

# Araghchi: Iran weighing whether to partake in next round of US talks

'Tehran will never stop enriching uranium'

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday that Iran is currently reviewing whether to participate in the next round of nuclear talks with the US amid wrangling between the two sides over Iran's uranium enrichment.

Araghchi said that the Iranian delegation is reviewing the proposed time and venue of the 5th round of talks which was expected to take place "at the weekend" in Rome.

The American officials are insisting that Iran must give up its uranium enrichment program – the issue that Iran considers it as a redline.

However, Iranian officials have signaled that Tehran is ready to significantly scale back uranium enrichment to low levels as a trust-building move in the negotiations.

US chief negotiator in the talks Steve Witkoff said on Sunday that the US administration's "red line" in nucle-

ar talks with Iran is that Iran cannot maintain any ability to enrich uranium. "We have one very, very clear red line, and that is enrichment. We cannot allow even 1% of an enrichment capability," Witkoff told ABC's "This Week" program.

Araghchi reiterated on Wednesday that Tehran will never stop enriching uranium, saying that Iran has already responded to the "irrational demands," and their statements do not help progress in negotiations.

"I have said it before, and I repeat it again: uranium enrichment in Iran will continue – with or without an agreement," he said.

"We have never abandoned diplomacy. We will always be present at the negotiating table, and the main reason for our presence is to defend the rights of the Iranian people," Araghchi said. "We stand against excessive demands and rhetoric at the table."

Araghchi's remarks came a day after Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called US demands for zero enrichment "excessive and outrageous," saying that he didn't expect the negotiations to produce a deal.

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Wednesday that, "If we didn't want to enrich uranium in our soil, there would have been no need to tolerate America's harsh and cruel sanctions over the past decades."

Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament in a statement said that Iran has never sought nuclear weapons, emphasizing that Iran will not relinquish its nuclear rights.

According to Article 4 of The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the signatories to the treaty have the three rights to research, develop, produce, and use nuclear energy, the statement said.

Moreover, Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said it is clear to everyone that what Iran has insisted on as its principled positions



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses a ceremony in Tehran, Iran on May 21, 2025 to mark the first anniversary of a helicopter crash that killed his predecessor Hossein Amir-Abdollahian along with seven others, including president Ebrahim Raisi, in northwestern Iran.  
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are in line with international law and its needs. "Therefore, it is expected that all relevant parties help us reach a reasonable and logical understanding based on international law."

Since April 12, Iran and the US have held four rounds of talks on Iran's nuclear program, with US President Donald Trump threatening Iran with military attack if no agreement is reached.

## Parliament ratifies partnership treaty with Russia



## International Desk

The Iranian Parliament ratified a 20-year strategic partnership treaty with Russia on Wednesday, consolidating closer ties between the two countries. The deal, which was signed by Presidents Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin in January, was already ratified by Russia's State Duma last month. It passed the Iranian Parliament with

191 votes in favor, eight against and three abstentions among the 212 members present.

Putin has called the treaty a "breakthrough document," while Pezeshkian said it would "open a new chapter in relations."

The pact has a duration of twenty years and establishes the legal framework for long-term cooperation in various sectors, including defense,

energy, industry, agriculture, finance, transportation, science, culture, and technology.

Primarily, the long-term agreement seeks to promote investments in oil, gas, and the development of peaceful nuclear energy. It also aims to establish an international payment system that is independent of third-party countries and operates using national currencies.

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."

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

Both countries are under heavy Western sanctions and have increasingly coordinated their diplomatic and economic policies.

## Iran-Afghanistan border wall aimed at beefing up security: Top general

## National Desk

Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said on Wednesday that constructing a wall along Iran's eastern border is aimed at improving security, confronting terrorist groups, preventing illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

Baqeri, who had traveled to the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan on Wednesday to observe the progress of security programs at the border areas, told reporters that the construction of barriers is moving forward rapidly.

He called the project a top priority for the country's Armed Forces and is being carried out using scientific principles and successful experiences.

Earlier on Saturday, General Sadeq Nouri, the deputy commander of the Northeast Regional Headquarters of the Army's Ground Forces, said that construction of 81 kilometers of the wall on the common border with Afghanistan has been completed in Iran's Khorasan Razavi Province.

More than 300 kilometers of a 935 km



wall on Iran's border with Afghanistan is currently under construction in the first phase of the project in the northeastern province. The four-meter wall is topped with fencing for enhanced security.

Nouri said that the illegal entry of Afghan nationals into Iran has significantly decreased during the implementation of the project. Several armed clashes have erupted at the border areas between Iran and Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. Iran is also grappling with an influx of Afghan migrants crossing the border.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated the number of Afghan immigrants in Iran at around three million.

## Cementing regional ties ...

Goods transported over long distances naturally come with higher costs for exporters and importers alike, while dealing directly with neighbors means significantly reduced prices for the parties involved.

Iran shares deep-rooted commonalities with many of its neighbors. Some neighboring nations speak the same language—Persian—or possess shared customs and traditions. For instance, countries within the Nowruz zone celebrate the ancient festival collectively, highlighting mutual rituals and practices. Several of them also share Iran's Shia faith, making religious tourism and shared beliefs valuable grounds for cooperation. These shared values lay the groundwork for stronger partnerships that can drive mutual growth.

Healthcare tourism is another area ripe for expansion. Iran, with its major medical infrastructure,

has the potential to emerge as a regional healthcare hub. This would not only serve the interests of neighboring countries—who would gain access to quality services at a lower cost—but also contribute to Iran's economic diversification.

The regional atmosphere is conducive to cementing such relationships. Many neighboring nations have warmed up to Iran, thanks to effective diplomacy initiated during the late president Ebrahim Raisi's administration and carried forward under the current government of President Masoud Pezeshkian. This shift has enhanced Iran's bargaining power, and has opened the door to economic cooperation, helping the country push back against Western sanctions. In this context, boosting regional relations is not just a strategic principle but a necessity given the escalating sanctions imposed by the US. However, there are challenges as

well. Powers like the United States continue to push their own agenda of global dominance. Washington is promoting a so-called new regional order in West Asia—one that aligns with its own economic and political interests. Any country that opposes that order would be put on US blacklist. For example, Iran's support for Palestine or its move to strengthen ties with certain countries is often met with American opposition.

If pressure on Iran ratchets up, a supportive region can take the edge off such impacts. A united front would also allow Iran to protect its neighbors and define its interests in alignment with them. Such a bond will ensure all parties to come out ahead, turning to be beneficial for all involved.

Naturally, this level of regional unity does not sit well with the US or Israel, that would prefer to drive a wedge between neighboring states. This makes it all the more crucial to embrace the

principle articulated by President Pezeshkian at the recently held Tehran Dialogue Forum: to mitigate regional crises, regional convergence must be ramped up and the ongoing process of cooperation must stay the course. The goal should be to build a secure region characterized by broad consensus and shared direction, leveraging all available capacities.

Most countries in the region are Muslim, and Islam itself serves as a common thread—a point of connection that can bring everyone to the table. Moreover, the current global climate presents a unique opportunity as emerging powers like China are seeking a secure West Asia region. Iran and its neighbors must close ranks to prevent foreign meddling from sowing division. By standing together, they can keep a lid on extremism, terrorism, and destabilizing forces that threaten regional order. Only through cooperation can their shared interests be safeguarded.

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