

Araghchi: Iran's enrichment program not up for negotiation

President says country's affairs will not await nuclear talks

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday that Iran's enrichment of uranium is "non-negotiable" after US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff called for a halt to uranium enrichment ahead of the second round of talks between the two countries in Italy.

"Iran's enrichment [program] is a real, accepted matter. We are ready to build confidence in response to possible concerns, but the issue of enrichment is non-negotiable," Araghchi told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

The remarks came as Araghchi and Witkoff are due to meet again in Rome on Saturday, a week after they held the highest-level talks since US President Donald Trump abandoned a landmark nuclear deal in 2018.

Both sides described Saturday's meeting as "constructive", which was held in Oman.

But on Tuesday, Witkoff said Iran must "stop and eliminate" its enrichment of uranium as part of any nuclear deal.

He had previously demanded only that Iran return to the 3.67 percent enrichment ceiling set by the 2015 accord between Iran and major powers that Trump unilaterally withdrew from in 2018.

Conflicting positions

Araghchi condemned what he called the "contradictory and conflicting positions" coming out of the Trump administration ahead of Saturday's talks.

"We will find out the true opinions of the Americans during the negotiation session," he said.

Iran's top diplomat said he hoped to start negotiations on the framework of a possible agreement but said that required "constructive positions" from the United States.

"If we continue to (hear) contradictory

and conflicting positions, we are going to have problems," he warned.

On Tuesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei cautioned that while the talks have proceeded well in their early stages, they could still prove fruitless.

"The negotiations may or may not yield results," he said.

Moscow visit

Before the second round of talks, Araghchi will deliver a message from Iran's Leader to Russian President Vladimir Putin on a trip to Russia.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian in a cabinet meeting on Wednesday said that the negotiations are underway and the country's affairs are proceeding normally, stressing that the country's affairs will not be held up for the outcome of the nuclear talks. However, he said that, "We naturally welcome an agreement."



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi talks with reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on April 16, 2025.
● MIZAN

The US president met with his top national security aides on Tuesday to discuss Iran's nuclear program. A source briefed on the meeting said

Trump and his top aides discussed the Iran talks and subsequent steps. US officials have been working on a framework for a potential nuclear deal.

Iran summons Argentine envoy over 1994 AMIA case accusations

International Desk

Iran summoned the Argentine chargé d'affaires in Tehran to strongly protest against accusations by the Argentinean judiciary against senior Iranian officials, condemning the provocative move by Buenos Aires as contrary to international norms and regulations. Iran's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned Jorge Mariano Jordan to convey Tehran's strong protest against a ruling by Argentine Prosecutor Sebastián Basso, who issued arrest warrants for several senior Iranian officials in connection with the 1994 AMIA bombing, Press TV reported.

"In response to the unlawful and internationally improper move by the Argentine Prosecutor's Office in leveling allegations against senior officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the chargé d'affaires of Argentina in Tehran was summoned by Issa Kameli, Director General for the Americas at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The chargé d'affaires was delivered the Islamic Republic of Iran's official note of strong protest," the ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

Back in July 1994, the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) Jewish



center in Buenos Aires was targeted by a bomb attack, in which 85 people were reportedly killed and some 300 others wounded.

The bombing remains unclaimed and unresolved, though Israel has consistently blamed Iran for the attack. Tehran has rejected the allegation on numerous occasions through the past three decades.

During the meeting, Kameli conveyed the Islamic Republic's "categorical rejection and condemnation of the unfounded accusations" made by the Argentine judiciary and official authorities.

He emphasized that the decision by

the AMIA case prosecutor to level accusations against senior officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran "constitutes yet another deviation in the protracted judicial proceedings related to a suspicious incident dating back to 1994." The decision to blame Iran "only serves to deepen the numerous unanswered questions and ambiguities surrounding the case—ambiguities that have persisted due to the continuous interference and influence of individuals affiliated with the Zionist regime, which has turned the case into a political instrument for advancing that regime's anti-Iranian agenda," he added.

Sandstorm sweeps several provinces across Iran

National Desk

A sandstorm has severely impacted several western and southwestern Iranian provinces, reducing air quality and leading to the closure of schools, universities and public offices as well as the suspension of incoming and outgoing flights.

The air quality levels saw an alarming drop in many cities in the provinces.

The sandstorm emanating from the neighboring Iraq and Saudi Arabia hit the provinces of Khuzestan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Bushehr, Lorestan, Hormozgan and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

The sandstorm blanketed the provinces in an orange cloud as shown in footage and images shared by the Iranian news agencies and reduced visibility in the areas.

People in the cities wore face masks to protect themselves from the dust.

The authorities were forced to shut down schools, universities and public offices and suspend flights in the southern province of Bushehr.

The authorities have called on people, especially those with cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, to avoid unnecessary

outdoor activities due to the significant decrease in air quality.

Drivers were forced to turn on their cars' lights in the daytime as the sand storm reduced visibility in the Qeshm island in the southern province of Hormozgan.

In Khuzestan Province, air pollution in many cities reached dangerous levels, schools and public offices were closed, flights were called off.

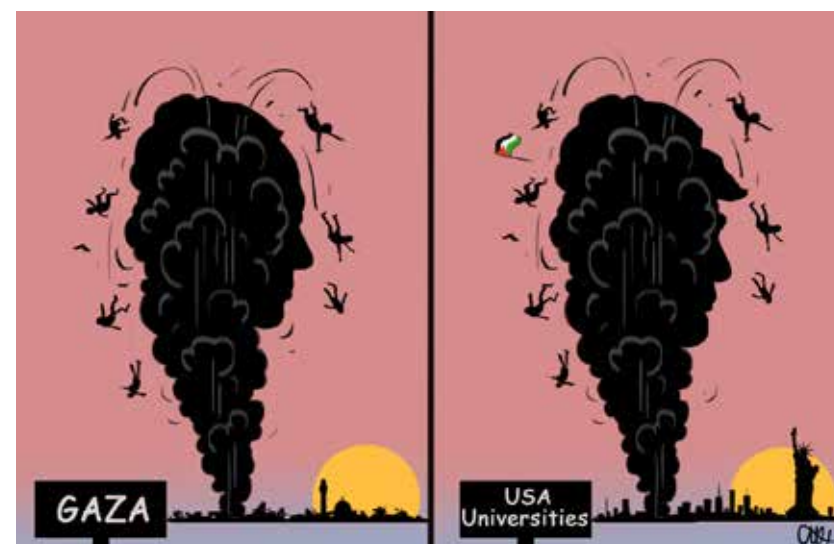
Hundreds of people were also taken to medical centers with respiratory and cardiac symptoms.

In the neighboring Iraq, a severe sandstorm also swept across the center and south of the Arab country, turning the sky a strange orange, reducing visibility in some places to less than a half mile and sending several thousand people to emergency rooms with respiratory problems.

As a result of its hot and arid climate, the West Asia region has always been battered by dust and sandstorms, but they have become relatively more frequent and intense in recent years. Most sandstorms hitting Iran originate from the neighboring countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Syria.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Russia's Federation Council okays strategic partnership deal with Iran

International Desk

The Russian Federation Council ratified the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement between Russia and Iran, solidifying a long-term alliance between the two countries across key sectors, including defense, energy, and technology.

It came weeks after Russia's lower house of parliament had ratified the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty with Iran, marking a significant step in the expansion of political and economic relations between Moscow and Tehran. The treaty was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in Moscow in January. Putin submitted it to the State Duma in March.

Russian leader called it a "breakthrough document," and the Iranian president

said it would "open a new chapter in relations between Iran and Russia in all fields."

It provides the legal framework for the long-term development of cooperation in areas ranging from defense, energy, finances, and transportation to industries, agriculture, culture, science, and technology. Based on the treaty, Russia and Iran are committed to helping each other counter common "security threats" and exchange intelligence in that direction. The agreement also stipulates that if either side is subjected to aggression, the other will not provide "assistance to the aggressor."

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

The Russia-Iran treaty promotes investment in oil and gas development, joint long-term projects in peaceful nuclear energy, and the creation of a payment system independent of third countries, which uses national currencies.

State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin said earlier that the treaty would strengthen relations in terms of both bilateral cooperation and coordination on international issues.

He said the agreement underscores the expansion of inter-parliamentary relations, including within international parliamentary organizations and through the commission on cooperation between the State Duma and the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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