

Iran, Russia rule out nuclear talks under pressure, threat

Potential for diplomacy still exists: *Lavrov*

International Desk

Iran and Russia opposed negotiations on Iran's nuclear program under pressure and threat as the United States restored a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran earlier this month.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi hosted a meeting with visiting Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who landed in Tehran on Tuesday for talks with Iranian officials.

In a joint press conference with Lavrov, Araghchi dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations with the United States on his country's nuclear program under "maximum pressure."

His remarks came a day after Washington announced fresh sanctions on Tehran targeting more than 30 vessels and people, including the head of the national oil company, accused of involvement in brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil. The sanctions were the latest to be imposed since US President Donald Trump reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran, reprising his approach during his first term.

"There will be no possibility of

direct talks between us and the United States on the nuclear issue as long as the maximum pressure is applied in this way," Araghchi said.

"Regarding the nuclear negotiations, the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is very clear. We will not negotiate under pressure, threat or sanctions."

Lavrov arrived in Tehran on Tuesday for talks with Araghchi and other senior officials on a range of topics including bilateral relations, regional developments and the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers. During Trump's first term, which ended in 2021, Washington withdrew from the landmark deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), that had imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

Potential for diplomacy still exists: Lavrov

Lavrov said he was sure that diplomatic measures were still on the table when it came to resolving issues around Iran's nuclear program.

"We discussed the JCPOA status in detail and believe that the po-

tential for diplomacy still exists and should be used effectively, without threats and bullying. Russia hopes for this and will help find solutions. This crisis was not created by Iran," Lavrov said. On Monday, Iran held a new round of talks with Germany, France and Britain about its nuclear program after reviving engagement with the trio, known as the E3, late last year.

Araghchi said he had briefed Lavrov about the latest discussions. "On the nuclear issue, we will move forward with the cooperation and coordination of our friends in Russia and China," he added.

Lavrov's visit came one week after he met with his US counterpart Marco Rubio in Saudi Arabia to discuss the war in Ukraine.

On Monday, the United States sided with Russia in two votes in New York, signaling a seismic shift as Trump stakes out a drastically new position on Ukraine.

Implementation of agreements

Also on Tuesday, the Russian foreign minister held a separate meeting with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Tehran on February 25, 2025.
● president.ir

During the meeting, Pezeshkian hailed growing bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow and underlined the acceleration of implementing the agreements reached between the two countries, especially the strategic comprehensive partnership

agreement recently signed by Tehran and Moscow.

Pezeshkian said that Iran is determined to strengthen its relations with Russia.

The president added that the two countries have close views on regional issues.

He stressed that Iran and Russia are strengthening their international cooperation through bilateral relations as well as regional and international organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Union, and BRICS.

Army's Zolfaghar 1403 military drills end in southern waters

National Desk

Iran's Army joint military drills, codenamed Zolfaghar 1403, ended with a naval parade in the country's southern waters.

The military exercises started on Saturday in an area along the strategic Makoran coastline in the southern part of the country, the Sea of Oman, and the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, extending up to the 10-degree latitude. Commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard said on Tuesday that Army's forces successfully practiced countering possible enemy infiltration.

Various infantry, armored and mechanized units,

air defense systems, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), unmanned surface vessels (USVs) as well as air force strategic bombers for logistical support participated in the military maneuver.

Organized under the theme "Stable Security under the Shadow of Self-Reliance, Unity, and Power," the exercise tested an array of military capabilities.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, deputy chief of the Army for Coordination, and the commander of the joint drill, said on Saturday that the primary goal of the exercise is to enhance the defensive and deterrence capabilities of the Iranian Armed Forces in the face of potential aerial, ground and naval threats.



The senior military commander noted that the massive exercise also serves as a testing ground for the new tactics that are drawn up and employed by young personnel of the Iranian Army.

New generations of domestically-developed arms, indigenous smart munitions, and homegrown weapons equipped with pinpoint accuracy systems, in addition

to a wide array of missiles, were tested during the three-day military drill.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force also joined the drill on Tuesday.

During a joint missile operation, the Iranian Navy and the IRGC Aerospace Force hit naval targets in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean.

The Navy and the IRGC forces launched various ballistic and naval cruise missiles to detonate and sink a naval target.

Iranian military forces hold routine exercises according to a detailed schedule in various parts of the country in order to test their weaponry and equipment and evaluate their combat preparedness.

In recent weeks, Iran has conducted military exercises across the country, including near nuclear facilities in the west and center of the country.

The country's officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiations.

President: Iran cannot be sanctioned owing to numerous neighbors



Masoud Pezeshkian
● president.ir

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran cannot be subjected to sanctions due to its long borders with numerous neighbors. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with several lawmakers after the United States announced a new set of sanctions against Iran.

Since taking office for the second term on January 20, US President Donald Trump has restored his so-called "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

The US has so far imposed two rounds of sanctions targeting Iran's oil supply chain.

On Monday, the US Treasury Scott Bessent announced sanctions against more than 30 Iran-linked people and vessels, including the head of the national oil company, for brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil.

"The United States will use all our available tools to target all aspects of Iran's oil supply chain, and anyone who deals in Iranian oil exposes

themselves to significant sanctions risk," he added.

The new sanctions came after the US State Department imposed sanctioned on several entities and individuals in China, India and the UAE for their links to Iran's oil sale on February 6.

Trump has issued a presidential memorandum which calls for the US to "drive Iran's export of oil to zero." At the time of the memo's signing in February, Trump said that "hopefully we're not going to have to use it very much."

"We will see whether or not we can arrange or work out a deal with Iran," the president said.

Iran's president said on Monday that his government's foreign policy strategy is dialogue, adding that the country's officials are currently negotiating with other countries, including neighbors and European countries, on various issues.

However, he said that, "We cannot negotiate with someone who openly threatens us and squeezes our throat."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

