

## Taiwan Strait not China's

Says Taipei after Canadian warship passes through

REUTERS, Taipei

The Taiwan Strait does not belong to China and any attempts to create tension threaten global security, the island's defence ministry said yesterday, after Beijing criticised Canada for sailing a warship through the sensitive waterway.

The US Navy and occasionally ships from allied countries like Canada, Britain and France, transit the strait, which they consider an international waterway, around once a month.

Taiwan also considers it an international waterway but China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, says the strategic waterway belongs to it.

## China claims the strategic waterway belongs to it

Last week the first US Navy ships transited the strait since President Donald Trump took office last month, drawing an angry reaction from China, which said the mission increased security risks.

Taiwan's defence ministry said China had responded to those sailings by carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols".

"The Taiwan Strait is absolutely not within the scope of China's sovereignty," the ministry said in a statement.

Freedom of navigation by "friendly and allied" countries through the strait are concrete actions that highlight the strait's legal status, and China is trying to create a false appearance that the strait is an "internal issue", it added.



A member of civil defence sprays water on a damaged car after an Israeli strike, according to security sources, in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon, yesterday. The Israeli military said it killed a Hamas commander in the airstrike in southern Lebanon, accusing him of planning attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# No point in inviting Europeans to Ukraine truce talks: Russia

AGENCIES

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday he saw no reason for Europeans to take part in Ukraine truce talks, accusing them of wanting to "continue war" in Ukraine.

Lavrov's comments came ahead of his visit to Saudi Arabia to meet US officials and as European leaders convene in Paris for an emergency summit on Ukraine, amid alarm at Washington's diplomatic outreach to Moscow.

"I don't know what they would do at the negotiating table... if they are going to sit at the negotiating table with the aim of continuing war, then why invite them there?," Lavrov told a press conference in Moscow.

The veteran foreign minister said Europe had "its chance" at resolving the conflict from 2014 -- when Russia annexed the Crimean

- » European leaders hold Ukraine summit in Paris
- » Lavrov says there will be no territorial concessions

peninsula and backed pro-Russian armed separatists in the east -- and that the bloc had failed, reports AFP.

The United States has said that it wants both Russia and Ukraine to make concessions if ceasefire talks ever materialise.

But Lavrov insisted Moscow would not compromise on territory it has seized in

eastern and southern Ukraine, saying there could not even be a "thought" of that during negotiations.

A source with knowledge of Kremlin thinking said yesterday that Putin was serious about doing a deal, but not at any price, reports Reuters.

The Kremlin said the talks would focus on restoring Russian-US relations and preparations for possible talks on ending the war.

Meanwhile, Russian drone attacks on Ukraine damaged storage facilities and private residences after Russia launched 147 drones to attack the country overnight, Ukrainian military and officials said yesterday.

Separately, Ukrainian drones struck a key pumping station at a major international pipeline in southern Russia disrupting supplies from Kazakhstan, the operator said yesterday.

## Israel, US 'cannot do a damn thing' against Tehran

Says Iran's foreign ministry

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran said yesterday that US and Israeli threats against it were a blatant violation of international law and that they could not "do a damn thing" to hurt Tehran.

The comments came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Jerusalem on Sunday and said their countries were determined to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions and its influence in the Middle East.

Netanyahu said Israel had dealt a "mighty blow" to Iran since the start of the war in Gaza and that with the support of US President Donald Trump "I have no doubt we can and will finish the job".

Speaking at a weekly press conference yesterday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei responded: "When it comes to a country like Iran, they cannot do a damn thing".

"You cannot threaten Iran on one hand and claim to support dialogue on the other hand," Baghaei said, state media reported.

Trump has expressed an openness to a deal with Tehran while also reinstating the "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran.

While stopping short of renewing a ban on direct talks with Washington decreed in 2018, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has criticised Trump's previous administration for not honouring its promises.

## Musk's DOGE seeks access to US tax system: reports

AFP, Washington

Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has sparked alarm by seeking access to a system with the US tax office that has detailed financial data about millions of Americans, US media reported.

Spearheaded by Musk, US President Donald Trump has embarked on a campaign to slash public spending deemed wasteful or contrary to his policies. The Washington Post and others reported that the latest request is for DOGE officials to have broad access to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) systems, property and datasets.

This includes the Integrated Data Retrieval System (IDRS), access to which is usually extremely limited and which offers "instantaneous visual access to certain taxpayer accounts", according to the IRS.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
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REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)  
FOR APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTING FIRM FOR BASELINE SURVEY FOR GLOBAL MULTI-TIER MEASUREMENT FOR ACCESS TO ENERGY (PACKAGE NO. S-35)

No: 27.71.0000.004.31.001.24-78Date: 17/02/2025

1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a fund from the International Development Agency (IDA) and it intends to apply a part of the proceeds of this credit to payment under the contracts for appointment of consulting firm for "Baseline Survey for Global Multi-tier Measurement for Access to Energy (Package No. S-35)". Power Cell, therefore, intends to appoint a reputed consultancy firm to accomplish the mentioned services by using this fund under "TA for Strengthening and Development of Sustainable Power Sector in Bangladesh" project of Power Cell, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resource.

2. Interested consulting firms must provide information indicating the qualifications to perform the services. The short-listing criteria are:  
a) General experience of the firm;  
b) Experience in similar projects of compatible complexity, and technical specialty;  
c) Financial soundness of the firm;  
d) Resources, key experts & support services of the firm.

3. A consulting firm is allowed to submit the Expression of Interest (EOI) alone if it considers itself to be fully qualified on its own for the assignment, as it is not mandatory for a consulting firm to associate with any other firm(s), whether foreign or local. Alternatively, if the firm chooses to associate to enhance their qualifications and capability for the assignment, then such associations may either be as a Joint Venture (i.e., all members of the joint venture shall be jointly and severally responsible) and/or Sub-consultants (The Consultant will be responsible for the services of the sub-consultant, and the qualification and experience of the sub-consultants will not be evaluated). In case of an association, the Consultants must explain in the EOI submission (a) the rationale for forming the association and (b) the anticipated role and relevant qualifications of each member of the Joint Venture and/or of each sub-consultant for carrying out the assignment, to justify the proposed inclusion of the JV members and/or sub-consultants in the association. Failure to provide the above explanation in the EOI may risk the association not being shortlisted for the assignment.

4. Consultants are requested to submit the following supporting documents against the above mentioned criteria: (a) The Firm's Incorporation/Trade/registration documents from the country of the firm; (b) JV agreement/letter of intent (if applicable); (c) Firm's brochure; (d) Description of similar consultancy contracts, including the scope, contract amount, name of Client, period of the contract (date of contract signing to date of completion), location/country of the services, etc.; (e) Service experience record (including nature, total cost, total inputs in terms of staff month, employer, location, scope of the service etc.); (f) Short biography of key professional; (g) Company's Income Tax certificate/Income Tax registration certificate. The experience of a parent company, subsidiary company, group company or associates (whatever the names) of the applicant (consulting firm) shall not be considered in evaluation.

5. Detailed Scope of Work will be available in the Terms of Reference (TOR) which can be downloaded from the website of Power Cell (www.powercell.gov.bd), and CPTU website from the date of publication of EOI.

6. Interested Firms are requested to submit their EOI in 2 (Two) sets, (one original and one duplicate) with soft copy in pen-drive in the address of the undersigned and clearly marked "Baseline Survey for Global Multi-tier Measurement for Access to Energy (Package No. S-35)" on or before the submission deadline of March 19, 2025, 12:00 Hours (BST). Any submission received after the submission date & time will not be accepted.

17.2.25

(A J M Ershad Ahsan Habib)

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Students hold a rally titled "Indonesia Gelap" (Dark Indonesia) to oppose budget-cutting policies by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in front of the East Java Regional House of Representatives building in Surabaya, Indonesia, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## THE PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT India SC refuses new pleas

NDTV ONLINE

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna has expressed his displeasure over piles of new petitions filed in the matter involving the Places of Worship Act, 1991, which stops a lawsuit from being filed to reclaim a place of worship or change its character.

"Enough is enough. There has to be an end to this," he remarked during a hearing yesterday morning, asserting that the Supreme Court will not hear any new petition in this matter.

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