

Won't allow Iran to 'slow walk'

Warns US on stalled nuke talks

AFP, Washington

The United States warned Saturday it would not allow Iran to "slow walk" international negotiations over its nuclear program while at the same time ramping up its atomic activities -- but stopped short of slamming the door on talks.

The warning came a day after Washington hit out at Iran, saying talks with world powers had stalled because Tehran "does not seem to be serious."

"Iran did not show the posture of a country that is seriously thinking of a rapid return" to the 2015 accord aimed at putting curbs on its nuclear program, said a senior US administration official, speaking after returning from the Austrian capital where talks resumed last week.

"We can't accept a situation in which Iran accelerates its nuclear program and slow walks its nuclear diplomacy," said the official -- echoing a recent warning by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and also reflecting concerns voiced by some of the Europeans taking part in the talks.

The seventh round of nuclear talks ended Friday after five days in Vienna, with delegations returning to their national capitals and expected to go back to Austria next week.

Iran had paused the talks in June following the election of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

The official argued that the United States had shown patience in allowing a five-month break in the process, but that during that time the Iranians were "continuing to accelerate their nuclear program in particularly provocative ways."



Rescue personnel search for villagers in an area covered in volcanic ash at Sumber Wuluh village in Lumajang, Indonesia yesterday, after the Semeru volcano eruption that killed at least 14 people. *Inset, a villager carries a child as people salvage their belongings in an area covered in volcanic ash at Sumber Wuluh village.*

PHOTO: AFP

US, West blast Taliban

Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman rejects accusation, says no evidence had been presented by HRW report

REUTERS, Berlin

AFGHAN REPRISALS



steps must be clearly publicized as an immediate deterrent to further killings and disappearances," it said.

Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sayed Khostie rejected the accusation of reprisal killings, saying no evidence had been presented.

"If there is any evidence, it should be shared with us," he said in a video statement, pointing to the general amnesty announced by the Taliban government.

"We have had some individual cases of killings of ex-government members but these were due to private enmity and we've arrested those involved."

"This is slander against the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, not justice."

Human Rights Watch officials said in a report on November 30 that Taliban forces in Afghanistan have executed or forcibly disappeared more than 100 former police and intelligence officers since taking over the country on August 15, despite the proclaimed amnesty.

The Taliban interior ministry has rejected the Human Rights Watch report but said it would arrest anyone who could be shown to have carried out violent reprisals against members of the former military.

Facing a deep economic crisis, the Taliban have been appealing for international support to stave off a humanitarian disaster.

The coup, which ended a

Military will exit politics after 2023 elections

Says Sudan's top general Burhan

REUTERS, Khartoum

partnership with civilian political parties after the ouster of Omar al-Bashir, drew international condemnation after the detention of dozens of key officials and crackdowns on protesters.

Neighbourhood resistance committees and political parties have called for the military to exit politics immediately and have rejected any compromise including the deal with Hamdok.

At least 44 people have died during demonstrations, many from gunshot wounds from security forces, according to medics.

"Investigations regarding the victims of the protests have begun to identify who has done this ... and to punish the criminals," Burhan said, adding that security forces had only dispersed non-peaceful protests.

MORE NEWS

Reported assassination attempt on Erdogan foiled

An assassination attempt on the life of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was foiled by Turkish intelligence on Saturday evening, Turkish media reported. Turkish police found a bomb under the car of a riot police officer assigned to work at an event attended by Erdogan in eastern Turkey. The device was reportedly discovered in the small city of Nusaybin, on the Syrian border, from which the officer had been due to drive 200 km (125 miles) northeast to Siirt, where Erdogan later addressed an outdoor audience. The car was parked at the officer's home in Nusaybin. The bomb was defused and an investigation was launched, Anadolu reported.

CNN fires anchor Chris Cuomo for helping governor brother

CNN fired news anchor Chris Cuomo, the network announced on Saturday, after "additional information" came to light during an investigation into his efforts to help his brother, former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, deal with allegations of sexual misconduct. Cuomo, who hosted CNN's most-watched prime-time news show, had been suspended on Tuesday. He had admitted in May that he had broken some of the cable news network's rules in advising his brother how to handle the allegations from a public relations perspective. Andrew Cuomo, 63, was forced to step down as governor in August after multiple allegations of sexual misconduct.



Israeli police kill Palestinian in Jerusalem stabbing

Israeli security forces shot dead a Palestinian in annexed east Jerusalem late on Saturday after he stabbed an Israeli civilian and tried to attack police, Israeli police and Palestinian medics said. The assailant stabbed a man near the Damascus Gate to the walled Old City and then "attempted to stab a border police officer", police said in a statement. "Police neutralised the stabber," it added. A spokeswoman for the Palestinian Red Crescent said police killed the assailant. Israel's Magen David Adom emergency service said the stabbing victim was a 20-year-old religious Jew who was taken to hospital in "moderate to severe condition". Palestinian official news agency Wafa identified the assailant as Mohammad Shawkat Ahmed Salima, 25, from the northern West Bank town of Salfit.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Pope Francis (2R) speaks with refugees at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, Greece yesterday. Pope Francis condemned the exploitation of refugees for political propaganda as he paid his second visit to the Greek island of Lesbos.

PHOTO: AFP

Biden, Putin set to talk about Ukraine

REUTERS, Washington/Moscow

US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold a video call tomorrow, with the two leaders set to discuss the tense situation in Ukraine.

"Biden will underscore US concerns with Russian military activities on the border with Ukraine and reaffirm the United States' support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said in a statement.

She said other topics would include "strategic stability, cyber and regional issues."

The two will also talk about bilateral ties and the implementation of agreements reached at their Geneva

summit in June, the Kremlin said on Saturday.

"The conversation will indeed take place on Tuesday," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Reuters. "Bilateral relations, of course Ukraine and the realization of the agreements reached in Geneva are the main (items) on the agenda," he said.

INVASION FEARS

The exact timing of the call was not disclosed.

More than 94,000 Russian troops are believed to be massed near Ukraine's borders. Ukraine Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said on Friday that Moscow may be planning a large-scale military offensive at the

end of January, citing intelligence reports. US officials have come to similar conclusions, they said.

Biden, meanwhile, has rejected Russian demands for security guarantees in the region.

"My expectation is we're going to have a long discussion with Putin," Biden told reporters on Friday as he departed for a weekend trip to Camp David. "I don't accept anybody's red lines," he said.

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