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir.

With an average PM2.5 level of 78 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³), Bangladesh had the worst air quality in the world, second only to Chad (128 µg/m³). It was followed

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## PROTECTING WOMEN, CHILDREN

# Fulfil your promises fast

Int'l NGOs urge govt

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International NGOs operating in Bangladesh, including ActionAid, Oxfam, Plan International, and Save the Children, have expressed serious concern over the recent surge in incidents of rape, sexual harassment, and violence against women, girls, and children across the country.

In a joint statement, the organisations have called for urgent action to ensure justice, protection, and the safeguarding of human rights of survivors and their families.

While welcoming the government's recent commitment to a "zero tolerance" policy towards violence against women and children, the organisations have urged the authorities to swiftly fulfil their promises, including completing investigations within 15 days and ensuring that trials are concluded within 90 days of the incident.

The NGOs called for the immediate implementation of these commitments and other relevant policies to combat violence.

These calls came in response to nationwide protests led by women, girls, students, teachers, activists, and rights-based organisations. The international NGOs have expressed solidarity with these demonstrators, who have played a key role in demanding greater accountability and justice.

The statement referenced recent data from Ain o Salish Kendra, which reveals an alarming trend in 2025, with 294 women and children subjected to violence in the first two months of the year, including 96 cases of rape, 44 of which involved minors.

Additionally, there has been a disturbing rise in moral policing, mob violence, and the misinterpretation of 'gender justice'. This growing trend of victim-blaming has discouraged survivors from seeking justice, while further

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Without getting treatment, a female patient along with her attendants returning home from the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday. Outdoor treatment at the healthcare facility stopped as interns demonstrated to press home their five-point demand, including immediate recruitment of 10,000 doctors.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## MAGURA RAPE

# Condition of 8-yr-old deteriorates

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of the eight-year-old rape victim from Magura worsened further with doctors saying that her brain has become "unresponsive".

A member of the medical board overseeing her treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka said that the girl's condition improved slightly on Monday.

"But her condition took a drastic turn, leaving her brain become unresponsive," the board member told Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a maternal uncle of the victim said, "The doctors have informed us that her condition is not good.

"They are trying their best but the condition is deteriorating..."

On Saturday, the victim's mother filed a case with Magura Sadar Police Station against four people – the victim's sister's father-in-law and mother-in-law and two brothers-in-law.

The police have arrested

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# Ukraine, US start partial truce talks in Jeddah

Kyiv fires largest drone barrage at Russia; EU chief calls for defence 'surge', says 'time of illusions' over

## AGENCIES

Ukraine said talks with the United States in Saudi Arabia began "very constructively" yesterday, with a partial ceasefire with Russia on the table hours after Kyiv conducted its largest drone attack on Moscow in three years of war.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga attended the meeting in Jeddah – which Russia was not participating in – as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure on Ukraine to end the war that began with Russia's 2022 invasion.

The talks come just days after President Volodymyr Zelensky's public dressing-down at the White House, after which the United States cut off military aid, intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery.

Ukraine is hoping the offer of a partial ceasefire in the sky and at sea will persuade Washington to restore the assistance.

"We are ready to do everything to achieve peace," Ukrainian presidency chief of staff Andriy Yermak told reporters as he entered the meeting at a luxury hotel.

Meanwhile, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen

yesterday called for a "surge" in European defence spending, as the 27-nation bloc faces an aggressive Russia and faltering US support.

Addressing lawmakers in Strasbourg, von der Leyen said Europe's security order was "being shaken," suggesting the continent could no longer rely on "America's full protection".

"The time of illusions is now over. Europe is called to take greater charge of its own defence," the European Commission president told the EU's parliament.

"We need a surge in European defence. And we need it now."

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron was set to address a meeting of military chiefs from 30 European and Nato countries willing to contribute to security guarantees for Ukraine after any negotiated truce with Russia.

Macron, who has sought to rally a European response to Washington's shock policy shift in US-Russia relations, has said yesterday's meeting will be held in coordination with Nato military command.

After yesterday's talks, defence ministers from Europe's five main military powers – France, Britain, Germany, Italy and Poland –

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- » 4 killed as hundreds of drones slam into Moscow and other areas overnight
- » Russia's army said it intercepted 337 drones across the country
- » Macron to address military chiefs from 30 countries on Ukraine
- » China hopes for 'just and lasting solution' in Ukraine

## Govt reinstates Ziaur Rahman's Swadhinata Padak

Publishes names of 7 awardees of this year

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reinstated the Swadhinata Padak (Independence Award) posthumously given to president Ziaur Rahman in 2003, reversing its 2016 decision to cancel the honour.

In 2016, the Awami League government revoked the BNP founder's award, citing a



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## Minimum fitra fixed at Tk 110 per person

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The minimum Fitra for this year has been fixed at Tk 110 per person, while the maximum at Tk 2,805.

The decision was made yesterday at a meeting of the National Sadaqatul Fitra Determination Committee at the Islamic Foundation's conference

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## Four children, a woman raped

## STAR REPORT

Four more children, including a mentally challenged girl, and a woman have been raped in Khulna, Chattogram, Savar, Bandarban, and Jamalpur.

Quoting a case statement, police said Mofiz Sheikh, 40, of Khulna's Terokhada upazila, raped a 31-year-old woman

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## Fifth AL leader dies in Bogura jail custody

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Another Awami League leader has died under the custody of Bogura District Jail. Prior to this, four AL leaders had died in the same jail custody since the July uprising.

The deceased, Emdadul Haque Bhutto, 51, was the organising

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Complicity in Rohingya genocide cannot go unpunished

P9

Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING

MARCH 12

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:55 12:45 4:30 6:07 7:30

JAMAAT 5:05 1:15 4:45 6:22 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MARCH SEHRI IFTAR

11 12 4:54 6:07

12 13 4:53 6:07

13 14 4:52 6:08



Rickshaws waiting for passengers occupy almost the entire road near Holy Cross College in the capital's Farmgate area. It causes severe inconvenience to vehicular movement. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Duterte held for crimes against humanity

## AFP, Manila

Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte boarded a flight bound for The Hague yesterday night, his lawyer said, following his arrest on an International Criminal Court warrant tied to his deadly war on drugs.

The 79-year-old faces a charge of "the crime against humanity of murder", according to the ICC, for a crackdown that rights groups estimate killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men, often without proof they were linked to drugs.

As of 9:00pm (1300 GMT), the former president had been placed aboard an aircraft bound for The Hague, according to one of his lawyers.

Martin Delgra told a group chat open to journalists on messaging app Viber that Duterte had boarded the plane at Manila's Villamor Air Base with three others at about 9:00pm (1300 GMT), adding: "We cannot go near the plane. Plane still on tarmac with door open."

Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte had earlier said her father was being "forcibly taken to The Hague tonight".

"This is not justice – this is oppression and persecution," Duterte's eldest daughter said in a statement.

A photo posted by Delgra to the same group chat showed the plane's tail number as RP-C5219.

While flight tracking site FlightRadar.com had no



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