

Iran to give talks with US 'genuine chance'

Leader's advisor: FM will go to Oman with full authority



Steve Witkoff

Abbas Araghchi

International Desk

Iran said on Friday it is giving high-level nuclear talks with the US "a genuine chance" as the two countries are set to hold the negotiations in Oman today to resolve a decades-long dispute over Iran's nuclear program. Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman said on Friday Washington

should value Tehran's decision to engage in talks despite what he called the US's "prevailing confrontational hoopla." "We intend to assess the other side's intent and resolve this Saturday," spokesperson Esmail Baqaei posted on X. "In earnest and with candid vigilance, we are giving diplomacy a genuine chance." US President Donald Trump made a

surprise announcement on Monday that Washington and Tehran would begin talks in Oman, a Persian Gulf state that has mediated between the West and the Islamic Republic before.

The talks were first announced by Trump during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington.

For months, Tehran and Washington have been expressing their interest to begin new negotiations on Iran's nuclear program.

On March 7, Trump sent a letter to the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, calling for resumption of nuclear negotiations while warning of possible military action if Iran refuses. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing, and it will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before."

Iranian military officials and Armed Forces have repeatedly underlined the country's preparedness to defend the country.

Iran rejects bullying

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said on Friday that Iran rejects any bullying

and coercion.

"Without threats and intimidation from the American side, there is a good possibility of reaching an accord", he said on Friday.

Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Iran's Leader, in a post on X also said "Important and practical" Iranian proposals have been prepared in pursuit of "a real and fair" agreement.

"If Washington comes to the talks with sincere intentions and genuine will to reach an agreement, the path to a deal will be clear and smooth," Shamkhani added.

He said Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was heading to Oman with "full authority" for indirect talks.

The talks would be led by Araghchi and US special envoy Steve Witkoff, with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi as intermediary.

In recent months, Iran has also been talking with France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia – the signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal from which Trump unilaterally withdrew during his first term and reimposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iran.

Tehran adhered to the deal for a year after Washington withdrew from it, but later began rolling back

its own commitments.

Diplomatic solution

On Friday, Germany urged Iran and the US to reach a "diplomatic solution", saying that it is a "positive development that there is a channel for dialogue between Iran and the United States".

Ahead of the talks, the US imposed additional sanctions on Iran targeting its oil network and nuclear program.

Iran's nuclear agency chief Mohammad Eslami downplayed their impact, saying: "They applied maximum pressure with various sanctions, but they were unable to prevent the country from progressing." US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday said, "We hope that'll lead to peace. We've been very clear what Iran is never going to have a nuclear weapon, and I think that's what led to this meeting," Rubio said during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Donald Trump. Tehran says its program is purely for peaceful energy purposes, but the West says it goes far beyond any civilian requirements, and suspects Tehran of covertly seeking to develop nuclear weapons capability.

Tariff battle escalates as China retaliates with 125% tariffs on US goods

China said Friday it would raise its tariffs on US goods to 125 percent in a further escalation of a trade war that threatens to bring exports to a halt between the world's two biggest economies.

Beijing's retaliation sparked fresh market volatility, with European stocks seesawing following the announcement while Tokyo and Seoul closed in the red, AFP reported.

In a sign of investors' worries about the health of the US economy under President Donald Trump's erratic stewardship, the dollar fell to a three-year low against the euro and by 1.3 percent against the yen.

In Beijing, China's State Council Tariff Commission said new tariffs of 125 percent on US goods would take effect Saturday, almost matching the staggering 145 percent level imposed on Chinese goods coming into America.

A Commerce Ministry spokesperson said the United States bore "full responsibility for this", deriding Trump's tariffs as a "numbers game" that "will become a joke".

The Chinese finance ministry said tariffs would not go any higher because "there is no possibility of

market acceptance for US goods exported to China" – an acknowledgment that almost no imports are possible at the new level.

Beijing also said it would file a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization over the latest round of levies announced by Trump.

Chinese President Xi Jinping condemned "unilateral bullying".

While the superpowers clash, the EU said its trade chief Maros Sefcovic would hold talks with US counterparts in Washington on Monday to resolve their own tariffs spat.

Sefcovic is traveling "in good faith to try and find solutions that can benefit us all," EU trade spokesperson Olof Gill said.

Trump sent global financial markets into a tailspin by announcing historic tariffs on America's trading partners on April 2, including a 10-percent baseline for all goods coming into the United States.

After days of plunging markets, on Wednesday he froze the higher tariff rates of 20 percent or more imposed on allies such as the European Union or Japan, but kept an additional rate of 34 percent on

China.

Beijing has since retaliated, leading to tit-for-tat increases over the past few days that culminated in Friday's latest move.

Trump acknowledged "a transition cost and transition problems" on Thursday, while insisting "in the end it's going to be a beautiful thing." Speaking to reporters, he said he had respect for Xi and was hoping for a deal.

"He's been a friend of mine for a long period of time. I think that we'll end up working out something that's very good for both countries," he said.

Economists warn that the disruption in trade between the tightly integrated US and Chinese economies threatens businesses, will increase prices for consumers, and could cause a global recession.

Trump described the European Union as "very smart" to refrain from retaliatory levies.

But the 27-nation bloc's chief Ursula von der Leyen told the Financial Times on Friday that it remained armed with a "wide range of countermeasures" if negotiations with Trump hit the skids.

Iran, Armenia conduct joint military drills



International Desk

Iran and Armenia concluded two days of joint military exercises along their shared border.

The drill, conducted on both sides of the border, involved operational units from the Ground Forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Armenian Army.

Iran said the aim of the drills is to strengthen security at the shared border and fight terrorist groups in the area. The joint drill took place in the Norduz border area, which is located in Iran's northwestern East Azerbaijan Province. Brigadier General Valiollah Ma'dani, deputy commander for operations of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC)'s Ground Forces, said on Wednesday that, "the joint exercise is a proac-

tive measure to ensure the combat readiness of our forces, confront terrorism, and contribute to sustainable peace in the region".

Ma'dani noted that the primary objective of the joint drill was to strengthen the security of the common border. "Given the sensitive geopolitical position of this area, the strategic importance of our border with Armenia cannot be overstated," he said.

Light and heavy weapons were used in the military exercises. Meanwhile, special forces displayed their sniper skills and practiced artillery fire support during the drills.

Armenia's borders with neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey have been closed for more than three decades, giving its mountainous frontier with Iran an out-sized economic significance.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Talks will work if...

What matters is whether negotiations will add anything of value to Iran's national interest. If so, they will be a source of pride and strength. If not, they will yield no benefits for Iran. It is no secret that some actors squandered past opportunities. Hardliners played a disruptive role during the JCPOA era, throwing up roadblocks that shut the door on critical opportunities. Even when golden chances for a renewed agreement were on the table, the same groups burned those bridges. As a result, expectations for any new deal bringing home even 10% of the original JCPOA benefits are slim. At best, these negotiations may only help keep tensions in check, but hopes for major breakthroughs or concessions are few and far between.

Talks could pave way for regional calm

By Asghar Salimi
Political analyst

The format of the upcoming talks is set to be indirect, but if things move forward and evolve into direct negotiations, the outcome could have more impacts and the path to agreement far smoother. These discussions might well set the stage for face-to-face talks and a gradual lifting of sanctions after years of deadlock. The process must remain grounded in mutual rights to ensure both sides come away with tangible gains. A deal between Iran and the US would go a long way toward stabilizing the region. Apart from Israel—which remains gripped by fear over Iran's progress—

other regional countries have expressed support for such a breakthrough and broader peace.

As long as the region stays clear of war and tension, all countries stand to benefit. Israel, however, has always tried to stir the pot to fish in troubled waters. Engaging with the US to lift sanctions could help untangle long-standing problems, but Iran must make full use of every available channel.

The truth is, in diplomacy, there are no permanent friends or foes. It is shared interests that call the shots. With Russia and China holding seats on the Security Council, they can play a constructive role in the standoff. Iran should step into the global arena confidently, but never at the cost of tying its national interests to those of others.

