

Iran nuclear talks fail to resolve dispute

No agreement on date or venue for next meeting

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Vienna: An apparent failure by world powers and Iran to make any progress towards resolving the dispute over its nuclear plans may increase US talk of the need to step up sanctions pressure on the Islamic Republic.

Two days of seemingly fruitless discussions in Istanbul between Iran and the six powers — the United States, France, Germany, China, Russia and Britain — ended yesterday without even an agreement on when and where to meet again.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said the door remained open but the outcome was clearly disappointing, even if no one had expected a breakthrough in the Turkish city.

Western officials had hoped for signs that Iran would be willing to start addressing their concerns about its nuclear programme, which they fear is aimed at making bombs but Tehran says is designed for peaceful power generation.

But the Iranian delegation made clear from the outset that the country's "nuclear rights" were not negotiable.

Ashton, who led the big powers' delegation, said no new meeting was planned for now. An Iranian official said the talks would resume, but that no date or venue had yet been set.

In the previous session between the two sides in Geneva in early December, which also made no concrete headway in easing the standoff, there was at least an agreement to have another meeting in Istanbul. at the end of January.

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