

Pezeshkian: Iran seeks cooperation with regional states to offset US pressure

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his government is seeking to expand cooperation with regional countries to offset the US pressure on regional countries as he began a three-day visit to Tajikistan and Russia. Pezeshkian arrived in Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, on Wednesday and was warmly welcomed at the airport by his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon. Before leaving Tehran for Dushanbe, Pezeshkian said his visit to Tajikistan is in line with his government's policies in expanding relations with neighboring countries. The president said his visit is aimed at expanding cooperation with Tajikistan in the fields of agriculture, industry, trade, and transportation. Pezeshkian is expected to sign agreements with his Tajik counterpart in the fields. At the invitation of Rahmon, the trip is Pezeshkian's first visit to

the Eurasian region since he took office in July. The Iranian president will then travel to Russia to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in the capital Moscow where they are set to sign a long-term strategic cooperation agreement on Friday. "During the visit to Russia, a comprehensive document on strategic cooperation between the two countries will be signed, which includes enhancing cooperation in economy, science, industry, agriculture, culture, and security," Pezeshkian said. He said that Iran plans to sign similar long-term agreements with other regional countries like Iraq. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who is accompanying the president during his visits, said strengthening cooperation in the security field is one of the important aspects of the 20-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. Araghchi said Iran and Russia

have valuable experiences in fighting terrorism and extremism. The comprehensive agreement between Iran and Russia is not only in the interests of the two countries, but also in the interest of world peace. Back in 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a long-term cooperation deal, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation. It was initially set for 10 years but was extended up until 2026. Iran and Russia are both subject to illegal Western sanctions. They have over the past years deepened their cooperation in various fields. The Russian Federation has signed similar agreements with the likes of China, Belarus, India and a host of former Soviet Union countries. Iran has also signed a long-gestating 25-year cooperation accord with China as both countries remain under United States sanctions.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) is welcomed by his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon as he arrives in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe on January 15, 2025.
● president.ir

Iran FM: E3 appears serious about resuming nuclear talks



Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that European powers appeared serious about finding ways to revive nuclear negotiations after talks in Geneva. "The talks with the three European countries are aimed at exploring how we can return to the nuclear negotiations," said Araghchi in an interview with state TV. He said the discussions were "positive and we felt the seriousness ... and (the European parties') desire for a negotiated solution." "We do not know whether the new US administration intends to return to the negotiations,"

he added. Officials from Iran held talks on Monday and Tuesday with counterparts from Britain, France and Germany, known as the E3, which both sides described as "frank and constructive". The discussions took place a week before US President-elect Donald Trump, who pursued a "maximum pressure" policy of intensified sanctions against Iran during his first term in office, was due to return to the White House. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the discussions revolved around lifting sanctions as well as other issues. On Tuesday, European Union diplomat Enrique Mora said he held a "constructive meeting" with Iranian officials on "exploring ways for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue." Mora said the talks touched on "Iran's unacceptable military support to Russia." Ukraine and its allies in many Western capitals have accused Tehran of supplying Moscow

with weapons for use in the Russia-Ukraine war. Iran has repeatedly denied the allegations. On Tuesday, Araghchi said European countries had "no valid reason for this concern," referring to Iran's policy on Ukraine. "We are ready to talk about this issue to address the concerns of the Europeans," he added. The talks were the second round in less than two months, following a meeting in Geneva last November. In 2015, Iran and world powers – including France, Britain and Germany – reached an agreement that eased international sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But the United States, during Trump's first term in office, unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed biting economic sanctions. Tehran adhered to the deal until Washington's withdrawal, but then began rolling back on its commitments. Iran has repeatedly expressed willingness to revive the deal.

Iran unveils first advanced 'signals-intelligence' destroyer



National Desk

The Iranian Army unveiled an advanced reconnaissance ship, state media said on Wednesday, as military forces conducted drills nationwide focused on safeguarding the country's nuclear facilities. "The country's first signals intelligence ship, named Zagros, is added to the Navy's combat operations," state TV reported. The Iranian-made vessel is equipped with "electronic sensors," interceptors, and other cyber and intelligence capabilities, the report said. Zagros's launch comes days into major military exercises conducted by the army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, which are set to continue until mid-March and are focused on protecting key nuclear sites including Natanz, Fordow and Khondab. Navy chief Admiral Shahram Irani said that the new spy ship "will be the watchful eye of the Ira-

nian Navy in the depths of the seas and oceans." "In light of all the orders of prudence that we are issued through the [relevant] chain-of-command, we try incessantly for the result of our performance to serve as a source of pride for the Islamic Republic's establishment," the commander remarked. Irani finally said all of the ship's equipment was of Iranian production, adding that the Navy had managed to meet the country's defensive demands on the back of its intelligence command as part of its efforts to ensure stable naval security across various bodies of water, including the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, as well as other waterways. Iran's Armed Forces have been continuously enhancing their military hardware and combat readiness in recent years. The forces have vowed to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of the threats that are posed by the Iranian nation's enemies.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Hamas approves Gaza truce deal: Report

Hamas has approved a Gaza truce and hostage release deal, Palestinian sources close to negotiations said Wednesday, after mediator Qatar expressed hope an agreement to end the war could be reached very soon. After months of failed bids to end the deadliest war in Gaza's history, negotiators were making a final push in Qatar to seal a cease-fire, AFP reported. Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari had said on Tuesday that negotiations were in their "final stages", and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with top security officials to discuss the deal late that night, his office said. Two Palestinian sources close to the talks told AFP on Wednesday that

Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad had approved the draft agreement. Israel's onslaught on Gaza has killed 46,707 people, most of them civilians, according to figures from the territory's health ministry that the UN considers reliable. Pressure to put an end to the fighting had ratcheted up in recent days, as mediators Qatar, Egypt and the United States intensified efforts to seal a deal and enable the release of the hostages. Israeli cabinet spokesman David Mencer said the first phase of a deal would see 33 Israeli hostages freed, while two Palestinian sources close to Hamas told AFP that Israel would release about 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange.

A source close to Hamas said that the initial hostage release would be "in batches, starting with children and women". Negotiations for a second phase would commence on the truce's 16th day, an Israeli official said, with media reports saying it would see the release of the remaining captives. Under the proposed deal, Israel would maintain a buffer zone inside Gaza during the first phase, according to Israeli media. Among the sticking points in talks have been disagreements over the permanence of any cease-fire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the scale of humanitarian aid for the Palestinian territory.