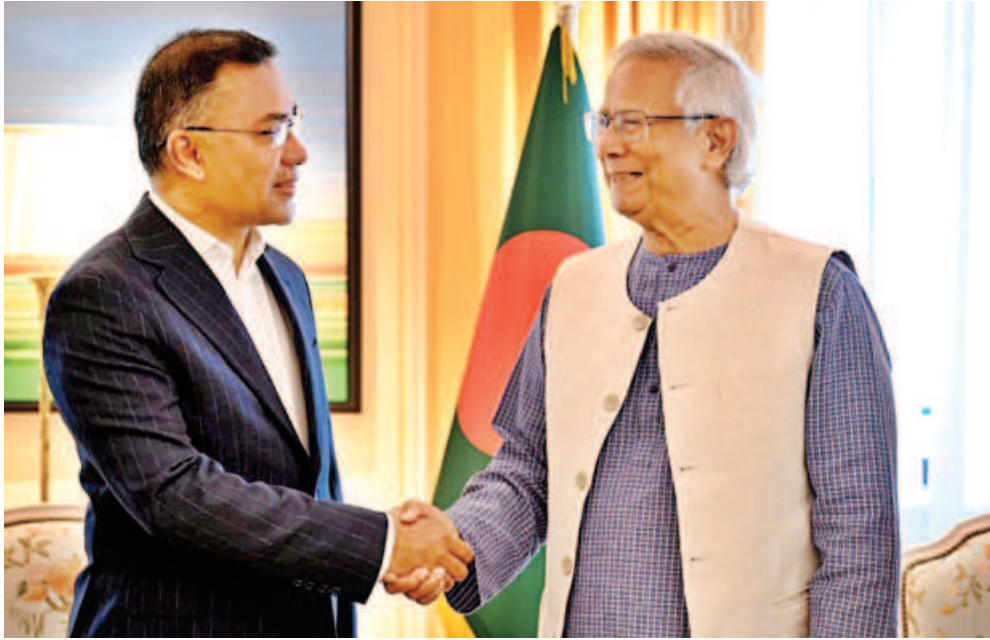




## Polls could be held in mid-February

Sufficient progress in reforms, trials necessary before election, Yunus tells Tarique in London



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has said that the next general election could be held in the week before the start of Ramadan in 2026 if all preparations are completed.

He added that sufficient progress in reforms and the trials of perpetrators of killings in the July uprising would be necessary to bring the election date forward from April.

Yunus made the remarks when BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, during a meeting with the chief adviser in London yesterday, suggested that the election take place before Ramadan.

The month of fasting will begin in the third week of February. After the end of Ramadan, Eid and Independence Day will be celebrated in March.

first half of April next year. If all preparations are completed, the election could be organised in the week before the start of Ramadan in 2026," the statement said.

It said Tarique welcomed the chief adviser's stance and expressed his gratitude on behalf of the party. The chief adviser also thanked Tarique for the fruitful discussion.

Both sides said they were satisfied with the outcome of the meeting at The Dorchester, the hotel where Yunus is staying during his four-day UK visit.

On multiple occasions, Yunus insisted that the polls would take place sometime between

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First responders gather outside a building hit by an Israeli strike in Tehran, Iran, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israel launches biggest ever attack on Iran

Strikes nuclear, military sites for the second night; top generals, nuclear scientists among 78 killed; Middle East airspace shut

AGENCIES

Israel launched renewed attacks on Iran as evening fell yesterday, after its biggest ever attack against its longstanding foe blasted Iran's huge underground nuclear site and wiped out its entire top echelon of military commanders.

Iran said that in retaliation, "the gates of hell will open", while Israel said the strikes were only the start of "Operation Rising Lion". US President Donald Trump said it was not too late for Tehran to halt the bombing campaign by reaching a deal on its nuclear programme.

- Some 200 Israeli fighter jets hit over 100 targets in Iran
- Trump urges Iran to grab 'second chance' for a deal
- China, Russia slam strikes; world urges restraint
- Report says US moving military assets to Middle East

Iran's Nournews said 78 people had been killed and 329 injured in Israeli attacks on residential areas in Tehran.

As evening fell yesterday, Iranian media reported explosions on the northern and southern outskirts of Tehran and at Fordow, near the holy city of Qom, a second major nuclear site which had been spared in the first wave of attacks. Israel's military said it was striking Iranian missile and drone launching sites.

Air defences were activated across Tehran, and explosions could be heard in Isfahan.

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## Iran's options for retaliation are limited

Say analysts

AGENCIES

Israel's strikes on archfoe Iran exposed severe weaknesses for Tehran that have hampered its ability to respond militarily, analysts said.

Israel said it hit 100 targets, including Iranian nuclear and military sites in the attacks, killing senior figures, among them the armed forces' chief and top nuclear scientists.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Israel it faces a "bitter and painful" fate over the attacks, but analysts say the Islamic republic's options are limited.

"This is an intelligence defeat of existential proportions for the Islamic Republic," said Ali Fathollah-Nejad, director of the Berlin-based Center for Middle East and Global Order (CMEGO) think tank.

"It exposes the vital vulnerability of the regime's military and security apparatus and its key infrastructures

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It's time to strengthen national unity and move swiftly toward a fair election in mid-February.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir



This is a significant shift in both sides' stance on election timing. The BNP, citing the urgency of returning to democracy, continued to demand that the election be held by December after the chief adviser announced polls in April earlier this month.

The government and the BNP revealed the outcome of the meeting between Yunus and Tarique in a joint statement presented at a press conference in London.

The party's Chairperson Khaleda Zia also believes that it would be good to hold the election during that time, according to the statement read out by National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman.

"The chief adviser said he has already announced that the election will be held in the

## Parties welcome possibility of February polls

NCP says reforms, trials must before polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four political parties and an alliance have welcomed the agreement between the government and BNP that the election could be held a week before Ramadan, which would be in February.

The National Citizen Party, however, said in a statement last night that the government appeared to be prioritising a particular party's demands regarding the election.

"While the discussion regarding the election timing received significant attention at the meeting, the key demands of citizens in the post-uprising Bangladesh, namely justice and reform, were not given the same importance. The National Citizen Party finds it extremely

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With this crime, the Zionist regime has set itself for a bitter and painful fate.

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI



This operation will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

## Two die from Covid in 24hrs

### 15 new cases detected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two women died from Covid-19 and 15 new cases of the disease were reported in the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, according to the health directorate.

One of the women died in Dhaka and the other in Chattogram, according to the health emergency operations centre and control room of the Directorate General of Health Services.

After a long gap, a coronavirus fatality was reported on June 5 this year.

With the latest fatalities and cases, the country's recorded death toll from the disease since March 18, 2020, stands at 29,502 and cases at 20,51800.

The recovery and death rates remained at 98.42 percent and 1.44 percent, respectively.

Amid rising numbers of cases in Bangladesh and neighbouring countries, the government is resuming coronavirus testing at four major hospitals in Dhaka and Chattogram from today.

The facilities are Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, Mugda Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, and the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in the capital; and Chattogram Medical College Hospital in the port city.

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Relatives of victims who died in the Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crash during take-off mourn as they wait outside the post-mortem room at a hospital in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## AIR INDIA PLANE CRASH

### Search on for missing people, clues

One of two black boxes found

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

Rescuers searched for missing people and aircraft debris in charred buildings in Ahmedabad yesterday after more than 260 people were killed in an Air India Boeing 787 crash, and local media reported that India may ground the airline's 787 fleet for safety checks.

The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner with 242 people on board bound for Gatwick Airport south of London came down over a residential area of Ahmedabad moments after take-off and erupted in a huge fireball as it hit buildings below, CCTV footage showed.

Rescue workers had completed combing the crash site and were now searching for missing people and bodies in the buildings as well as for aircraft parts that could help explain why the plane crashed soon after taking off.

There was a strong stench of jet fuel in the air as cranes worked to remove chunks of burnt trees on the ground and a sniffer dog went through the debris.

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