



Pakistan under risk of sanctions over trade deal with Iran: Washington

Description

WORLD : Washington threatened Pakistan with sanctions on 23 April over a trade agreement recently signed with Iran.

“We advise anyone considering business deals with Iran to be aware of the potential risk of sanctions. Ultimately, the Government of Pakistan can speak to their own foreign policy pursuits,” State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said on 23 April.

The warning came after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi arrived in Pakistan on 22 April and met with top officials, including Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

“Both sides agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to 10 billion US dollars in the next five years,” Sharif’s office said in a statement.

Raisi and Sharif also discussed during the visit the importance of energy cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad.

A gas pipeline project between the two, dating back over a decade and aimed at allowing the flow of Iranian gas into Pakistan, has been consistently held up by the US.

A US official revealed last month that Washington has set a “goal” to prevent the construction of the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline. The project has been delayed by nearly a decade in large part due to US economic pressure.

“I fully support the efforts by the US government to prevent this pipeline from happening,” US Assistant Secretary Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Donald Lu, said during a congressional hearing on 19 March. “We are working toward that goal,” he stressed.

On Wednesday, Iran and Pakistan issued a joint statement calling on the UN Security Council “to prevent Israel’s regime from its adventurism in the region and its illegal acts attacking its neighbors and targeting foreign diplomatic facilities.”

The statement also called “for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access to the besieged people of Gaza, return of the displaced Palestinians, as well as ensuring accountability of the crimes being committed by the Israeli regime.

They reiterated their support for a just, comprehensive, and durable solution based on the aspirations of the people of Palestine,” according to the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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