

Iran says nuclear talks closer to deal, Russia says time-consuming work remains

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DUBAI: Indirect talks between Tehran and Washington on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have come closer than ever to an agreement, but essential issues remain to be negotiated, the top Iranian negotiator said on Thursday. The Islamic Republic and six world powers have been negotiating in Vienna since April to work out steps for both sides to take. The United States withdrew in 2018 from the pact, under which Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of many foreign sanctions against it.

"We achieved good, tangible progress on the different issues ... we are closer than ever to an agreement but there are still essential issues under negotiations," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi was quoted as telling Al Jazeera television.

Araqchi said Iran's presidential election on Friday would have no effect on the negotiations and the Iranian negotiating team will continue the talks regardless of domestic policy.

The sixth round of talks resumed on Saturday with the remaining parties to the deal – Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain, Germany and the European Union – meeting in the basement of a luxury hotel.

The US delegation to the talks is based in a hotel across the street as Iran refuses face-to-face meetings.

Since former US President Donald Trump pulled out of the deal and reimposed sanctions on Iran, Tehran has embarked on counter-measures, including rebuilding stockpiles of enriched uranium, a potential pathway to nuclear bombs.

"We want to make sure that what happened when Trump pulled out of the deal will not be repeated by any other American president in the future," Araqchi told the pan-Arab satellite TV network.

Russia's envoy to the talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, added a note of caution, saying progress had been made in the last few days but talks were tough.

"Some difficult and time-consuming topics still remain unresolved," he said. France's foreign ministry said on Wednesday there were still significant disagreements.

Iran's new president is expected to name his Cabinet by mid-August. Current President Hassan Rouhani's term ends on Aug. 3, a government spokesman said.



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Iran nuclear deal hangs in balance as Islamic Republic votesIran 'enriches 6.5 kg of uranium to 60 percent'

[Kuwait to allow vaccinated foreigners entry from August](#)

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Thu, 2021-06-17 21:07

KUWAIT: Kuwait announced Thursday it would allow foreigners who have been fully vaccinated against the novel coronavirus to enter the country from August 1, after a months-long suspension.

The Gulf country in February banned the entry of non-citizens in a bid to limit the spread of the virus, but has started to ease some of its Covid-19 restrictions in recent weeks.

Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mizrem said foreign travelers will need to have been fully inoculated with one of the four vaccines that the Gulf country has approved – Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

Passengers must also hold a negative PCR test conducted a maximum of 72 hours before travel, and undergo another test during a seven-day quarantine in the country, Mizrem told a press conference.

Meanwhile, only Kuwaiti citizens who have been fully vaccinated will be allowed to travel abroad from August 1, he said, although some exceptions would be made, such as for pregnant women.

Previously, Kuwaitis were required to have had at least one job in order to travel.

Mizrem also announced that Kuwait would allow access to large shopping malls, gyms and restaurants from June 27 only for those who have been fully inoculated.

“The government has decided to allow those who have received a (full) Covid-19 vaccine... to enter restaurants and cafes, gyms, salons, shopping malls more than 6,000 square meters,” said Mizrem.

Kuwait has officially recorded more than 332,000 coronavirus cases, over 1,800 of them fatal.



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Kuwait reports new cases with Indian variant of coronavirus

[US blames Houthis for failed Yemen peace efforts](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-06-17 19:36

RIYADH: The US envoy to Yemen has blamed the Houthi militia for failed efforts to bring peace to the country.

Tim Lenderking made the comments during a meeting on Thursday with Yemen's Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak in Saudi Arabia, Saba news agency reported.

Lenderking is holding talks in the Kingdom as part of a US push to bring a nationwide cease-fire.

But the Biden administration appears increasingly frustrated by the Iran-backed Houthis and their refusal to engage with peace efforts.

During his meeting with Bin Mubarak, Lenderking repeated Washington's position that there is no military solution to the Yemen conflict.

He strongly condemned the continued Houthi attacks on civilians and said an immediate and comprehensive cease-fire was a basic necessity to alleviate human suffering.

He said the US continued to support the legitimate government and the unity, stability and security of Yemen.

Bin Mubarak said: "The Houthi militia's refusal to agree a comprehensive cease-fire, reopen Sanaa airport, and guarantee the supply of oil derivatives revenues to pay employees' salaries proves the false pretexts these militias claim and confirms their bargaining on the humanitarian side, in order to continue implementing Iran's subversive agenda."

He said the militia's targeting of civilians and populated areas in Marib with ballistic missiles has not stopped, but rather increased in severity, which exacerbates the seriousness of the humanitarian situation, increases the number of civilian casualties and undermines international efforts to establish peace."



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Yemenis demand end to Houthi siege of Taiz as part of peace plans US envoy for Yemen heading to Saudi Arabia for ceasefire talks

[Houthis denounced for sentencing two activists to death](#)

Thu, 2021-06-17 19:19

ALEXANDRIA: Yemeni government officials, human rights activists and journalists have condemned a Houthi-run court's decision to sentence two Yemeni activists to death, accusing the rebels of using the judiciary in areas under their control to punish dissidents.

On Tuesday, a Houthi-run court ordered that Zafaran Zaid, a Yemeni human

rights activist and lawyer, and her husband and fellow activist Fuad Al-Mansouri be executed by firing squad. The two were tried in absentia.

Zaid, head of the Yemeni Women's Empowerment Foundation (Tamkeen), has exposed a number of human rights abuses by the Houthis. Al-Mansouri is the head of the Development Media Association and an outspoken critic of the Houthis. His brother, the journalist Tawfiq Al-Mansouri, was abducted by the Houthis in 2015 and sentenced to death in 2020.

The court found the couple guilty of smuggling Buthaina Mohammed Al-Raimia – the Yemeni child injured in an errant airstrike by the Arab coalition in 2017 – to Riyadh.

The child was sent to Riyadh by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, where she received life-saving medical treatment. Once she was fully recovered, she was returned to her family in northern Yemen.

Ahmed Arman, Yemen's minister of legal affairs and human rights, told Arab News on Thursday that the Houthis are using the judicial bodies in areas under their control to "settle scores" with their opponents and to confiscate their property.

"The ministry renews its strong condemnation and denunciation of all immoral and inhumane practices used by the Houthis against citizens in areas under their control and calls on the international and regional community to provide support to the Yemeni government and help it restore its authority over all Yemeni territories," Arman said.

He added that Houthi-controlled courts have issued similar death sentences against hundreds of Yemeni activists, military and security officials, politicians and journalists for challenging their rule and backing the Yemeni government and Arab coalition.

"The Houthis continue to use so-called judicial authority in areas under their control to seek vengeance on Yemenis," Arman said.

Yemeni activists and rights groups echoed Arman's concerns about the Houthis' escalating crackdown on dissidents at a time when regional and international mediators are pressuring the rebels to agree to a peace initiative brokered by the UN to end the war.

"The Houthis have become violent and oppressive towards Yemeni women – employing all methods of intimidation against them. What is happening is a flagrant violation of human rights," Noora Al-Jarwi, a Yemeni activist, said.

The Geneva-based SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties demanded the Houthis put an end to their "farcical" death-sentence rulings.

"SAM emphasizes that such rulings seriously violate a set of basic rights guaranteed by both Yemeni and international law," the organization tweeted.



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Yemenis demand end to Houthi siege of Taiz as part of peace plans
US condemns Houthi drone attack on Saudi school

[Egypt completes concrete work on tallest tower in Africa](#)

Thu, 2021-06-17 18:43

CAIRO: Egypt has announced the completion of the concrete work at the Iconic Tower skyscraper – the tallest tower in Africa – in the New Administrative Capital (NAC), east of Cairo.

“This represents a historic day in the history of modern Egypt and serves as a documentation of the growth the country is witnessing,” Minister of Housing Assem Al-Gazzar said at a function celebrating the feat on Thursday.

The project's investments are estimated at \$3 billion.

The project is being jointly implemented by the Egyptian Ministry of Housing, represented by the New Urban Communities Authority, and the China State Construction Engineering Corporation, one of the largest contracting companies in the world.

Al-Gazzar said the political leadership is taking full interest in the development projects at the NAC.

He said the Iconic Tower project will serve as a turning point in the history of urbanization in Egypt and that next week a new project will be launched in the city of El-Alamein alongside several new towers, "which confirms the extent of cooperation between Egypt and China."

He added that several further projects would be inaugurated in the coming period.

Al-Gazzar thanked China and the Chinese company for their "great flexibility with the Egyptian government in implementing this huge project."

The central business district of the NAC will feature 20 towers, including the 400-meter Iconic Tower.

Ahmed Al-Banna, project manager from the company Dar Al-Handasa, said the construction took 800 non-stop working days, adding that the pandemic did not halt the work.

He said the work was carried out in three phases, after which the concrete strength was installed, which accelerated work inside the tower.

The second phase, from the third floor to the 30th floor, took about 100 workdays, while during the third phase, one floor took about six workdays. The number of engineers, technicians and workers in the group amounted to 190.

The 80-floor tower project covers an area of 65,000 square meters.



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