

Nuclear dossier must be pursued independently, MP says

TEHRAN - A member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament says that the nuclear case should be pursued independently, but the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a diplomatic apparatus will be protected.



Speaking to Mehr about the continuation of the nuclear talks on Sunday, Fadah Hossein Maleki said: "The president has a clear position on the continuation of the nuclear talks and has stated that Iran is not after attritional talks and all sanctions should be lifted."

The nuclear talks for a possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is expected to be resumed now that a new government in Iran has come to power.

The nuclear talks for restoring the JCPOA started in April in Vienna and until June 20 six rounds of talks were held. However, since then no talks have taken place because Iran was in the process of transition.

Referring to some consultations to transfer the nuclear case to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), he added: "In the previous administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dedicated its time to nuclear talks and as a result regional talks and economic diplomacy were practically stopped."

During the Khatami and Ahmadine-

jad administrations the SNSC was tasked to handle the nuclear issue. During the two administrations diplomats from the Foreign Ministry were also involved in the talks. However, President Hassan Rouhani, who himself was chief nuclear negotiator during the Khatami presidency, tasked the Foreign Ministry to follow the issue.

MP Maleki, a former diplomat, stated that Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has a special view on the region and neighboring countries.

Maleki said there is a kind of consensus among some officials that the "nuclear case should be pursued independently, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the foreign minister will have a strong and influential presence in the investigation of this case."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Maleki said that Iran is seeking an inclusive government in Afghanistan with the involvement of all ethnic and religious groups.

"The Islamic Republic seeks peace, stability and tranquility and the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan," stated Maleki, Iran's former ambassador to Afghanistan.

Maleki also said the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is present in Panjshir and is involved in the formation of the Taliban cabinet. He suggested that the Foreign Ministry should negotiate with Pakistan, and that a meeting should be held between Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan to resolve the Afghan problem.

"We should not allow Pakistan to intervene and maintain U.S. position

in Afghanistan," the member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee remarked.

On the meeting of the parliamentary Committee with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maleki said: "The Minister of Foreign Affairs believes that an inclusive government should be formed in Afghanistan so that all ethnic groups play a role in the government."

A purely Taliban-oriented government is currently being formed in Afghanistan, and the continuation of this process will push Afghanistan to a comprehensive war, the MP predicted.

The UN has condemned the Taliban for their "increasingly violent response" to dissent, weeks after the group's rapid takeover of Afghanistan.

Taliban fighters killed four people during recent protests, the UN said.

Demonstrations have taken place across Afghanistan since the fall of Kabul on August 15, demanding respect for women's rights and greater freedoms.

Taliban fighters have used batons, whips, and live ammunition against protesters, the UN said in its report.

"We call on the Taliban to immediately cease the use of force towards, and the arbitrary detention of, those exercising their right to peaceful assembly and the journalists covering the protests," a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a press statement.

Did Grossi find what he was looking for?

From page 1 ▶ The bill entails uranium enrichment activities with at least 1,000 IR-2M centrifuge machines at the Natanz nuclear plant within three months after the ratification of the law, and compels the AEOI to launch uranium enrichment as well as research and development activities with at least 164 IR-6 centrifuges and increase the number of centrifuge machines to 1,000 within a year after the ratification of the bill.

The bill also requires the government to suspend the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) three months after the ratification of it if the parties to the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), failed to uphold their obligations under the agreement.

During his trip, Grossi met with Mohammad Eslami, Iran's nuclear chief. The two had a "constructive" discussion, according to Eslami.

"Mr. Rafael Grossi came to Tehran at the invitation of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and we had good and constructive talks with him," Mohammad Eslami told reporters in a joint press conference with Grossi on Sunday.

Eslami also said he will hold talks with Grossi on the sidelines of the IAEA's Board Governors meeting which will start in Vienna from Monday.

"We decided to participate in the next meeting and continue our talks on the sidelines of the meeting," Iran's nuclear chief stated.

What is now clear is that the Board of Governors must be cautious over what they discuss. The IAEA, before Grossi's leadership, mostly focused on the technical aspects of Iran's nuclear file. Since Grossi took office, the UN nuclear watchdog has been trying to politicize the case, which has nothing to do with the IAEA obligations.

The nuclear file has two separate aspects. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the negotiations to revive the internationally agreed deal, and the technical aspects with respect to Non-Proliferation Treaty. The IAEA must know its limits and stick to the very mission it was founded for.

As for the JCPOA revival negotiations, Iran had previously stated that it has no problem returning to the negotiations, as long as the other side shows "determination and seriousness" and negotiates with goodwill.

According to the joint statement issued by the AEOI and the IAEA, "the parties recalled and reaffirmed the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust and its continuation and emphasized the necessity of addressing the relevant issues in a constructive atmosphere and exclusively in a technical manner."

In the framework of the existing cooperation, the two sides decided to maintain their mutual interactions and meetings at relevant levels. To this end, the Vice-President and the Head of AEOI will meet the IAEA Director General at the sidelines of the upcoming General Conference, and the IAEA Director General will also visit Tehran in the near future to hold high level consultations with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of enhancing cooperation between Iran and the IAEA in different fields and discussing current issues of mutual interest.

IAEA's inspectors are permitted to service the identified equipment and replace their storage media which will be kept under the joint IAEA and AEOI seals in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The way and the timing are agreed by the two sides.

The statement clearly indicates that Iran has not set a specific time for the IAEA's request to replace the storage memory cards. Iran insists on keeping the IAEA out of the political aspects of the nuclear file. It is time for Board of Governors to keep things technical.

Intelligence chiefs meet in Islamabad to discuss Afghanistan

TEHRAN — Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed on Saturday hosted intelligence chiefs of regional countries in Islamabad to discuss the Afghan situation, according to Pakistani media outlets.

The meeting was held as the Taliban took the full control of Afghanistan on August 15.

According to sources, intelli-

gence chiefs of Russia, Iran, China, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attended the meeting.

The participants exchanged views on the security situation in Afghanistan. A week back, the ISI chief had visited Afghanistan and met Hizb-e-Islami head Gulbadin Hekmatyar.

On a similar note, foreign ministers of countries neighboring Afghanistan held a virtual confer-

ence on Wednesday, September 8, to discuss the latest developments in the war-torn country.

The meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of Iran, Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It took place one day after the Taliban announced an interim cabinet.

The Taliban captured the capital Kabul on August 15 and President Ashraf Ghani fled the country.

Foreign intervention in Afghanistan doomed to failure, ex-diplomat highlights



TEHRAN - A former Iranian diplomat says experience shows that any foreign intervention in Afghanistan will end in failure, citing Britain (1839-42), the Soviet Union (1980-88) and the United States (2001-2021) as examples.

"The interference of foreigners will be doomed to failure. As with the former Soviet Union, Britain, and most recently the United States, if a country like Pakistan intervenes, it will suffer the same fate," Mohsen Rouhi Sefat told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

There are certain reports claiming that Pakistan's ISI chief was involved in the formation of the Taliban government and the Taliban's attack on the Panjshir Valley.

"The people of Afghanistan are against foreign intervention," the former diplomat said, noting, "It will soon be shown that if a country intervenes, it will fail. Our advice to all neighbors and major powers is to refrain from interfering in Afghanistan's affairs."

Regarding the ongoing clashes between the National Resistance Front and the Taliban in Panjshir, the Afghan affairs expert said: "The Panjshir region has 21 valleys, which the Taliban forces have penetrated only to the nearest valley where the governor's office is located. Another 20 valleys are under control of the opposition forces. So, we have to see what happens in the process of these conflicts."

Rouhi Sefat underlined that the government in Afghanistan would not be stable without the participation of ethnic groups.

"Because all these issues are ethnic, tensions

'The Taliban government would not be stable without participation of ethnic groups.'

will definitely continue in areas such as Panjshir. Of course, in the former Soviet Union, they only reached the first valley and conquered it, but did not succeed. This seems to be the case for the Taliban this time as well."

In the end, referring to the virtual meeting of Afghanistan's neighboring countries, he said: "These countries also demand the participation of ethnic groups in Afghanistan so that the government has legitimacy. Therefore, the Taliban must know that it will not be able to gain legitimacy without comprehensive participation."

Rouhi Sefat also said without the participation of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, no government would be stable in the Central Asian country.

"(Instead,) the former diplomat said, "instability would increase."

"The Taliban know that without comprehensive participation, they cannot achieve legitimacy," the expert on Afghanistan said.

The Taliban formally declared a caretaker government on Tuesday, appointing acting cabinet ministers who were largely loyalists from the group's first years of rule in the 1990s.

The Taliban has appointed Mohammad Hasan Akhund, a close aide to the group's late founder Mullah Omar, as head of Afghanistan's new caretaker government, weeks after it took control of the country in a rapid offensive.

The list of cabinet members announced by chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on Tuesday was dominated by members of the group's old guard, with no women included.

Regarding the developments in Afghanistan and the announcement of the cabinet by the Taliban, Rouhi Sefat said: "Afghanistan's geographical, ethnic and racial structure is such that no ethnic group has a majority in that country. Therefore, any sustainable government should be based on the fact that every ethnicity has a significant participation in the government."

He added: "Government based on ethnic and racial aspirations can last, and if it does not, it will not be stable and instability will increase."

Iran-Saudi talks must be balanced to solve regional problems, expert suggests.

TEHRAN - An expert on political issues has said Iran-Saudi Arabia talks are aimed at solving the region's problems, saying Iran seeks peace, security and sustainable peace in the West Asia region.

"The Islamic Republic is interested in peace, stability, sustainable security and comprehensive development in the region," Reza Sadr al-Hosseini told the Mehr news agency in an interview published on Sunday.

Noting that talks between countries are first held between experts, al-Hosseini said, "Usually in all diplomatic talks between countries, the talks are held first at expert level and those who are completely immersed in the details."

Sometimes these talks will take years, the expert noted, but at the end it will be diplomatic officials from involved parties who sign agreements.

"Political talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia are no exception, and all the provisions of a possible agreement and all issues that the two countries are interested in should be examined in detail at the expert level, and after resolving all these issues, the negotiations should be pursued at a higher level," al-Hosseini highlighted.

Negotiations usually take place in a shorter period of time when they are pursued at a high level, which either leads to a solution or not, the expert stated.

"There may be other questions and ambiguities in those higher-level negotiations that should be re-studied at expert level and expert comments should be made on it."

Iraq, whose prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi visited Iran on Sunday, has so far held three rounds of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia. According to the Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Iraj Masjeidi, the fourth round of talks is set to be held.

An Iraqi government source who requested anonymity, had said Kadhimi will raise "issues of security, energy, and relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran" with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, according to The Arab Weekly.

Raisi has said his administration prioritizes close relations with neighbors.

Asked about the role of relations with neighbors and its effects on neutralizing sanctions on Iran, the analyst said: "The issue of neutralizing sanctions is another issue that I think may be the next priority of these talks."

The Islamic Republic pursues talks as a principle, he underscored.

Sadr al-Hosseini further stated: "If the region is governed by a general consensus, it will be in the interest of all countries in terms of security, economy and security of the region's waters, and Iran is also interested in the region being safe for all."

"The Islamic Republic is interested in peace."



The Islamic Republic is interested in peace, stability, sustainable security and comprehensive development in the region, and in this regard it is pursuing a fair and balanced negotiation, he said.

Sadr al-Hosseini also said Iran is interested in resolving the region's problems as soon as possible and wishes peace and sustainable security for regional countries and at the same time it seeks an expulsion of outside powers from the region.

"Iran is interested that all countries in the region enjoy lasting security and non-regional countries not being present in the region," he remarked.

"The trans-regional countries, led by the Americans and the Zionist regime, are doing nothing but disrupting relations between the countries of the region and destabilizing the region."

Will the upcoming SCO summit bring good news to Iran?

By Prof. Fan Hongda

The 2021 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit will be held on September 16-17 in Tajikistan, the rotating chair of the organization. The summit's attitude towards Iran's application for membership has attracted much attention.

On May 30, 2021, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Tehran Nizomuddin Zohidi said in a press briefing on SCO that Iran's membership in SCO has been on the main agenda. The ambassador also said that his country will invite the Iranian President to participate in the meeting. In a TV interview at the end of August, Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian stated that President Ebrahim Raisi will attend the summit.

As early as more than ten years ago, Iran applied for SCO's membership. According to the SCO charter, the unanimous consent of the existing members is required before new members can join in the past, because of UN sanctions and Tajikistan's opposition, Iran failed to become a member of the SCO.

However, on August 11, 2021, Ali Shamkhani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, wrote on his Twitter account that "political obstacles to Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have been lifted and Iran's membership will be finalized through technical formalities."

In this way, it seems that the relationship between Iran and SCO has made significant progress. In fact, Russia has repeatedly publicly expressed its support for Iran's membership of SCO. According to the Islamic Republic National News Agency (IRNA), during a telephone conversation with President Raisi on August 18, 2021, President Xi Jinping expressed support for Iran's formal membership in SCO which he said will be in the long-term interests of the organization.

China and Russia are the most influential members of SCO, and their attitude is crucial



SCO membership can improve Iran's ability to respond to pressure from the United States.

to whether Iran can join the organization. Now the two members have clearly supported Iran's application for the membership of SCO, and Iran also stated that all political obstacles have been removed. In this way, the possibility of Iran being accepted as the ninth member of SCO has greatly increased.

SCO membership can enhance Iran's regional and international influence, integrate Iran into a certain degree of collective security arrangements and improve Iran's ability to respond to pressure from the United States.

If Iran can successfully gain membership of SCO, Iran's regional influence is the core factor. Although Iran has encountered serious development difficulties due to international sanctions in the past four decades, its influence in West and Central Asia has not decreased but increased. Many regional issues require Iran's active participation to be resolved.

Iran's accession will enhance SCO's ability to respond to regional challenges.

SCO is celebrating its 20th birthday this year. Compared with 20 years ago, both regional and international situations have undergone obvious changes, and SCO has to deal with

some new challenges. Therefore, SCO needs new members who are influential and willing to join like Iran. What needs to be mentioned in particular is that U.S. threat to the stability and security of the international community has forced SCO and its members to respond in some ways.

For example, the continuous U.S. attacks on Russia, China, and Iran are one of the reasons why these countries are getting closer. Also, the long-term presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and their irresponsible and hasty withdrawal have not only led to a dangerous state, but also had a serious impact on regional security. It is even more necessary for SCO to absorb new forces and respond to new challenges more independently.

Judging from the remarks of the secretary of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council cited above, Iran should have resolved the political obstacles to joining SCO through diplomatic efforts, leaving only some technical issues to face. This shows that Iran has made further progress in adapting to the requirements of SCO and once again shows its strong desire to join the organization.

However, it must be noted that some countries do not want Iran to join SCO. These countries either don't want to see Iran use SCO to increase its influence, or they don't want to see SCO increase its influence because of Iran's accession. They may take some measures to prevent Iran from becoming a member of SCO.

So far Iran's application for membership will be on the agenda of this year's SCO summit. SCO will also discuss on this issue for the first time since Pakistan and India became members in 2017. As Tajikistan no longer opposes Iran's membership, the attitude of India, which has close relations with the United States, is worthy of attention. Judging from the two visits to Tehran by the Indian Foreign Minister after Raisi was elected President of Iran, Iran-India relations should not become a new obstacle.

I believe that the upcoming SCO summit will bring good news about membership to Iran.

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