

China's Xi says 'firmly supports' Myanmar in safeguarding sovereignty
AFP | Beijing

Chinese leader Xi Jinping pledged support yesterday for Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty, state media reported, as he met with President Min Aung Hlaing in Beijing.

China is Myanmar's most crucial ally and a rare enduring partner after Min Aung Hlaing's 2021 coup ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, prompting Western nations to cut ties with the South-east Asian nation.

Beijing has emerged as a key power-broker in the civil war sparked by the coup, and also vocally backed recent polls that excluded Suu Kyi's party and returned a walk-over win for pro-military MPs -- who elected Min Aung Hlaing as president.

Xi said that China "firmly supports" Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as he met Min Aung Hlaing at Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People yesterday following a welcome ceremony, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The Myanmar leader's trip -- his second state visit since taking over as civilian president in April -- comes as ties with Beijing have frayed in recent years over internet scam centres along the countries shared border areas that have targeted Chinese citizens, analysts say.

India blocks Telegram before retest exam to curb cheating
AFP | New Delhi

India blocked access to Telegram messenger yesterday ahead of a retest of a nationwide medical college entrance examination, after a scandal last month over a question paper leak.

The failure of the hugely competitive exam, along with a separate marking fiasco in high school tests, sparked outrage and fuelled youth protests demanding the education minister's resignation.

The Ministry of Electronics issued the order restricting access to Telegram until June 22, the day of the retest. Message-editing features, which allow users to alter existing posts, will remain restricted until June 30.

Iran says talks on final US deal to begin this week

Trump signals Hormuz reopening as both sides prepare to sign accord

- **Switzerland tipped for signing**
- **Hormuz restrictions set to end**
- **Nuclear dispute remains unresolved**
- **Sanctions relief under discussion**

AFP | Washington

Iran said yesterday that talks with the United States on its nuclear programme and sanctions relief would likely begin later this week, as President Donald Trump said the Strait of Hormuz would "completely open" once the two countries sign their deal.

Officials say negotiations over a final deal would take place in a 60-day window after the memorandum of understanding aimed at ending nearly four months of conflict involving US and Israeli strikes on Iran is physically signed.

"Likely on Friday, at a location to be determined... a new round of negotiations between Iran and the United States to reach a final agreement will begin," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said.

"In the final agreement, decisions will be made on the nuclear issues and the lifting of sanctions."

According to Iran's deputy foreign minister, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the Islamic republic's top negotiator, will attend the signing in Switzerland.

The US side will be represented by Vice President JD Vance, who said Trump himself might also attend.

The developments came after Trump said restrictions affect-

A memorandum to end the conflict paves the way for final nuclear negotiations

SIGNING & TALKS TIMELINE

- MoU SIGNED ELECTRONICALLY**
Iran and the US have signed a memorandum of understanding.
- SIGNING IN SWITZERLAND**
The deal will be signed on Friday, June 19, at the Burgenstock resort.
- NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN**
Final nuclear and sanctions talks expected to start likely on Friday.

BURGENSTOCK, SWITZERLAND
Friday, June 19

KEY PARTICIPANTS

IRAN
Abbas Araghchi
Foreign Minister
Top negotiator to attend signing

UNITED STATES
JD Vance
Vice President
Representing the US (Trump may attend)

“The Strait of Hormuz will completely open once the deal is signed.”
— President Donald Trump

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days are expected for negotiations on a final agreement after the memorandum of understanding is signed

ing traffic through the crucial Hormuz Strait oil and gas route would be fully lifted by the same day, which would be a major boost to the global economy.

The United States had previously imposed restrictions on Iranian ports.

"Ships are starting to move, many loaded up with Oil, out of the Strait of Hormuz," Trump said Monday, adding later that he did not "think we will need much help" keeping the waterway open.

Sporadic episodes of violence since an April ceasefire had

threatened progress toward a deal, but weeks of indirect negotiations mediated by Pakistan and Qatar built momentum for an interim agreement.

Yet a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme and Western sanctions remains unresolved.

Washington and close ally Israel are pressing for the removal of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which US officials say was targeted by strikes last year, while Iran has insisted on its right to enrich uranium.

The agreed framework has, however, paved the way for talks on those key disputes.

'Powerful document'

Asked at the G7 in France when the text would be released, Trump said: "It's a very powerful document, and I want it to be released. So probably pretty soon."

But he told The New York Times the US was still negotiating whether Iran would suspend enrichment for 20 years, hinting

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Trump told The New York Times the US was still negotiating whether Iran would suspend enrichment for 20 years, hinting he might settle for 15 years instead

he might settle for 15.

Iranian military officials described the accord as a success, saying it had dealt a setback to US and Israeli objectives, while President Masoud Pezeshkian called it "a great achievement" for the region.

The ultraconservative newspaper Vatan-e Emrooz described the agreement as a "Trump sur-

render document".

But Araghchi struck a more cautious note.

"We have a history of broken commitments... we have a history of agreements being torn up. All of this is present in our minds," he said.

A senior US administration official, however, said Trump, Vance and negotiator Ghalibaf had already signed the text electronically.

In a series of interviews promoting the deal, Vance said no US taxpayer money would go to Iran under the agreement, as Iranian media reported that \$12 billion of frozen assets would be released.

Vance told NBC that US and UN nuclear inspectors would be allowed to enter Iran.

"One of the core parts of the agreement is that the (International Atomic Energy Agency) and the United States are going to help Iran destroy the highly enriched stockpile, and that's something that's spelled out very clearly" in the MoU, Vance said.

Alleged plot to attack White House fight night foiled: FBI

AFP | Washington

US law enforcement yesterday said it had foiled a plot to attack the White House during a crowded mixed martial arts event attended by President Donald Trump and other top officials.

"Thanks to the rapid action of this FBI, our partners, and the Department of Justice in a multi-state operation, multiple individuals are now in custody and allegedly planned attacks were stopped cold," FBI Director Kash Patel announced on X.

His post included a caption of a Fox News headline reading: "FBI disrupts alleged explosive-drone plot targeting White



US military jets perform a flyover as US President Donald Trump attends the "UFC Freedom 250" mixed martial arts event on the South Lawn of the White House

House UFC event, officials say."

Trump on Sunday joined thousands of fans at the unprecedented White House fights, where a temporary arena dubbed "The Claw" was erected on the South Lawn.

Fox News reported that five people had been taken into custody, according to unnamed US officials, with investigators identifying 23 people in a "potential network of plotters" who allegedly communicated in a Signal group chat.

The plan allegedly would have involved using drones to hit buildings near the White House during the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) contest, thereby prompting a mass evac-

uation that would "steer crowds toward a pre-staged sniper team," Fox News said.

There were also allegedly plans to storm the White House gates with a "second wave," the report said.

It was not clear if people involved in the alleged plot had taken any steps to carry out an attack. The White House is protected by intense surveillance, fencing, checkpoints, anti-air-attack capabilities, snipers and a permanent group of quick-reaction forces.

Asked for further details about Patel's announcement, the FBI told AFP "we have nothing to add to the post at this time."