

Leader urges Armed Forces to maintain 'maximum preparedness'

National Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on the country's Armed Forces to maintain their "maximum preparedness" to fulfill their national responsibilities. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a Sunday meeting with commanders and officials of Iran's Armed Forces on the occasion of the Persian New Year. He described the Iranian Armed Forces as the nation's "shield and a refuge" for the people in the face of any aggressor. The Leader criticized the contradictory stance of bullying powers, who have armed themselves with the most advanced and lethal weapons, yet consider the defensive advancements of others as unacceptable.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said ill-wishers are furious with Iran's increasing advances, urging the country's officials to counter their propaganda. "They (ill-wishers) present their desires as news and reality," the Leader said, emphasizing the importance of formulating strategies to combat such propaganda. He highlighted that the Islamic and independent nature of Iran's government is the main reason behind the enemies' hostility towards the nation. "What irritates the enemy is not the name 'Islamic Republic,' but the determination of a country to be Muslim and independent, with a distinct identity of its own," the Leader said. Ayatollah Khamenei further said that what angers the enemy is the notion that the Islamic Republic refuses to rely

on others for its dignity. The Leader also acknowledged certain shortcomings in the country, including in the economic sector, and called for intensified efforts to address these issues. At the start of the meeting, Major General Mohammad Baqeri, the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, discussed developments in Iran and the West Asia region. He praised the global awakening regarding the Palestinian issue and the historic resistance of the people of Gaza and Lebanon against the Israeli regime's crimes. Baqeri affirmed that the Iranian Armed Forces, supported by the nation, are fully prepared and will not allow the enemies to achieve "their ominous goals."



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with a number of commanders and officials of Iran's Armed Forces in Tehran on April 13, 2025.

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Israeli strike destroys last fully functional hospital in Gaza City



An Israeli air strike early Sunday heavily damaged one of the few functioning hospitals in Gaza, drawing condemnations from several countries. Since the outbreak of war, tens of thousands of Gazans have sought refuge in hospitals, many of which have suffered severe damage in the ongoing hostilities. The strike on Al-Ahli Hospital in northern Gaza – also known as the Baptist or Ahli Arab Hospital – caused no casualties, but came a day after Israeli forces seized a key corridor in the territory and signaled plans to expand their campaign, AFP reported. "The bombing led to the destruction of the surgery building and the oxygen generation station for the intensive care units," Gaza's civil defense rescue agency said. The blast left a gaping hole in one of the hospital's buildings, with

iron doors torn from their hinges. Patients, relatives and medical personnel evacuated the Al-Ahli hospital in haste following the military's warning. Many found themselves stranded in the surrounding streets. The Israeli military claimed that Hamas fighters were operating "a command and control center" inside the hospital compound. Hamas condemned what it described as a "savage crime" committed by Israel "with blatant US cover and complicity", dismissing the claim that the facility was a used militarily. Qatar also denounced the strike as "a heinous crime". Hospitals, protected under international humanitarian law, have repeatedly been hit by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas on October 7, 2023.

Iran: Talks with US to focus solely on nuclear issue, lifting sanctions

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday that negotiations with the United States would solely focus on the nuclear issue and lifting of sanctions as the two countries have begun a diplomatic process to resolve disputes over Iran's nuclear program. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a televised interview on Sunday that the talks would only focus on "the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions," and that Iran "will not have any talks with the American side on any other issue." "If we consider the letters that were exchanged between the two sides and the process that led to the beginning of the indirect talks in Oman as the basis for the negotiations, we just focused on the nuclear issue in that correspondence", Baqaei said. On Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff held talks in Oman's capital of Muscat, marking the highest-level Iran-US nuclear negotiations since the collapse of a 2015 accord. They agreed to meet again in days.

Venue of next talks still unknown

Baqaei also said the negotiations will

continue to be indirect, adding that Oman will remain the mediator, but we are discussing the location of future negotiations.

Iran and the US separately described Saturday's discussions as "constructive." Iran said the talks were held indirectly with Oman's foreign minister acting as an intermediary. Another round of talks will be held on Saturday, April 19.

Asked about the talks, Trump told journalists aboard Air Force One, "I think they're going OK. Nothing matters until you get it done."

After the conclusion of the talks in Oman on Saturday, Baqaei said that the two sides exchanged their positions "in a constructive and mutually respectful atmosphere."

Baqaei said that after nearly two and half hours of talks, the two countries' top negotiators had a brief direct conversation in the presence of Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi.

In an interview after the talks, Araghchi said the two sides showed their commitment to advance the talks to reach an agreement that is desirable for both parties.

"I think we came very close to a basis for negotiations," the Iranian foreign minister said.

"At our next meeting, if we can finalize that basis, we will have gone a large part of the way."

"Neither party wants fruitless negotiations and prolonged talks," Araghchi underlined.

The American negotiator Witkoff had said that "our position today" starts by demanding that Iran completely dismantle its nuclear program – a view held by hardliners around Trump that few expect Iran would ever accept.

"That doesn't mean, by the way, that at the margin we're not going to find other ways to find compromise between the two countries," Witkoff told the newspaper.

Trump last month sent a letter to Iran's Leader via the United Arab Emirates, saying he wanted a deal to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and to avert possible military strikes by the US and Israel.

Iran insists its nuclear activities are entirely peaceful and it will never seek to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

Trump has warned the US would use military force if no deal was reached and Iran has repeatedly said it won't negotiate under pressure.

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

Iran holds line ...

Iran's goal is to reassure the world it is not pursuing nuclear weapons and continues to seek peaceful use of nuclear technology, something it considers an inalienable right.

If, however, the other side tries to chip away at Iran's peaceful capabilities or push for restrictions, the Iranian delegation will draw a hard line. Any deal that whittles down the country's nuclear strength or involves such concessions crosses a red line and will be rejected outright.

Other issues frequently dragged into negotiations by Washington—missile capabilities, regional influence, the Resistance Front, human rights, and drones—are seen as strengths by Iran. Including them in the talks is a

non-starter and would only serve to play into efforts to weaken Iran's regional standing and therefore should be avoided.

As for Muscat, the venue was no accident. Oman has long maintained a neutral stance in regional politics and stayed on good terms with Iran. It was the right call to settle on Oman, given its history of honest intermediation.

The format—indirect talks through Omani mediation—also stems from Washington's track record of hostile behavior over the past decades. Iran believes the US has not yet created the conditions for a direct meeting, especially after years of economic, political, and security pressure.

Before the talks even began, the US had rattled its sabers,

attempting to dictate terms, even pushing back against Muscat as the location. Iran stood firm, insisting that the talks be held in Oman. It also made it clear that threats have no place at the table.

If the US steps out of line, Iran has warned it will hit back hard, making it clear it possesses the military capabilities to do so if provoked. But that is not the route Tehran seeks. Talks must remain on track, focused solely on the nuclear file.

Hopefully, efforts by Zionist lobbies, some regional rivals, and Iran's adversaries will not derail the process. Regardless of the outcome, Iran has entered negotiations with dignity and strength and has made it clear that it will never bow to pressure or sign off on anything under threat.

Tehran condemns terrorist attack on Pakistanis in Sistan and Baluchestan

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned a terrorist attack in the country's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, in which eight Pakistanis were killed.

Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei described the killing of innocent people as a criminal act that contradicts all Islamic principles and humanitarian norms.

He also offered condolences to the families of the victims and the government and people of Pakistan and assured that Iran's authorities will spare no effort to identify the perpetrators of the crime.

The attack happened in the province's city of Mehrestan. Pakistan has been battling a de-

cade-long insurgency in its impoverished Balochistan Province, which militant groups claim is being exploited by outsiders, with wealth from its natural resources syphoned off with little benefit to the local population.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday condemned the "brutal killings of eight Pakistanis," calling on Tehran to "immediately arrest the culprits, give them appropriate punishment, and make the reasons behind this brutal act public."

The Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), a Pakistani separatist group, claimed responsibility for the attack.

The eight men killed were from Pakistan's most populous province, Punjab, according to the Associated Press of Pakistan. Armed separatists in the area



have in recent months intensified attacks on workers from other provinces, particularly Punjabis who are viewed as having strong links to the military.

Iran's embassy in Pakistan also confirmed the death toll and condemned the attack as "terrorism", calling, like Islamabad, for "joint efforts" to combat the violence. Nine Pakistanis were also killed in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province in January 2024.