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### Dhaka-Beijing co-op must continue Says Yunus

**BSS, Dhaka**

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has said Bangladesh-China cooperation must continue beyond his tenure.

"In a few weeks, I will be out of this office, and a new government will be formed, but the work between our two countries must go on," he said.

The chief adviser made the remarks when a delegation from the China Bangladesh Partnership Forum met him on Wednesday at the

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Vendors occupy most of the road in front of the Karwan Bazar kitchen market, leaving little space for traffic and pedestrians. Illegal parking is adding to congestion in the already busy area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### TENGRATILA BLOWOUTS

## Niko ordered to pay \$42m against claim of \$1b

ASIFUR RAHMAN

An international arbitration tribunal has ordered Canadian energy company Niko Resources to pay \$42 million in compensation to Bangladesh over the 2005 explosions at the Tengratila gas field in Chhatak, Sunamganj.

The verdict was delivered on December 18 last year by the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

Officials at the Energy Division, Petrobangla and Bapex told The Daily Star yesterday that they learned of the award after receiving a summary of the ruling from their legal counsel a few days ago. They said the full text of the verdict is expected soon, after which the government will decide its next course of action in consultation with lawyers.

The compensation was set against a \$1.014 billion claim jointly filed by the Bangladesh government and Bapex, seeking damages for Niko's

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On January 7, 2005, an explosion occurred in Chhatak gas field in Sunamganj while Niko was drilling there, causing extensive damage to the environment of the gas field and its adjoining areas.

FILE PHOTO

## 48% see Tarique as next PM: poll 23% expect Shafiqur, finds survey on 5,147 respondents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly half of voters expect BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman to become Bangladesh's next prime minister, while a majority say they intend to vote for the BNP and its alliance, according to the report of a nationwide survey conducted ahead of the February 12 national election.

The survey found that 47.6 percent of respondents believe Tarique will be the future prime minister while 22.5 percent named Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman. Another 22.2 percent said they do not know who will emerge as the PM, indicating continued uncertainty.

**Among voters who have already decided whom to support, BNP and its alliance are projected to get 52.8 percent of the votes, compared with 31 percent for Jamaat and its combine.**

Among voters who have already decided whom to support, BNP and its alliance are projected to get 52.8 percent of the votes, compared with 31 percent for Jamaat and its combine.

A further 13.2 percent declined to reveal their preference.

The survey, titled "People's Election Pulse Survey, Round-3," was conducted by Innovision Consulting with support from Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network (BRAN) and Voice for Reform.

Innovision Managing Director Md Rubaiyath Sarwar revealed the findings at an event at DBBL Bhaban yesterday afternoon.

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### One power can't solve global crises

Says UN chief targeting Trump, warns against erosion of int'l law

REUTERS, United Nations

Global problems will not be solved by one power "calling the shots" or by splitting the world into rival spheres, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Thursday in comments directed at the United States and China.

Guterres spoke to reporters to mark the start of his 10th and final year in office. The UN Security Council will choose his successor later this year.

"Global problems will not be solved by one power calling the shots," said Guterres, later adding it was a reference to the United States. "Nor will they be solved by two powers carving the world into rival spheres of influence."

## Diplomacy gains as US-Iran tensions rise

Iran FM in Turkey says Tehran ready for 'fair' talks as Trump eases strike threat

AGENCIES

President Tayyip Erdogan told his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian in a call yesterday that Turkey was ready to play a facilitator role between Iran and the United States to ease the tensions between the two sides, the Turkish presidency said.

Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi landed in Istanbul earlier in the day. He said Iran is prepared for the resumption of talks with the US, but they should be fair and not include Iran's defence capabilities.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he planned to speak with Iran, even as the US sent another warship to the Middle East and the Pentagon chief said the military would be ready to carry out whatever the president decided.

Trump -- who had previously warned time was "running out" for Tehran -- appeared to slightly pull back, saying: "We have a group headed out to a place called Iran, and hopefully we won't have to use it."

One of the main demands by the US to resume talks with Iran is curbing its missile programme, a senior Iranian official told Reuters last week. Iran rejects that demand.

"If negotiations are fair and on an equal footing, Iran is ready to participate in such talks," Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said in a press conference with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan in Istanbul.

"We see that Israel is trying to persuade the US to launch a military attack on Iran... We hope the US administration will act with common sense and not allow this to happen," Fidan said.

Araqchi also said no talks between Tehran

and Washington were currently arranged, and reiterated that Tehran was ready for either negotiations or warfare.

As Washington dialled up its rhetoric and Iran issued stark threats, UN chief Antonio Guterres has called for nuclear negotiations to "avoid a crisis that could have devastating consequences in the region".

The EU's decision on Thursday to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC)

- Turkey ready to mediate between US and Iran: Erdogan
- Ready for nuke talks on 'equal footing': Iran FM
- US military destroyer docks at Israel's Eilat port
- Turkish FM urges US to resist Israeli pressure to strike Iran

as a terrorist organisation is a "major strategic mistake", Araghchi warned. The Iranian army also blasted the move as "irresponsible and spite-driven" while Israel hailed it as "historic".

A US military destroyer has docked in the port of Eilat, Israel's ynet news website reported yesterday, citing the military.

The news website said the destroyer's arrival at the southern port, on the Gulf of Aqaba and near Israel's southern border crossings with Egypt and Jordan, was pre-planned and part of cooperation between the Israeli and US militaries.

### REFERENDUM

## Civil servants cannot push for 'yes/no'

Says official; CA press wing debunks interim's 6-month extension

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Following clarification by the Election Commission, Public Administration Ministry Senior Secretary Ehsanul Hoque yesterday said government officials and employees will not be allowed to campaign in favour of either a "yes" or "no" vote in the upcoming referendum.

He made the remarks at a meeting with officials of the Rajshahi divisional administration, chaired by Divisional Commissioner ANM Bazlur Rashid at Bazlur's office.

Ehsanul said the current government is non-partisan and has no candidate or political position in the election process.

"Our responsibility is solely to organise a free, fair, acceptable and neutral election. In line with the Election Commission's decision, no government official or employee will be allowed to campaign for either 'yes' or 'no' in the referendum," he said, adding that officials may only encourage voters to participate but must not take any position.

He said whether people want change or not will be decided entirely by the voters.

"The government remains neutral. Those who win the election will form the government, while the referendum gives

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### ENERGY SECTOR

## Ukraine ready to halt attacks if Russia does so Says Zelensky; Trump asks Putin to suspend strikes on Kyiv until Feb 1

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine is ready to reciprocate if Russia halts its attacks on the country's energy infrastructure that has plunged the capital Kyiv into cold, President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday, adding there was no formal truce between the two countries.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin had agreed not to fire on Kyiv for a week due to cold weather. The Kremlin said yesterday that President Putin had received a personal request from Donald Trump to halt strikes on Kyiv until February 1 in order to create a favourable environment for peace negotiations.

Temperatures in the Ukrainian capital is forecast to plunge as low as minus 26 degrees Celsius tomorrow.

Zelensky said the opportunity to de-escalate the conflict was proposed by the United States during trilateral peace talks in Abu Dhabi last weekend. He added that the date or location for a follow-up round of talks, currently scheduled for tomorrow in the United Arab Emirates, could change.





### NASA eyes February 2026 for moon mission

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

NASA is preparing to send four astronauts on a 10-day journey around the Moon in early 2026, a mission that would mark humanity's first crewed voyage beyond Earth's orbit in more than half a century.

The flight, known as Artemis II, is designed to take astronauts further into space than any humans have travelled before. While the mission will not land on the lunar surface, it is intended as a crucial step towards a future landing under the Artemis programme, which aims to land astronauts to the Moon later in the decade.

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Federal workers and community members gather outside the VA Harbour Healthcare System in New York City, US, on Thursday, during a vigil for Alex Pretti, who was fatally shot by federal immigration agents attempting to detain him in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

PHOTO: REUTERS