

## Iran confirms 'indirect' talks with US in Oman

*Araghchi: Deal can be reached if US shows goodwill*

## International Desk

Iran's foreign minister said on Tuesday that Tehran and Washington would hold "indirect" nuclear talks in Oman on Saturday, confirming an earlier announcement by the US President Donald Trump.

Abbas Araghchi, who was on a state visit to Algeria, said he believes a new nuclear deal could be agreed with the US provided it shows sufficient goodwill.

Araghchi said Iran's principal aim remained the lifting of sweeping US sanctions reimposed on Iran after its unilateral pullout of the 2015 nuclear agreement in 2018.

Trump made the surprise announcement that his administration would open talks with Iran during a White House meeting on Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump said the talks would be "direct" but Araghchi insisted his negotiations with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff on Saturday would be "indirect."

**'Format of talks not important'**

"We will not accept any other form of

negotiation," Araghchi told official media. "The format of the negotiations... is not the most important thing in my view. What really counts is the effectiveness or otherwise of the talks. If the other side shows enough of the necessary willingness, a deal can be found... The ball is in America's court."

Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Tuesday that Iran seeks to preserve its national interests in the negotiations. She stressed that the details of the negotiations are not yet clear, but wise negotiations are on the agenda.

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that Iran is seeking negotiations to resolve the nuclear dispute but "not with ignominy."

Pezeshkian said that the other side should also prove that is seeking negotiation.

**'Great danger'**

Speaking Monday in the Oval Office, Trump said he was hopeful of reaching a deal with Tehran, but warned that the Islamic republic would be in "great danger" if the talks failed.

"We're dealing with the Iranians, we

have a very big meeting on Saturday and we're dealing with them directly," Trump told reporters.

Trump's announcement came after Iran dismissed direct negotiations on a new deal to curb the country's nuclear activities, calling the idea pointless.

"I think if the talks aren't successful with Iran, I think Iran's going to be in great danger, and I hate to say it, great danger, because they can't have a nuclear weapon," Trump said.

In an interview with US network NBC late last month, Trump went further. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing," he said.

**Russia, China welcome talks**

Russia welcomed the prospect of negotiations for a new nuclear accord to replace the deal with major powers that was unilaterally abandoned by Trump in 2018.

"We know that certain contacts – direct and indirect – are planned in Oman. And, of course, this can only be welcomed because it can lead to de-escalation of tensions around Iran," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that Moscow "absolutely" supported

Abbas Araghchi  
● IRNA

the initiative.

China called on the United States to "stop its wrong practice of using force to exert extreme pressure" after Trump threatened Iran with bombing if it fails to agree a deal.

"As the country that unilaterally withdrew from the comprehensive agreement on the Iran nuclear issue and

caused the current situation, the United States should demonstrate political sincerity (and)... mutual respect," its Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. Washington should "participate in dialogue and consultation, and at the same time stop its wrong practice of using force to exert extreme pressure", Lin added.

## President orders probe into deadly mine incident in Semnan



● ROKNA

## National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed the industry minister to immediately follow up a deadly mine incident in the central province of Semnan.

Pezeshkian expressed sympathy with the families of the victims of the incident in which seven miners, including three Afghan nationals, lost their lives after they were suffocated by gas in a coal mine located in the village of Mehmandovieh in the city of Damghan.

The president also emphasized the need to dispatch expert teams to investigate the causes behind the accident which occurred Monday afternoon.

Safety measures may have been disregarded, a report said.

Reports indicate that the mine was not officially operational at the time, and that the matter is under investigation. Last week, an iron ore mine collapsed, killing one worker in the country's northwest. Meanwhile, an explosion in a coal mine in eastern Iran killed dozens of workers in September.

Israeli attacks on Gaza 'brutal revenge against innocent civilians': *Hamas*

## International Desk

The Palestinian resistance group Hamas said the increasing intensity of Israeli attacks on Gaza "is not just military pressure, but rather brutal revenge against innocent civilians." It called on the international community to do its part to stop the Israeli violence.

"Increasing the pace of aggression will not break the will of our people, but rather raise the level of defiance, stubbornness, and determination to confront the aggression," Hamas said in a statement published on Telegram. "Netanyahu's policy of revenge against children, women, and the elderly is not a plan to achieve a supposed victory, but rather a recipe for inevitable failure."

The group also warned that the military escalation would not return Israeli captives alive. "It threatens their lives and kills them. Their return is only possible through negotiation," it added. According to Gaza's Health Ministry on Tuesday, at least 58 Palestinians were killed and 213 injured in Israeli attacks



● AFP

across the Gaza Strip in just 24 hours. Israel resumed major strikes on the Gaza Strip on March 18, ending a two-month cease-fire with Hamas.

According to the Gaza's civil defense agency, five children and four adults were killed in a strike that hit a home in the central city of Deir el-Balah, while two separate pre-dawn attacks on Gaza City and Beit Lahia in the north left a total of 10 people dead.

Separately, a media outlet affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement announced the death on Monday of an

employee named Ahmed Mansur in an Israeli strike on a tent used by journalists in the Khan Yunis area.

The Government Media Office in Gaza had on Monday reported the death of journalist Hilmi al-Faqaawi, who worked for a local news agency, in the same strike, which also wounded another nine.

According to the Gaza health ministry, at least 1,391 Palestinians have been killed in the renewed Israeli operations, taking the overall death toll since the start of the war to 50,752.

## Russian parliament okays partnership treaty with Iran

## International Desk

Russia's lower house of parliament voted Tuesday to ratify a 20-year strategic partnership to consolidate Moscow-Tehran ties in a wide range of areas.

Containing no military commitments from either side, the agreement covers multiple areas, including economy, transportation, energy, healthcare and agriculture as well as cooperation in the field of common challenges such as organized crimes, and terrorism and dealing with climate change.

"The signing of the treaty does not mean the establishment of a military alliance with Iran or mutual military assistance," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said in an address to the State Duma.

Instead, the treaty states that if either

side is subjected to aggression, the other will not provide "assistance to the aggressor."

"Russia and Iran will not provide military or any other assistance to an aggressor in case either of them comes under attack, and will rely on the UN Charter and other norms of international law to resolve conflicts," Rudenko said. "The treaty, which consists of 47 articles, highlights the parties' intention to interact in the field of foreign policy, to protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity, ensure security and stability; it also determines the principles of developing relations in the trade, economic, scientific, investment and technical fields, as well as in the fields of education, healthcare, sports, culture, tourism and others."

The comprehensive strategic partner-

ship deal was signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian in January, with votes in Moscow's parliament necessary before it can come into force.

Putin at the time called it a "breakthrough document," while Pezeshkian said it would "open a new chapter in relations between Iran and Russia in all fields."

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 twice up until 2026.

Iran and Russia, as two close and strategic allies, have over the past years deepened relations in various fields, despite heavy Western sanctions.

 Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist
