

Iran will promise UN not to seek nuclear bomb, semi-official agency reports

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Iran plans to submit a written promise to the United Nations that it will not seek nuclear weapons, the semi-official Mehr news agency said Tuesday.

"Iran plans to declare in the UN that it will never go after nuclear bombs," the agency quoted Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi as saying. Rahimi did not say when the promise would be delivered.

Rahimi charged that Western actions of late aim to thwart Iran's "scientific progress" referring to the several rounds of sanctions aimed at the nuclear program, that have impacted heavily on Iran's economy.

Iran has repeatedly denied West suspicions that it is pursuing weapons construction under cover of its nuclear program.

In 2005, Iran's top leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a religious edict "banning production, storage and use of nuclear weapons".

The United States warned Iran last week that that it faces further international isolation and pressure if it fails to address United Nations nuclear watchdog concerns about its atomic activity, which the West fears has a military purpose.

In a hard-hitting statement delivered at a board meeting of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency, U.S. envoy Joseph Macmanus accused Iran of "provocative actions", singling out the recent installation of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.

"We are deeply concerned with what appears to be Iran's unwavering commitment to deception, defiance, and delay," Macmanus told the IAEA's board of governors, according to a copy of his speech at the closed-door session.

Western countries fear Iran is enriching uranium to develop the capacity to build nuclear weapons and have led several rounds of international sanctions, while Iran says the program is legitimate and intended for purely peaceful purposes.

The Vienna-based IAEA has been trying for more than a year to persuade Iran to give it access to sites, documents and officials as part of a stalled investigation into suspected atom bomb research by the Islamic state.

Iran has in particular refused IAEA requests to visit the Parchin military site, where inspectors suspect explosives tests relevant for nuclear arms development took place, possibly a decade ago.