

US hopes to build on Iran nuclear talk progress this week

Tue, 2022-01-04 23:25

WASHINGTON: Nuclear deal talks with Iran in Vienna have shown modest progress and the United States hopes to build on that this week, State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday amid efforts to revive a 2015 agreement. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) lifted sanctions against Tehran in exchange for restrictions on its atomic activities but Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the deal in 2018, a year after he took office. Iran later breached many of the deal's nuclear restrictions and kept pushing well beyond them. Tehran says it has never pursued the development of nuclear weapons.

In the latest round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States in Vienna, Tehran is focused on getting US sanctions lifted again.

"There was some modest progress in the talks last week. We hope to build on that this week," Price told reporters.

"Sanctions relief and the steps that the United States would take... when it comes to sanctions together with the nuclear steps that Iran would need to take if we were to achieve a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA – that's really at the heart of the negotiations that are ongoing in Vienna right now."

Meanwhile, Iran said it has detected a new "realism" on the part of Western countries, as further meetings in Vienna aimed at rescuing the accord got underway.

The talks resumed in late November and the latest round was set to formally get underway on Monday after a three-day break for the end of year holidays.

Tehran's chief negotiator Ali Bagheri met with EU coordinator Enrique Mora, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported.

Bagheri held a separate meeting with top negotiators from the European parties to the deal, the agency added.

Monday's meetings were "informal," Russia's envoy in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Twitter.

The meetings came hours after Tehran detected what it called a sense of "realism" from Western parties.

"We sense a retreat, or rather realism from the Western parties in the Vienna negotiations, that there can be no demands beyond the nuclear accord," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters.

However, "it is too early to judge if the United States and the three European countries have drawn up a real agenda to commit to lifting sanctions," he said.



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Two killed in flash flooding in Iran's southern province of FarsIran nuclear talks 'now urgent': European and US negotiators

[US, EU warn Sudan's military against unilaterally appointing a government](#)

Tue, 2022-01-04 22:25

WASHINGTON/LONDON: The United States and European Union warned Sudan's military on Tuesday against naming its own prime minister after civilian leader Abdalla Hamdok quit amid protests against the junta. The so-called troika on Sudan – the US, Britain and Norway – and the EU “will not support a prime minister or government appointed without the involvement of a broad range of civilian stakeholders,” a joint statement said. “Unilateral action to appoint a new prime minister and cabinet would undermine those institutions' credibility and risks plunging the nation into conflict,” the statement added. Hamdok was ousted in the coup, only to be reinstated a month later following a deal with the military meant to calm tensions and anti-coup protests.

Hamdok stepped down Sunday amid political deadlock, saying he had failed to find a compromise between the ruling generals and the pro-democracy movement. Meanwhile, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, chairman of the Sovereign Council, held talks with Volker Perthes, UN envoy to Sudan and head of the UN Integrated Transition Support Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), to discuss the current political situation in the country after Hamdok's resignation, state news agency SUNA reported.

Al-Burhan briefed Perthes on developments in the transition process and the two sides stressed the need to complete the structures of the transitional period and expedite the appointment of a new prime minister to succeed Hamdok.

(With AFP, Reuters and AP)





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Anti-coup protests in Sudan amid turmoil after PM resignsUN condemns violence targeting Sudanese protesters, US urges civilian rule after PM quits

[Moroccan tour operators protest pandemic restrictions](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2022-01-04 22:11

RABAT: Moroccan tour operators threatened with bankruptcy due to border closures protested Tuesday, calling for the tourism industry to be “saved” as the coronavirus wreaks havoc on international travel.

About 200 industry workers demonstrated in front of the tourism ministry in Rabat, demanding the reopening of borders and talks with the authorities, citing the “dramatic collapse” of the industry in the wake of the pandemic. “Have mercy on the economy and the people,” one sign read.

Morocco suspended all passenger flights from November 29 until January 31 as a result of rising infections of the omicron variant worldwide.

The restrictions have dealt a punishing blow to the North African country’s vital tourism sector, already on its knees after two lost seasons because of the pandemic.

Lahcen Zemat, head of the national federation of the hotel industry, said the situation for tourism was “catastrophic” and called for borders to be reopened and bank loan payments to be delayed.

Raja Ould Hamada, the owner of a travel agency in Marrakesh, said the most recent border closure was a “fatal blow” to the industry, claiming “other competing countries” such as Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates had benefitted.

Rabat recently promised a 2,000-dirham (about \$216) monthly allowance to tourism workers for the final quarter of 2021.



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[Kuwait suspends indoor activities until Feb. 28 to limit spread of COVID-19](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-01-04 00:14

LONDON: Authorities in Kuwait on Monday announced a decision to temporarily suspend all types of social events, which are held in closed places, from Sunday until Feb. 28, in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19.

The Kuwaiti Cabinet made the decision during its weekly meeting and said it would continue to review the epidemiological situation in the country throughout the period.

The Cabinet also announced that all travelers are obligated to take a PCR test 72 hours before arriving in the country as of Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the health ministry registered 982 new coronavirus cases on Monday, raising the total to 419,314. It also said 171 patients had recovered from the virus in the past 24 hours, while no deaths were reported.





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Kuwait airport activates emergency plan amid heavy rainfall

[Two killed in flash flooding in Iran's southern province of Fars](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-01-03 23:57

TEHRAN: At least two people were killed in flash flooding in Iran's southern province of Fars, a local official said on Monday.

"Two people from this province were trapped by water and lost their lives," Mehdi Khoobyar, deputy head of the Iranian Red Crescent in Fars, told the Young Journalists Club, a news agency affiliated with state television.

One of the victims died in the city of Darab, he added, without giving details on the second.

Relief teams “who were already on full alert, were dispatched to the flood-affected areas” in at least five cities in the province, he said.

The Red Crescent had “provided relief aid or rescued” hundreds of people, Khoobyar was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

Meteorological authorities had warned on Sunday of heavy rain and floods in southern provinces including Kerman and Hormozgan, local media reported. Heavy rains caused damage to agricultural lands and blocked roads in Hormozgan province, and damaged some infrastructure in the southeastern province of Sistan-Balushistan, state news agency IRNA said Sunday.

A weather system causing heavy rain is covering Iran’s south and several Arab countries of the Gulf.

Torrential rainfall has hit the UAE, where its official news agency WAM said bad weather is expected to last until Thursday.

Oman was also impacted by the dense weather system, and Kuwait suspended school classes and exams on Monday.

Largely arid, Iran has been suffering chronic dry spells for years.

In 2019, heavy floods in the south left at least 76 people dead and caused damages estimated at more than \$2 billion.



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