

President: Iran 'in principle' open to talks with new US administration

'I do hope that Trump will go for peace in the region'

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness for negotiations with the second administration of his American counterpart, Donald Trump, on the country's nuclear issues and removal of illegal US sanctions as he took Washington to task for breaching its commitments in the past and seeking to subvert the Iranian government.

Pezeshkian made the statement in a long interview with NBC News in Tehran on Tuesday, reiterating that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and the Islamic Republic is not after "nuclear weaponry."

"The problem we have is not in dialogue. It's in the commitments that arise from talk and dialogue that we'll have to commit to," Pezeshkian told NBC News host Lester Holt.

"We upheld all the commitments that we had to commit to," when Iran held talks with major powers about its nuclear program, the Iranian president added. "But unfortunately, it was the other party that did not live up to its promises and obligations." Stressing that Iran in principle is open to dialogue with the second Trump administration, Pezeshkian said, "We have this doubt that, no matter how much we engage in conversation and dialogue, they are trying to topple the government, not solve the problems."

He also reiterated that Iran does not aim to develop nuclear weapons despite allegations by the United States and its Euro-

pean allies.

Under the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran agreed to certain restrictions on its civilian nuclear activities in exchange for the lifting of sanctions targeting its economy.

Trump's unprovoked and illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 placed the fate of the deal in limbo. Tehran had remained compliant with the agreement—as repeatedly verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—and continued to honor its terms for a year after the US withdrawal.

However, with European powers failing to counter US pressure, Iran began to reduce its nuclear commitments under the terms of the agreement.

During his first term, Trump implemented the so-called maximum pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic and several rounds of negotiations under President Joe Biden failed to bring the United States back into compliance with the landmark agreement.

'We do not fear war'

Pointing to Trump's threats that US ally Israel could strike Iranian nuclear facilities less than a week before his return to the White House, Pezeshkian asserted that Tehran would react to any action.

"You see, naturally enough, we will react to any action. We do not fear war, while we do not seek it either," he said, adding, "I solemnly hope that this will not transpire because it will be



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks with NBC News host Lester Holt in an interview in the capital Tehran on January 14, 2025.
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to the detriment of all the actors, not only and merely us."

Pezeshkian said Iran's adversaries were accusing Tehran of trying to build a nuclear bomb "to fabricate some sort of a pretext," stressing, "This is not true."

Iran 'never' plotted to assassinate Trump

The Iranian president also dismissed the media stories that the Islamic Republic had been involved in a plot to assassinate Trump during last year's US elec-

tion campaign.

Asked about the reported plot against Trump outlined by US authorities, Pezeshkian said, "This is another one of those schemes that Israel and other countries are designing to promote Iranophobia. ... Iran has never attempted to nor does it plan to assassinate anyone."

Asked whether Iran is willing to promise that there will be no attempt on Trump's life, Pezeshkian said, "We have never attempted this to begin with, and

we never will."

The Iranian president also stressed Tehran's efforts to ensure peace in the region.

"I do hope that Trump will go for peace in the region and the world not, conversely, contribute to bloodshed or war," he said in part of the interview with NBC when asked about his message for the incoming US president. Queried whether Iran had a role to play in brokering a possible ceasefire deal in Gaza, Pezeshkian said, "We do whatever we can

in order for peace to prevail in the region."

On the recent regional developments and the notion that the Axis of Resistance has suffered damages, the Iranian president said Tehran's position had not been weakened.

"I do not see any link," he said, adding that, "Comparing to last year inside the country, we're more coherent. We're more robust. We have better participation. We have a more solid security in the country."

New chapter unfolding ...



Ebrahim Rezaei

Major milestone in ties

Ebrahim Rezaei, the head of the Iran-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group and spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the legislative chamber, shed more light on the comprehensive cooperation agreement in an interview with Iran Daily.

"In my opinion, the signing of this treaty is a major milestone and a giant leap forward in bilateral relations. It is the result of several years of negotiations between the two countries and holds great importance for the development of their ties."

According to Rezaei, the treaty includes a preamble and 47 ar-

ticles, which must be passed by the Iranian Parliament and the Russian Duma.

"The agreement deals with vital areas such as political, security, commercial, economic, energy, scientific and technological cooperation, nuclear collaboration, inter-regional partnerships, defense cooperation, environmental issues, combating organized crime, money laundering and terrorism," the lawmaker said.

He noted that the treaty emphasizes respect for the territorial integrity of both countries, suggesting that the agreement serves as a very positive and key foundation

for building up relations and unlocking substantial cooperation potential between the two nations.

"Given the many shared interests and things the two nations have in common in various fields, the agreement can be a helping hand in numerous aspects."

Rezaei, referring to the Western sanctions against Iran and Russia, said, "Both countries are in the same boat, facing sanctions, and by joining forces, they can turn the tide and make the most of these collaborations to meet their needs."

Regarding their current trade status, he explained that trade volume between Iran and Russia is estimated at around \$5 billion. Official sources have indicated that trade between the two countries has picked up this year. However, customs data indicates that the trade volume has not budged much this year.

Rezaei said that Iran could fill many of its needs, such as grain, from Russia while simultaneously supplying Russia with agricultural products, particularly during the second half of the year and winter season.

He added that prior agree-

ments in the energy sector, particularly in gas cooperation, were quite fruitful during the term of the late Iranian president Ibrahim Raisi, culminating in a \$40 billion agreement when he last visited Russia a year ago, which "we are awaiting its implementation."

Rezaei also highlighted the importance of Iran-Russia cooperation in developing and strengthening the North-South Corridor, stating, "There is untapped potential between the two countries in various segments of this corridor. To make the most of this opportunity, the completion of rail, maritime and land corridors should be fast-tracked."

He continued that one of the key priorities in developing relations between the two countries was the construction of these corridors, which both nations need to follow through on earnestly.

The lawmaker noted that there was also huge potential for cooperation in the fields of nuclear energy and power plant construction and promising work had already begun in these areas. "However, these efforts must pick up pace."

Additionally, Rezaei said that Iran and Russia had successful-



Mostafa Nakhai

ly worked together in security matters and counterterrorism and such cooperation could be carried over to other areas.

Clear framework to be set up for cooperation

Mostafa Nakhai, a member of the Energy Committee of the Iranian Parliament, also weighed in on the cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia, telling Iran Daily that various collaborations had come about between the two nations over the years, yielding positive results.

However, he said that Pezeshkian's visit to Russia could lead to a major leap in cooperation,

opening up a new chapter in their relations.

"Both countries need to step up their collaboration to address their mutual needs and signing the strategic partnership treaty could establish a clear and structured framework for this joint cooperation, providing greater transparency in their relations and collaboration methods."

He added that expanding cooperation between Iran and Russia could yield important outcomes, especially in the energy sector, as both countries were major players in the global energy scene, making this collaboration crucial and decisive.