

INTERNATIONAL

Iran submits a 'written response' in N-deal talks

Iran said Tuesday it submitted a "written response" to what has been described as a final roadmap to restore its tattered nuclear deal with world powers. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency offered no details on the substance of its response, but suggested that Tehran still wouldn't take the European Union-mediated proposal, despite warnings there would be no more negotiations. "The differences are on three issues, in which the United States has expressed its verbal flexibility in two cases, but it should be included in the text," the IRNA report said. "The third issue is related to guaranteeing the continuation of (the deal), which depends on the realism of the United States." Tehran under hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi has repeatedly tried to blame Washington for the delay in reaching an accord. Monday was reported to have been a deadline for Iran's response. There was no immediate acknowledgment from the EU that Iran submitted its response. The EU has been the go-between in the indirect talks. From Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the U.S. would share its own response to the EU. "We do agree, however, with (the EU's) fundamental point, and that is that what could be negotiated has been negotiated," Price said. He added that Iran had been making "unacceptable demands" going beyond the text of the 2015 nuclear deal, which saw Iran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. "If Iran wants these sanctions lifted, they will need to alter their underlying conduct," Price said. "They will need to change the dangerous activities that gave rise to these sanctions in the first place."

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China plans cloud seeding to protect grain crop amid drought

China says it will try to protect its grain harvest from record-setting drought by using chemicals to generate rain, while factories in the southwest waited Sunday to see whether they would be shut down for another week due to shortages of water to generate hydropower. The hottest, driest summer since Chinese records began 61 years ago has wilted crops and left reservoirs at half of their normal water level. Factories in Sichuan province were shut down last week to save power for homes as air-conditioning demand surged, with temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius. The coming 10 days is a "key period of damage resistance" for southern China's rice crop, said Agriculture Minister Tang Renjian, according to the newspaper Global Times. Authorities will take emergency steps to "ensure the autumn grain harvest", which is 75% of China's annual total, Tang said Friday, according to the report. Authorities will

"try to increase rain" by seeding clouds with chemicals and spray crops with a "water retaining agent" to limit evaporation, Tang's ministry said on its website. It gave no details of where that would be done. The disruption adds to challenges for the ruling Communist Party, which is trying to shore up sagging economic growth before a meeting in October or November when President Xi Jinping is expected to try to award himself a third five-year term as leader. A reduced Chinese grain harvest would have a potential global impact. It would boost demand for imports, adding to upward pressure on inflation in the United States and Europe that is running at multi-decade highs. Also Sunday, thousands of factories in Sichuan province that make solar panels, processor chips and other industrial goods waited for word on whether last week's six-day shutdown would be extended. A document that circulated on social media and said it was from the Sichuan Economic and Information Industry Department said the closure would be extended through Thursday, but there was no official confirmation. Phone calls to the economic agency and provincial government weren't answered. A woman who answered the phone at the Sichuan branch of the government-owned power utility State Grid Ltd. said she had seen no notice about extending the shutdown. She wouldn't give her name. The governments of Sichuan and neighboring Hubei province say thousands of acres (hectares) of crops are a total loss and millions have been damaged. Hubei's government declared a drought emergency on Saturday and said it would release disaster aid. The Sichuan government said 819,000 people face a shortage of drinking water. Sichuan has been hardest hit by drought because it gets 80% of its power from hydroelectric dams. The provincial government says reservoirs are at half of normal water levels. It earlier called on manufacturers to "leave power for the people". Offices and shopping malls in Sichuan were ordered to turn off lights and air-conditioning. The subway in Chengdu, the provincial capital, said it turned off thousands of lights in stations. Meanwhile, other areas have suffered deadly flash floods. Flooding in the northwestern province of Qinghai killed at least 25 people and left eight missing, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, citing local authorities. Mudslides and overflowing rivers late Thursday hit six villages in Qinghai's Datong county, the report said. Some 1,500 people were forced out of their homes.

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