

Will not surrender nuclear rights: Iran

By [Atul Aneja](#)

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DUBAI: Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced that Tehran's "undeniable" nuclear rights are non-negotiable and nuclear talks with global powers in the future would be narrowed down to "cooperation on peaceful use of atomic energy" and "non-proliferation".

"In our view the nuclear question is finished. We will not negotiate over Iran's undeniable rights," Mr. Ahmadinejad said on Monday at a press conference in Tehran.

"What we have announced is cooperation in two parts: cooperation on peaceful use of clean atomic energy and preventing a proliferation of atomic weapons."

The head of Iran's national security council, Saeed Jalili, had earlier said that Iran had prepared a new package of proposals, which it would present to the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany in order to kick-start talks. These countries have been exerting pressure on Iran to take "initiatives" within this month to "co-operate" or face fresh sanctions. The new sanctions could target exports of refined petroleum products, including ready-for-use gasoline, which Iran imports in bulk quantities.

Mr. Ahmadinejad reiterated that Iran was committed to present its new proposals, but rejected imposition of any deadline for talks. Analysts say that instead of talks being confined to a single subject, Iran is looking for a comprehensive dialogue with the West which would result in normalisation of ties, based on recognition of its status as a regional power. The Iranian President urged the European countries and the Americans to "climb down from fragile glass towers."

The President's assertions come a day after Venezuela promised to supply 20,000 barrels a day of gasoline to Iran; a move that would help undermine possible future sanctions that seek to restrict petrol supplies to Tehran. Visiting Venezuelan President signed an agreement late on Sunday for fuel supplies which would begin in October, Iran's state television reported. In return for gasoline exports, Venezuela will import machinery and technology from Iran, Mr. Chavez was quoted as saying.

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