

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.

Parties fret over govt initiative to publish their stance online

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or disagreed will be posted on the website. If anyone has amendments, they can submit them too. Our responsibility is to present your wishes to the nation," said Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.

He explained, "One party may agree to 98 out of 100 proposals. Another may agree with only two. We will decide our next steps later based on this."

Led by the chief adviser himself, the National Consensus Commission held its first meeting on Saturday to discuss reform proposals. Around 100 representatives from 27 parties and alliances, including BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, participated.

With a view to ensuring transparency and public engagement in reaching a consensus on reforms, it was suggested that the proposals be published on a website. Yunus assured that the commission's role is to present recommendations, not to impose decisions.

However, the government's push for transparency has caused discomfort among some political leaders.

They say the initiative is unclear about how consensus will be achieved and worry that it might subject them to public criticism.

For instance, if a party opposes popular proposals like barring MPs from becoming the prime minister while remaining the party chief, or nomination quotas for the youth, it could invite backlash from voters.

A senior leader from the BNP-led alliance, wishing not to be named, said that for example, a proposal limiting a person to two terms as the prime minister was rather popular. "Which party could oppose it? If they

do, and the government publishes it, they will face public scrutiny. For some proposals, public opinion has already formed, making it difficult for parties to oppose them without providing explanations."

Mujibur Rahman Manju, chairman of AB Party, said the government should list all common proposals from different parties and focus discussions only on areas of disagreement. "This would reduce complexity and accelerate progress."

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosambhati Andolon, stressed the need for further dialogue on the process. "These matters will be clarified through discussions with the government," he added.

Meanwhile, a senior leader from the 12-party alliance, speaking anonymously, expressed frustration. "This process feels like pressure is on political parties. It seems the responsibility for implementing the reforms is being placed entirely on us."

On Sunday, Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said, "We welcome all positive decisions. Once the commission makes its final recommendations, we will start preparing for the election."

However, despite these concerns, some leaders see value in the initiative. They believe it could help voters understand party priorities ahead of the national election. "The initiative is promising, and the government has pledged not to impose decisions. But reforms cannot be reduced to a multiple-choice exercise. Reaching a consensus requires debate, rationale, and dialogue," said Saiful Haque, president of Revolutionary Workers Party.

Journos

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The international organisation Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) highlighted these findings in a report, published on CPJ's website yesterday.

The report said CPJ documented a recent spate of beatings, criminal investigations, and harassment of journalists for their work.

The report said Bangladesh's interim government has drawn criticism from journalists and media advocates for its January introduction of drafts of two ordinances: the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2025 (CPO) and Personal Data Protection Ordinance 2025.

While the government reportedly dropped controversial sections related to defamation and warrantless searches in its update to the CPO, rights groups remain concerned that some of the remaining provisions could be used to target journalists.

Journalists are also concerned that the proposed data law will give the government "unchecked powers" to access personal data, with minimal opportunity for judicial redress, writes the cpj report.

"Democracy cannot flourish without robust journalism," said CPJ Asia Program Coordinator Beh Lih Yi.

She said, "Bangladesh's interim government must deliver on its promise to protect journalists and their right to report freely. Authorities should amend proposed laws that could undermine press freedom and hold the perpetrators behind the attacks on the press to account."

Gabtoli-Dasherbandi route

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of Tk 47,721 crore, with 2031 set as the deadline.

The project was initially proposed in 2023 under the Awami League government at an estimated cost of Tk 54,618 crore. However, after revision, the cost came down to Tk 47,721 crore. Of this amount, Tk 32,332 crore will be financed by the Asian Development Bank and the South Korean government.

According to project documents, after the interim government took office, the planning commission returned the project proposal to Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited under the Roads and Highways Division to determine whether the project should proceed.

The RHD confirmed it would be implemented and then resubmitted the proposal to the planning ministry for the next steps.

Once constructed, the southern route will start from Gabtoli and end at Dasherbandi, passing through Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Asad Gate, Russell Square, Karwan Bazar, Hatirjheel, Tejgaon, and Aftabnagar.

It will feature 11 underground and four elevated stations. The underground stations will be between Gabtoli and Aftabnagar, while the elevated ones will be from Aftabnagar to Dasherbandi.

Initially, 19 trains with six air-conditioned coaches will operate on the route.

According to the documents, the middle coaches of each train will accommodate a maximum of 323 passengers, while the trailer coaches will carry 308 passengers.

With a travel time of 28 minutes between Gabtoli and Dasherbandi, one train will depart every four and half minutes.

The route is expected to help reduce traffic congestion and improve the environment in the capital and surrounding areas.

Operations of the country's first metro rail line, formerly known as MRT Line-6, began in November 2023, except for its Motijheel-Kamalapur section.

Two more lines -- MRT Line-5 (northern route) and MRT Line-1 -- are currently being constructed.

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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: 27.71.0000.004.31.001.24-78 Date: 17/02/2025

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

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