

Power shift in Karnataka as Siddaramaiah resigns

Two-time Chief Minister points at his deputy Shivakumar as successor after stepping down from the post; not interested in national politics, will fight communal forces till last breath, he declares

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Two-time Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah tendered his resignation on Thursday, paving the way for transition of power to his deputy D.K. Shivakumar. The formation of the next government is likely to be discussed in Delhi on Friday.

After visiting the Lok Bhavan to hand over his resignation to the Special Secretary to Governor Thaa-warchand Gehlot, who was away in Indore, Mr. Siddaramaiah proceeded to Delhi for talks with the Congress central leadership over the formation of the next government.

However, his flight was diverted to Jaipur owing to bad weather on Thursday



Rein change: Siddaramaiah leaves after a press meet in Bengaluru on Thursday. D.K. Shivakumar is also seen. SUDHAKARA JAIN

night. Mr. Shivakumar also left for Delhi.

Though the Congress is yet to formally name his successor, Mr. Siddaramaiah, during a media conference, pointed to Mr. Shivakumar as the next Chief Minister. There has also been no official word on the Congress Legisla-

ture Party meeting, although speculation is rife that it could take place on Friday evening.

"I have stood down after the high command asked me to do so. I will remain in active politics and fight communal forces till my last breath. The high command asked me to go to the

Rajya Sabha. But with humility, I have told them that I am not interested in national politics," said Mr. Siddaramaiah, who entered politics in the local body elections in 1978. "I owe my career to the Constitution drafted by the committee chaired by B.R. Ambedkar."

Mr. Siddaramaiah, the State's longest serving Chief Minister, said he would serve the remaining two years as a legislator.

The announcement brings to an end the speculation over leadership that has plagued the government for nearly a year and is expected to end public posturing by both factions.

CONTINUED ON

» **PAGE 12**

MORE REPORTS ON

» **PAGES 5 & 13**

Siddaramaiah resigns, leading to power shift



Supporters of Siddaramaiah gather outside his residence as he resigned from the post of Karnataka CM. PTI

The leadership transition is learnt to have been implemented to honour an apparent power-sharing agreement between the two brokered by the high command in May 2023.

The 77-year-old Mr. Siddaramaiah, hailing from Mysuru district, had been asked to pave way for a new Chief Minister on Tuesday.

During the press conference on Thursday afternoon, he thanked Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi multiple times for the opportunities he got after joining the Congress in 2006 following his expulsion from the former Prime Minister H.D. Devegowda-led Janata Dal (Secular). Often credited with stitching together an Other Backward Class-Dalit-Muslim social alliance known by the Kannada acronym AHINDA, Mr. Siddaramaiah has been a formidable mass leader over the last decade and half. He was expelled from the JD(S), which draws its strength from the dominant land-owning Vokkaliga community, for his attempts to form the AHINDA coalition.

This was his second term in office – the first was from 2013 to 2018 and the second began in May 2023. On January 7, 2026, he became the longest-serving Chief Minister of the State, going past the 2,792-day record previously held by Congress leader D. Devaraj Urs. He also served as the Leader of the Opposition on two occasions – between 2008-2013 and 2019-2023.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Siddaramaiah – despite pressure from his followers to continue in the post – announced his resignation during the breakfast meeting of his Cabinet colleagues.

He is learnt to have expressed satisfaction over his governance and the challenges that the government faced and thanked his Cabinet colleagues for their cooperation. Adding a twist to the fast-paced political developments was the absence of the Governor as the government had sought his availability on Thursday. However, Mr. Siddaramaiah decided to submit his resignation to the Special Secretary.

Pradhan takes responsibility for lapses in CBSE evaluation

Minister reviews evaluation and post-exam processes, promises a 'solution to discrepancies in the OSM system' and says 'Board is working to address students' concerns'; also criticises Rahul Gandhi for being 'opposed' to technological progress

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Taking responsibility for the issues that have cropped up with the new on-screen marking (OSM) evaluation process used by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday said that strict action would be taken against anyone found intentionally responsible for irregularities affecting students.

"This was the first time CBSE used [the OSM process], and some discrepancies have come to light. I take responsibility for this and assure you that a solution will be found. We are working on it. We will not leave any student's query unaddressed," he said.

Many Class 12 students have alleged scoring discrepancies and also claimed that the scanned copies of their answer sheets uploaded by the Board did not match their handwriting, taking to social media to raise concerns over a possible mix-up in the OSM system.

40 crore pages scanned

Under the OSM system, physical answer sheets were scanned and uploaded to a secure digital platform, so that evaluators could assess them on computers instead of handling the paper booklets.

"Seventeen lakh students appeared for the examination, and we have 98 lakh answer sheets. Each answer sheet has 40 pages.



Seeking answers: Members of the National Students' Union of India during a protest in New Delhi on Thursday against the CBSE over discrepancies in the marking system. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

So, nearly 40 crore pages have been scanned," Mr. Pradhan said. The CBSE has said that, so far, approximately 4 lakh students have accessed around 11 lakh answer sheets through the portal.

Minister chairs review

"The Board is working to address all concerns raised by students regarding evaluation and re-evaluation for Class 12 examinations," the minister said, after chairing a meeting at the CBSE headquarters to address technical and payment-related issues faced by students during the re-evaluation and verification processes.

The review meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Department of School Education, the CBSE Chairperson, and the directors of the Indian Institutes of Technology, Ma-

dras and Kanpur, along with senior officers from the Union Ministry of Education, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, public sector banks and the CBSE.

The CBSE Class 12 evaluation and post-result processes were discussed and reviewed in the meeting.

"Mr. Pradhan took note of reports related to login access issues, heavy server load, and payment-related difficulties on the post-examination services portal," a senior education official noted.

The expert technical team comprising professors from the IIT, Madras and specialists in digital systems has been tasked with reviewing portal stability, server capacity, login management, and payment gateway integration to ensure uninterrupted services for students.

Deliberations focused

on providing a student-friendly re-evaluation portal, strengthening the CBSE's digital platforms, enhancing student exam and result facilitation mechanisms, and improving evaluation and monitoring systems.

Stakeholders also highlighted measures undertaken for student support and outlined future plans for robust, transparent, and technology-enabled service delivery to benefit students.

The official added that following discussions with the Finance Ministry, the payment gateways of four public sector banks – the State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Canara Bank – have been integrated with the CBSE portal to make the system more seamless for students.

Mr. Pradhan also

slammed Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for his remarks on the alleged discrepancies in the CBSE exam system, saying he was "frustrated" and "opposed" to technological progress.

The Minister's response came a day after Mr. Gandhi had said the CBSE examination results have been marred by "massive irregularities" and demanded an independent judicial inquiry and constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to unearth the truth behind the "entire scam". He had also accused the CBSE of handing over the contract for digital evaluation of answer books to a Telangana firm with a murky past.

"Yesterday, CBSE gave its response regarding this matter. It is in accordance with the procurement policy of the Government of India. I want to assure everyone that if any irregularities are found, no one will be spared," Mr. Pradhan said. He added that the Congress leader appeared "frustrated" due to continuous electoral defeats. "But as far as Rahul Gandhi is concerned, he seems to have reached a different state of mind. Due to continuous electoral defeats, he appears frustrated. He opposed SIR, he used to oppose EVMs, and he opposed Digital India. He does not seem to stand with India's scientific progress," he said.

The Minister urged political parties to avoid politicising the issue.

SIR judgment gets the law right, and the ground reality wrong

BEFORÉ ANY representative government can count votes, it must first know whose votes may be counted. That arresting opening line from CJI Surya Kant's 124-page judgment in Association for Democratic Reforms vs Election Commission of India, delivered on May 27, sets an appropriately philosophical tone for one of the most consequential electoral rulings in recent memory. It is a judgment that gets the constitutional law largely right — and the ground reality almost entirely wrong. It also mistakes a demolition for a renovation.

Let me begin with the credit due. The Court has affirmed what election administrators have long known: Clean electoral rolls are not an administrative nicety but the foundation of democratic legitimacy. More than two decades had passed since Bihar's last Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Rapid urbanisation and large-scale migration had produced rolls riddled with duplication, dead voters, and multiple recording of migrant voters. Annual Summary Revisions were addressing these issues, but problems persisted. The ECI's decision to undertake the SIR was legally and constitutionally valid, as the SC has upheld — even if the manner of its execution was anything but.

The Court correctly holds that the SIR is traceable to Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, read with Article 324, and does not conflict with the constitutional imperative of free and fair elections. More importantly, it draws an intelligent and necessary line on citizenship: The ECI can examine it, but for the limited purpose of determining inclusion or exclusion from the electoral roll. Deletion from the voters' list does not amount to a declaration of non-cit-

izenship. Final adjudication remains with the competent authority under the Citizenship Act. Without this guardrail, the SIR could have silently become a backdoor NRC. The Court refused that.

One more direction deserves appreciation. The ECI has been told to refer, within four weeks, all persons whose names were deleted from the 2003 Bihar roll on citizenship grounds to the competent authority — and if that authority finds them to be citizens, their names shall be restored. On paper, this is a meaningful protection.

Now for the cons — and they are serious. The judgment does not address what is perhaps the most fundamental objection: What the current ECI conducted was not a revision at all. It was a *de novo* collection of data — starting from scratch, discarding rolls on which successive ECs had laboured for nearly three decades. Through painstaking summary revisions, the Commission had achieved about 99 per cent accuracy in the electoral rolls. Elections as consequential as the 2024 general election were conducted on these very rolls without challenge. To throw that work into the dustbin, and to harass 1 billion voters just to fix a residual inaccuracy, is not an SIR within the meaning of Section 21(3). It is something altogether different. The Court simply did not engage with this distinction. That silence is a serious lacuna.

The Court upheld the use of the 2003 roll as the reference baseline, meaning every voter enrolled after 2003 must re-verify. I think carefully about who that is: The young first-time voter, the migrant labourer, the woman newly enrolled under SVEEP.



S Y QURAISHI

These are the citizens that the ECI's own outreach programmes spent years bringing into the democratic process. The SIR, as validated, risks systematically disenfranchising the people democratic deepening was meant to reach.

Then there is the documentation problem. The Court upheld the ECI's document framework as a "considered exercise of administrative discretion". But a large portion of India's poor do not possess neat documentary proof of identity and residence. The one reliable proof that existed, namely the Elector's Photo Identity Card, has been trashed in one stroke.

Most troubling of all is the remedy the judgment prescribes for wrongful deletions. Persons deleted erroneously may, the Court says, "assail the decision of the Commission by way of judicial review". Picture the voter this is addressed to: The daily wage labourer in Sitamarhi or Murshidabad who has been removed from the rolls, possibly without knowing it, possibly having never seen the draft roll, certainly without a lawyer, and almost certainly without the time, money, or legal literacy to file a petition before a competent court. Judicial review is a remedy designed for citizens with resources and time. For the poor voter, it is no remedy at all — it

is the law's way of closing a door while appearing to open it.

The citizenship referral direction carries a similar infirmity. The competent authority under the Citizenship Act has no established infrastructure to handle millions of individual cases. The judgment directs completion before "the next Parliamentary, Assembly, or Local Body election, whichever is earlier"

— an impossibly compressed timeline. Crucially, the Court has specified no penalty for non-compliance. What if the authority is unable to decide by the earliest upcoming election? Will the voters be advised again to wait till the "next election"? A direction without teeth is a direction in name only.

In West Bengal alone, over 90 lakh names were deleted from the draft rolls. In Tamil Nadu, nearly 74 lakh. The scale of potentially wrongful exclusion is not theoretical. It has already happened. The court's safeguards arrive after the damage.

Just 12 days ago, CJI Surya Kant — the author of the judgment — expressed anguish from the bench about lawyers with fake degrees and no briefs, "like cockroaches". Today, with this judgment, the learned Chief Justice has unwittingly heaped a bounty on them. With crores of wrongfully deleted voters potentially seeking judicial review, the same briefless lawyers across India will find themselves overwhelmed with work. They will laugh all the way to the bank. Whether the poor voter, whose only power was the vote, will find anything to laugh about is quite another matter.

The voter roll is not a bureaucratic document. It is, in practice, every citizen's certificate of democratic belonging. Every name wrongly struck off is democracy denied — not by the agency of the state, but by the state itself. The SC has told us the SIR is constitutional. What it has not told us — and what no judgment can — is whether a democracy that disenfranchises its poorest voters in the name of clean rolls deserves to call itself one.

Quraishi is former Chief Election Commissioner of India and author of *An Undocumented Wonder* — The Making of the Great Indian Election

Persons deleted erroneously may, the Court says, 'assail the decision of the Commission by way of judicial review'. Picture the voter this is addressed to:

The daily wage labourer removed from the rolls

Iran, U.S. to extend truce in tentative deal

Among the first issues to be negotiated during the extended ceasefire is what will happen to Iran's highly enriched uranium, the official said.

Iran has not publicly committed to giving up the stockpile, which is believed to be buried under a trio of nuclear sites that were badly damaged by U.S. air strikes last year.

A second U.S. official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said the broad outlines of an agreement have been reached but stressed that until Mr. Trump signs off on it, there is no deal. The official said there still are questions about whether Mr. Trump will accept the proposal.

Kuwait had earlier announced an attack on its territory, and Iran said it had retaliated for strikes earlier in the week by firing on a U.S. base in a Gulf state it did not name. The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry condemned Iran for what it called "blatant aggression," and U.S. Central Command called the attack on one of America's top allies in the Persian Gulf an "egregious ceasefire violation". The exchange unfolded after U.S. officials said on Wednesday that U.S. forces launched more strikes on Iran, shooting down four one-way attack drones that posed a threat around the strait and hitting an Iranian ground-control station in Bandar Abbas that was about to launch a fifth drone.

Naga camp, promises to trace hostages

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Thursday visited a relief camp housing Nagas displaced by the ongoing ethnic conflict and assured them that the six Naga men missing since May 13 would be traced soon.

The relief camp at the Makhen Baptist Church in Makhan Naga village currently shelters 35 Nagas from Konsakhul. Both villages are in the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district.

Armed Kuki groups allegedly abducted some Naga men from Konsakhul after unidentified gunmen killed three Thadou church leaders between Kotlen and Kotzim villages in Kangpokpi district on May 13. Elsewhere, Naga groups allegedly held Kuki villagers hostage.

An official statement said that among the internally displaced persons the Chief Minister met at the relief camp were women and children who were taken hostage but later released by armed miscreants. “The government



Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh visiting a Naga relief camp. PTI

is taking the hostage issue seriously, and the security forces are conducting search and combing operations to locate the hostages,” the statement quoting the Chief Minister said.

He also said that four people suspected to be involved in the kidnapping of the six Naga civilians, including two church leaders, had been arrested.

Not far away in Kangpokpi district’s Taphou Kuki village, the families of 14 people allegedly abducted by Naga extremists intensified their protest, demanding equal attention from the government to the hostage crisis they have been facing.

Twisha death case: retired judge Giribala Singh arrested

A CBI team reached her residence and carried out an investigation for six hours; the agency plans to confront Singh and her son Samarth Singh, Twisha's husband, with each other's statements

Mehul Malpani

BHOPAL

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested retired Bhopal district judge Giribala Singh in the Twisha Sharma dowry harassment and death case, a day after the Madhya Pradesh High Court rejected the anticipatory bail a local court had granted her on May 15.

Ms. Singh, Twisha's mother-in-law, was questioned for six hours at her house in Bhopal before the arrest, the agency's Chief Information Officer, Beena Yadav, told *The Hindu*. On Thursday morning, several CBI officers arrived at Ms. Singh's residence and carried out an investigation and recreated the crime scene.

Twisha's husband Samarth Singh, a lawyer, is in CBI custody. Ms. Yadav said that Ms. Singh will be



Twisha's husband Samarth Singh and mother-in-law Giribala Singh after CBI officials leave their house in Bhopal on Wednesday. ANI

produced before a local court on Friday, and the CBI will seek her custody. The agency plans to confront the mother and son with each other's statements and interrogate them on the circumstances leading to Twisha's death, officials said.

The anticipatory bail was granted just hours after an FIR was lodged by

the local police against Ms. Singh and her son.

Late on Thursday, the single Bench of Justice Devnarayan Mishra issued the order after hearing petitions by Twisha's father Navnidhi Sharma and the State government challenging the bail.

In its observations, the High Court noted that some of the injuries found

on Twisha's body were "not caused due to taking out the body from the ligature or carrying out to the hospital" and that one head injury "was antemortem", suffered before death.

"As per the post-mortem report, the death was due to antemortem hanging by ligature, but from the post-mortem, it is also clear that six other injuries were found in the body of the deceased, in which four injuries were on the left arm, one on the ring finger and one on the head, and that was antemortem," it said.

The High Court observed that the trial court did not consider allegations, presented by the victim's family, against Ms. Singh while granting the anticipatory bail. The observations prompted Twisha's family to reiterate claims that their daughter "was killed".

Chandrayaan-2 finds 'possible presence' of ice in lunar south pole

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Nearly six years after it was
launched, India's second
moon mission Chan-
drayaan-2 continues to
provide valuable data on
the satellite.

In a new finding, scientists have found the possible presence of sub-surface ice in the Lunar South Polar Region. These were the findings of scientists from the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) who used observations from the Chandrayaan-2's Dual Frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar (DFSAR) payload.

In this study, the scientists focused on doubly shadowed craters, which are special craters located in permanently shadowed regions (PSRs) of the moon.

Due to continuous shielding from sunlight and thermal radiation, these regions remain extremely cold (temperatures -25K) and are consi-



In this study, the scientists focused on special craters located in permanently shadowed regions of the moon. PTI

dered favourable locations for preserving water-ice over long geological timescales.

Using advanced radar polarimetric analysis, the scientists identified radar signatures consistent with the possible presence of sub-surface ice beneath the floors of four doubly shadowed craters in the lunar South Polar Region.

The findings are expected to have significant implications for future lunar exploration missions.

India, China hold talks on border delimitation

According to the MEA, the two sides reviewed the situation along the border and expressed satisfaction over the progress made in maintaining peace and tranquillity in border areas

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

The 35th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was held in Beijing on Wednesday, where India and China held constructive and forward-looking discussions on border delimitation and boundary management issues.

The Indian delegation was led by Sujit Ghosh, Joint Secretary (East Asia), while the Chinese delegation was headed by Hou Yanqi, Director-General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the two sides reviewed the situation along the India-China border and expressed satisfaction over the progress made in maintaining peace and tranquillity in border areas, which they said had contributed



Fruitful talks: Representatives from India and China at the 35th WMCC meeting held in Beijing on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to the gradual normalisation of bilateral relations.

During the talks, both countries discussed issues related to border delimitation, border management, mechanism building and cross-border cooperation.

The Indian side also stressed the need for an early meeting of the Expert Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers, it said.

India and China agreed to continue regular diplomatic and military-level exchanges through existing mechanisms, including those agreed upon during

Indian side called for an early meeting of the Expert Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers

the 24th Special Representatives (SR) Talks. Both sides agreed to work together for preparations for the next SR meeting, scheduled to be held in China.

On the sidelines of the visit, the head of the Indian delegation met Liu Jinsong, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Chinese Fo-

reign Ministry, and also called on Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Hong Lei.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, said both sides conducted constructive dialogue in a practical and friendly atmosphere and acknowledged that border area maintained lasting peace.

In order to implement the consensus reached during the 24th round of talks between the Special Representatives of China and India on the boundary question, the two sides held discussion on boundary delimitation, border management, mechanism development and cross-border communication and cooperation.

They agreed to keep communication through diplomatic and military channels, maintain peace and tranquillity in the border area and actively prepare for the 25th round of talks between the Special Representatives of China and India on the boundary question, it added.

Trump threatens to blow up Oman amid Hormuz talks

Reuters

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday dismissed a report that Iran and Oman would manage shipping through the Strait of Hormuz as part of a deal to end the war, in a sign that any potential agreement remained elusive.

Mr. Trump's comments came after Iranian state TV reported that it had obtained an unofficial draft of an agreement that would restore commercial shipping through the strategic waterway to pre-war levels within a month, with Iran and Oman jointly managing traffic. That framework also would have the United States lift its blockade of Iranian ports and withdraw military forces from Iran's vicinity.



Donald Trump

Mr. Trump said no single country would have control over the waterway, and appeared to threaten Oman, a country with which the United States has decades-long military and economic ties.

"Nobody's going to control [the strait]," Mr. Trump said at a Cabinet meeting attended by presspersons. "It's international waters and Oman will behave just like everybody

else or we'll have to blow them up. They understand that, they'll be fine."

The White House and Oman's embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

The waterway is covered by international law that guarantees foreign vessels the right to pass through.

'Part of deal'

"We'll watch over it, but nobody's going to control it – that's part of the negotiation that we have," Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Trump has also asked Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt and Jordan to join the Abraham Accords normalising relations with Israel as part of a deal to end the war, which they have declined to do.

China vows to support Cuba against 'all forms of power politics, bullying'

Agence France-Press

BEIJING

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi vowed to support Havana and confront "power politics and bullying" during talks with his Cuban counterpart in New York, state media reported on Wednesday, as the Caribbean island faces mounting pressure from the United States.

Cuba is suffering under a U.S. energy blockade, and President Donald Trump has openly mused about taking over the country.

China has close ties to the communist state and has promised to donate 60,000 tonnes of rice to help Cuba deal with shor-



Resolute stance: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks to presspersons at United Nations headquarters on Tuesday. AP

tages, the first batch of which arrived on Sunday.

"China will continue to uphold justice and speak out on Cuba's behalf, support the just cause of the Cuban people, and contribute to the development of Cuba's economy and the

improvement of its people's livelihoods," Mr. Wang told Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, according to a Chinese readout of their meeting.

"It is essential to steadfastly respect the sove-

reignty and independence of all nations, and to oppose all forms of power politics and bullying," he added, in an apparent reference to the U.S.

The Trump administration cut off Cuba's supply of oil from Havana's ally Venezuela after it ousted Nicolas Maduro in a raid in January.

Washington tightened the screws last week by indicting former Cuban president Raul Castro over the downing of two civilian U.S. planes in 1996.

China's Foreign Ministry had urged the U.S. to "stop brandishing... the judicial stick against Cuba and stop threatening force at every turn", in response to the indictment last week.

Ukraine, Sweden ink defence deal as Kyiv moves to buy fighter jets

Reuters

Uppsala, May 28

UKRAINE WILL buy 20 new Gripen fighter jets and Sweden will donate 16 of an older model next year, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said at a joint press conference on Thursday.

The two leaders had signed a letter of intent last year paving the way for Sweden to sell up to 150 Saab Gripen model E fighter jets to Ukraine, though deliveries of the newer model are several years away.

The planes are a priority for Ukraine's fighter fleet and the country's defence ministers said in May that a deal for Gripen E could be signed "within months" after the European Union approved a 90 billion euro loan for Ukraine.

"Gripen is the best and optimal choice for Ukraine. So



Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Uppsala, Sweden, on Thursday. REUTERS

today, we take the next major step on this joint journey," Kristersson said at a press conference alongside Zelenskyy at Uppsala air base, where two Gripen jets were on display.

"We need these jets and for us this is really a new page for Ukraine," Zelenskyy said, adding it planned to buy all the 150 jets stipulated in the orig-

inal letter of intent. "God bless, we will have enough financing for this," he said.

The transfer of older model C/D jets enables a stopgap solution for Ukraine's air defence in the meantime.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine had earmarked 2.5 billion euros out of a 90 billion euro EU loan package for the planes.

Yemen's ex-President Hadi, who exiled to Saudi Arabia, dies

Agence France-Presse

RIYADH

Yemen's former President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who fled house arrest by Houthi rebels and spent his final years in Saudi Arabia, has died, the Yemeni presidency said on Thursday.

Three days of mourning, with lowered flags and condolence books, was declared to commemorate Hadi, who oversaw a tumultuous period when the Houthis seized large swathes of Yemen, triggering a devastating civil war.

The presidency's statement praised his "wise leadership", saying he "led the Yemeni state through one of the most complex



Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi

phases the country has ever experienced, amid war, coup, and unprecedented humanitarian and economic crises".

Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia in 2015 as war erupted between the Houthis, who had forced the government from the capital Sanaa, and a Saudi-led coalition.

Myanmar President Hlaing to visit India; exiled govt. protests

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing will visit India from May 30 to June 3, the External Affairs Ministry announced on Thursday. This will be the first foreign visit by President Hlaing since he won the controversial election (December 2025-January 2026) that excluded political parties of the Opposition.

The Opposition National Unity Government (NUG) has protested against the announced visit, describing Mr. Hlaing as a “terrorist junta leader” who is attacking Myanmar’s people.

“Myanmar lies at the confluence of India’s neighbourhood First, Act East and MAHASAGAR policies. The official visit of President U Min Aung Hlaing to India is expected to further strengthen and deepen the multi-faceted relations between the two countries,” the Ministry said. The visit will be keenly watched as it comes against the backdrop of intensifying Myanmar mili-

India-based Myanmar opposition groups have announced they will hold protests during the visit

tary attacks on rebel targets in Chin state, close to Mizoram, that is known for rare earth minerals.

India-based Myanmar opposition groups have announced they will hold protests coinciding with the visit.

Mr. Hlaing will begin his visit from Bodh Gaya where he is expected to offer prayers at the Maha Bodhi temple and meet resident Myanmar nationals and monks. The Ministry said the President will be accompanied by a “high-level delegation comprising Cabinet Ministers, senior officials, and business leaders”. He will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 1 and participate in a Myanmar-India business forum in Delhi. He is next scheduled to visit Mumbai for meetings with business leaders and industrialists.

Iran, U.S. to extend truce in tentative deal'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Negotiators from the U.S. and Iran reached a tentative agreement on Thursday to extend the ceasefire in the 3-month-old war by 60 days and launch talks on Iran's nuclear programme, according to a U.S. official familiar with the matter while noting that U.S. President Donald Trump has yet to sign off on it.

While Tehran did not immediately confirm any deal, Iran's *Tasnim* news agency, citing a source close to the negotiating team, said that the text of a potential memorandum of understanding had not yet been finalised or confirmed, and that reports from Western sources making such claims were false. The possibility of an MoU comes as the fragile ceasefire appeared to be wavering. The latest flare-up in fighting happened less than a day earlier, when Kuwait intercepted mis-



A billboard referring to U.S. President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz seen in Tehran on Wednesday. AFP

siles fired from Iran, according to U.S. Central Command.

According to the U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the MoU makes clear that Iran will not be able to impose tolls on the Strait of Hormuz and that it will have to remove all mines from the vital waterway within 30 days. The U.S., meanwhile, would gradually lift its naval blockade on the strait and also agree to relax sanctions, allowing Iran to sell more of its oil.

CONTINUED ON

» **PAGE 12**

RELATED REPORTS ON

» **PAGE 16**

Iran, U.S. to extend truce in tentative deal'

Among the first issues to be negotiated during the extended ceasefire is what will happen to Iran's highly enriched uranium, the official said.

Iran has not publicly committed to giving up the stockpile, which is believed to be buried under a trio of nuclear sites that were badly damaged by U.S. air strikes last year.

A second U.S. official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said the broad outlines of an agreement have been reached but stressed that until Mr. Trump signs off on it, there is no deal. The official said there still are questions about whether Mr. Trump will accept the proposal.

Kuwait had earlier announced an attack on its territory, and Iran said it had retaliated for strikes earlier in the week by firing on a U.S. base in a Gulf state it did not name. The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry condemned Iran for what it called "blatant aggression," and U.S. Central Command called the attack on one of America's top allies in the Persian Gulf an "egregious ceasefire violation". The exchange unfolded after U.S. officials said on Wednesday that U.S. forces launched more strikes on Iran, shooting down four one-way attack drones that posed a threat around the strait and hitting an Iranian ground-control station in Bandar Abbas that was about to launch a fifth drone.