



"Trump doesn't understand that the Iranian nation is resilient. The more pressure the US applies, the stronger the people's resolve becomes."  
Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's National Security Council



DHAKA SATURDAY MARCH 14, 2026

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 59

FALGUN 29, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAMADAN 24, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00



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## 'Stop the war'

UN chief urges Israel, Hezbollah as he visits Beirut amid shelling; Trump says US will hit Iran 'very hard' after easing sanctions on Russian oil

AGENCIES

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called on Israel and the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah to "stop the war" at the start of his visit to Beirut yesterday, as Israel expanded its strikes across the country.

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war last week when Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

"My strong appeal to those parties, to Hezbollah and to Israel, is for a ceasefire to stop the war," Guterres said.

"This is no longer the time of armed groups. This is the time of strong states."

Later in the day, the UN chief launched a humanitarian appeal to help the more than 800,000 people registered as displaced in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump said the US was going to be hitting Iran

"very hard over the next week", shortly after issuing a partial 30-day waiver for purchases of sanctioned Russian oil, hoping to ease prices fuelled by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

**More than 800,000 displaced in Lebanon**

**Israel and Iran exchange missile barrages**

**6 US service members die in plane crash in Iraq**

Prices have been whipsawing on Trump's changing comments on the likely duration of the war, which has prompted Iran to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for a fifth of the world's oil.

Benchmark Brent crude (LCOc1) eased about 0.6% to around \$99.80, still up almost 40% since the start of the conflict.

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A burst of burning debris erupts after reported Israeli strikes in Beirut's southern suburbs, Lebanon, early yesterday, amid escalating clashes between Hezbollah and Israel.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### NATION GASPS UNDER TOXIC SKIES

## Air pollution driving up respiratory diseases

Country's top treatment facility grapples with surge in patients

**"During the dry season, germs remain suspended in the air, and people inhale them. That is why more and more people suffer from respiratory diseases at this time."**

Golam Sarwar Liaquat Hossain Bhuiyan  
Director of Nat'l Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital

#### NUMBER OF PATIENTS AT NIDCH

|      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 2025 | 1.95 lakh |
| 2024 | 1.92 lakh |
| 2023 | 1.75 lakh |
| 2022 | 1.62 lakh |
| 2021 | 1.28 lakh |

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and PINAKI ROY

The outdoor department of the country's premier respiratory treatment facility in the capital's Mohakhali was so packed with patients that staffers were struggling to manage the crowd.

Clutching their medical test reports, many stood in front of doctors' chambers because the seating arrangement was inadequate. With only a few minutes left before the

outpatient services closed at 1:00pm, some looked visibly worried, unsure whether they would be able to see a physician.

This scene unfolded at the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (NIDCH) on February 23. Several staffers said such situations have become frequent at the 870-bed specialised facility. Their claims are corroborated by the hospital's yearly

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## Smoke fills the air we breathe

Landfills, kilns and vehicles combine to push pollution to hazardous levels

PINAKI ROY

Smoke from burning garbage at the Matuail and Amin Bazar landfills often blankets Dhaka's sky, underscoring how poor waste management has become a major driver of the city's air pollution.

Waste collectors also frequently burn trash along highways outside the capital. Along with emissions from brick kilns and vehicles, and dust from roads and construction sites, these practices further worsen the city's already toxic air.

According to the Switzerland-based Air Quality Index (AQI), Dhaka's air is frequently ranked among the most polluted in the world. The average AQI in Dhaka and its surrounding areas consistently hovers around 200, occasionally surging beyond 600.

Just yesterday, Dhaka's air quality ranked the third worst in the world, after Karachi and Beijing, while Bangladesh's overall average air quality was the second worst globally.

On the AQI scale, 0-50 is considered "good," 51-100 "moderate," 101-150 "unhealthy for sensitive groups," 151-200 "unhealthy," 201-300 "very unhealthy," and anything above 300 is classified as "hazardous."

On March 4, the AQI in Savar was 640. Contacted, Ziaul Haque, head of the CASE

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## Govt moves to secure fertilisers for Aman season

SUKANTA HALDER

The government has finalised a plan to import five lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser as a precautionary measure amid fears that a prolonged US-Israel war on Iran could disrupt Bangladesh's fertiliser supply after June.

Apart from urea, Bangladesh is set to sign a contract with Egypt to import DAP and TSP fertilisers, while proposals from several other countries for various fertiliser supplies are under discussion.

| FERTILISER | TONNES IN STOCK |
|------------|-----------------|
| Urea       | 4,52,000        |
| TSP        | 4,67,000        |
| DAP        | 5,44,000        |
| MoP        | 3,38,000        |

SOURCE: AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

The Aman seasons will begin after June. Aman rice accounts for 40 percent of the total annual rice crop, which was estimated around 4 crore tonnes in the fiscal year 2024-25.

Since March 4, the authorities have shut five of Bangladesh's six urea fertiliser factories amid concerns over gas supply disruptions caused by the war and Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key energy route. With domestic production already meeting only a small portion of demand, the closures have

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## Bangladesh's energy future clouded by LNG risks

Warns Global Energy Monitor

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Low prices through the end of this decade may make liquefied natural gas (LNG) temporarily more attractive, but they could obscure the long-term risks for developing economies like Bangladesh, according to the latest briefing by the Global Energy Monitor (GEM).

In the immediate term, however, the fallout from the recent US-Israel war on Iran has highlighted the "fragile assumption" that LNG imports will remain affordable and reliably delivered to Asia, it said.

The conflict threatens shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. A significant portion of global LNG trade flows through the narrow channel.

"The pricing implications are savage," the report said, adding that futures for the

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Fuelled by waste, including plastic and polythene, the Matuail landfill under Dhaka South City Corporation continues to smoulder. Locals say the stench and smoke are overpowering. This drone photo of smoke rising from an around 25-foot-high pile of garbage was taken recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

## US launches labour probe into 59 nations, Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) yesterday announced investigations into 60 economies, including Bangladesh, in relation to what it called failures to take action on forced labor.

The investigations will determine whether the acts, policies and practices of these economies led to their failure to impose and effectively enforce a ban on the import of goods produced with forced labour and whether it impacted US commerce, said a USTR statement dated March 12.

"Despite the international consensus against forced labor, governments have failed to impose and effectively enforce measures banning goods produced with forced labour from entering their markets. For too long, American workers and firms have been forced

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## Parliament must debate, scrap US trade deal

Say speakers at seminar



**It'll be an understatement if the deal is described as a slavery deal. Because, it has left no room for autonomy.**



Economist ANU MUHAMMAD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should immediately cancel the recently signed trade deal with the US because the terms and conditions of the agreement hardly protect the interests of the country, said noted economist Anu Muhammad yesterday.

The real loss to Bangladesh from the deal would be more than the Tk 1,500 crore annual financial loss estimated by research organisations, he said at a seminar on the risks of the US-Bangladesh trade deal organised by Ganatantrik Odhikar Committee, a left-leaning platform, at the Economic Reporters' Forum auditorium in Dhaka.

It is not only the loss in revenue from the zero-duty

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