

WORLD

Teheran sees 'better direction' in Vienna

But thorniest points remain in indirect talks with US to revive nuclear accord

TEHERAN/DUBAI — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said the eighth-round Vienna talks on the restoration of a 2015 nuclear deal are in a "better direction" than previous rounds.

Indirect talks between Iran and the United States on salvaging the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, resumed on Jan 3. Iran refuses to meet directly with US officials, meaning that other parties to the landmark deal — China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and Germany — must shuttle between the two sides.

However, Iran has yet to see "serious willpower" from the US and three European parties, Abdollahian told news channel Al Jazeera English on Tuesday.

"We do not yet see new initiatives from the West. ... They do not seem ready to return to their commitments quickly, so we feel that the West is still dragging its feet," he explained.

Both sides were displaying little flexibility on core issues in the indirect nuclear talks, Reuters commented, raising questions about whether a compromise can be found soon.

The thorniest points that remain are the speed and scope of lifting sanctions on Teheran, including Iran's demand for a US guarantee of no further punitive steps and restoring curbs on Iran's atomic work.

The nuclear deal limited Iran's uranium enrichment activity to make it harder for it to develop nuclear arms — a Western claim that Teheran denies — in return for lifting sanctions.



Hossein Amir Abdollahian

But former US president Donald Trump ditched the pact in 2018 and reimposed sanctions that badly damaged Iran's economy. Following months of talks that began after Joe Biden replaced Trump in the White House, Western officials now say time is running out to resurrect the pact. But Iranian officials deny they are under time pressure, arguing that its economy can survive with oil sales to other countries.

Western diplomats have indicated they are hoping to have a breakthrough by the end of January or early February, but sharp differences remain with the toughest issues still unresolved. Iran has rejected any deadline imposed by the West.

Sanctions relief

France said on Tuesday that despite some progress at the end of December, Iran and the world powers are still far away from reviving the deal.

"The discussions are ongoing. They are slow, too slow, and that creates a gap that jeopardizes the chance of finding a solution that respects the interests of all sides," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told a parliamentary hearing.

The US State Department said on Jan 4 that the issues "at the heart of the negotiations" are sanc-

tions relief and the steps that Iran would take to return to the accord.

Iran insists on the immediate removal of all Trump-era sanctions in a verifiable process. Washington said it would remove curbs inconsistent with the 2015 pact if Iran resumed compliance with the deal, implying that it would leave in place others such as those imposed under so-called terrorism or human rights measures.

"Americans should give assurances that no new sanctions under any label would be imposed on Iran in future. We need guarantees that America will not abandon the deal again," said a senior Iranian official.

Iran's media outlet Nournews reported on Wednesday that Iran's key conditions at the talks "are assurances and verifications".

On the issue of obtaining verification that sanctions have been removed — at which point Iran would have to revive curbs on its nuclear program — a senior Iranian official said Teheran and Washington differed over the timetable.

"Iran needs a couple of weeks to verify sanctions removal (before it reverses its nuclear steps). But the other party says a few days would be enough to load oil on a ship, export it and transfer its money through banking system," the official said.

Shadowing the background of the talks have been threats by Israel, which sees Iran as a threat. Israel has threatened to attack Iranian nuclear installations if it deems diplomacy futile in containing Teheran's atomic abilities and potential.

In response, Iran has said it would hit back hard if it were attacked.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Haze of terror



People sift through wreckage at the scene of a suicide car bomb blast in Mogadishu, Somalia, on Wednesday. At least 10 people including five soldiers were killed. The attack was claimed by the al-Shabaab extremist group, which said it was targeting "foreign officers". FARAH ABDI WARSAMEH / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Briefly

INDIA

New Delhi, London aim to finalize FTA this year

The United Kingdom and India formally launched free trade agreement talks in New Delhi on Thursday with the aim of wrapping up a deal by the end of the year that could boost annual bilateral trade by billions of dollars. Britain has made a deal with India one of its post-Brexit priorities as, free from the European Union's common trade policy, ministers look to gear trade policy toward faster-growing economies around the Indo-Pacific region. Meeting in New Delhi on Thursday, Indian Trade Minister Piyush Goyal and his British counterpart Anne-Marie Trevelyan said they would also launch an "early harvest" or a limited-scope interim trade agreement in the next few months, before finalizing the free trade agreement.

UNITED STATES

Top Republican lashes out at Biden's reform

Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell lashed out at President Joe Biden on Wednesday, accusing him of widening the US political divide with his push for voting rights reform and call to change the Senate rules. Biden, in a speech in Atlanta, Georgia, on Tuesday, called for a break in the Senate's supermajority rule so Democrats can override Republican opposition to voting rights reforms that he called crucial to saving US democracy. "The president's rant yesterday was incorrect, incoherent and beneath his office," the conservative senator said, calling it "pure demagoguery". Biden was scheduled to meet with Senate Democrats on Thursday to discuss voting rights

and changing the rules of the Senate to sidestep Republican opposition.

Prince Andrew must face sex assault case

Britain's Prince Andrew failed to persuade a US judge to dismiss Virginia Giuffre's lawsuit accusing the Duke of York of sexually abusing her when she was a teenager. In a decision made public on Wednesday, US District Judge Lewis Kaplan said Giuffre, 38, could pursue claims that Andrew battered her and intentionally caused her emotional distress while the late financier Jeffrey Epstein was trafficking her. The Manhattan judge said it was premature to assess Andrew's efforts to "cast doubt" on those claims, though the 61-year-old prince could do so at a trial.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Weichai Power breaks ground on efficiency

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Chinese powertrain manufacturer Weichai Power has launched the world's first diesel engine with a thermal efficiency rating of 51.09 percent, marking the latest in a long line of achievements it has made in developing engines as well as green energy products.

The record thermal efficiency is of great significance to environmental protection and sustainable development, as a higher thermal efficiency represents lower fuel consumption.

With China having set the strategic goal of achieving carbon peak by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060, the internal combustion engine industry is expected to play an important role in the process.

Weichai released the world's first commercial diesel engine with a base engine thermal efficiency of 50.23 percent in September 2020, establishing a new benchmark for the industry.

Just 480 days later, the company hit a new world record that increased the base thermal efficiency to 51.09 percent, further consolidating China's position in the global internal combustion engine industry.

German test authority TUV SUD issued a certificate for the engine on the day it was released, recognizing Weichai Power's latest achievement.

Weichai said the new diesel engine provides technical preparation for the stricter national VII emission standard and will be of great significance to promoting the energy-efficient and green development of China's traditional internal combustion engine industry.

It is estimated that products with a thermal efficiency of 51 percent can reduce fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by 10 percent compared with those with a thermal efficiency of 46 percent. It can substantially reduce fuel consumption, reduce costs and cut carbon dioxide emissions, according to the company.

10 percent

the decrease of fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by an engine with a thermal efficiency of 51 percent compared with that with a thermal efficiency of 46 percent

With mass use of the technology in the industry, it is expected to generate huge economic and social benefits.

In addition to boosting the innovative and low-carbon development of conventional internal combustion engines, Weichai has also made great efforts to support the development of new energy products.

On Jan 8, Chinese heavy-duty truck manufacturer Sinotruk delivered its first batch of hydrogen-powered heavy-duty tractor trucks to the Port of Shandong, which is equipped with Weichai's high-power-output hydrogen fuel cell systems.

With the support of the Ministry of Science and Technology and Shandong province, Weichai took the lead in building the National Fuel Cell Technology Innovation Center last year, and participated in national and Shandong province's hydrogen technology demonstration projects.

Weichai has partnered with other companies, universities and research institutions, and successfully developed the 15 to 200-kilowatt series of hydrogen fuel cell systems. Among them, the 200 kW fuel cell system was selected to be exhibited at a national exhibition of science and technology achievements made during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) in October.

In addition, the company launched an environmental adaptability test for fuel cell vehicles and successfully started vehicles at temperatures of minus 34 C.

Based on its fuel cell products,



Clockwise from top: Heavy-duty trucks equipped with Weichai's hydrogen full cell system are delivered to the Port of Shandong. The diesel engine made by Weichai is the world's first with a thermal efficiency rating of 51.09 percent. Weichai Power receives a certificate for the diesel engine with a thermal efficiency of 51.09 percent from TUV SUD. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Weichai has launched a demonstrative program for multisenario applications to accelerate the development of key hydrogen energy technologies.

The company's first high-power-output container hydrogen fuel cell heating and power generation system and 30kW solid oxide fuel cell heating and power system, both firsts of their kind in China, have

been put into operation in Weifang, Shandong province.

China's first 80-seat hydrogen fuel cell passenger ship with zero carbon emissions developed by the company has been tested in Jinan, Shandong province.

More products powered by Weichai's powertrain systems have been developed, including a 49-ton fuel cell heavy-duty truck that can run

more than 5,000 kilometers on a single charge, and a Sinotruk ski-waxing truck with a Weichai 162-kW hydrogen fuel cell system that will be used during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Tan Xuguang, president of Weichai Power, said the development of internal combustion engines with continuous rises in thermal efficiency and mass applications of new

energy resources in products are the two crucial driving forces for Weichai, and have kept the company ahead in the development of high-performance conventional engines and new energy engines.

The moves have also opened a new path for diversified energy transformation under the national strategy of carbon peak and carbon neutrality, Tan said.