

Iran can soon buy planes to add to ageing fleet: President Rouhani

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Tehran: Iranian president Hassan Rouhani has pointed to another possible windfall from a nuclear deal with world powers - his country may soon be able to buy badly needed new planes for its aging fleet, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Rouhani said Iranian negotiators came away from the talks in Vienna with "achievements beyond the nuclear" agreement and succeeded in having "aviation sanctions removed." His remarks were carried by the official IRNA news agency late on Wednesday.

The landmark deal, struck on Tuesday between Iran and six world powers after marathon negotiations in the Austrian capital, is meant to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, in exchange for sanctions relief. According to the deal, key economic sanctions - such as those on Iranian energy and financial sectors - would be lifted once Iran implements the restrictions on its nuclear programme.

International and specifically US sanctions have prohibited the sale of Western planes and some spare parts to Iran, making it impossible for Iran to buy new planes and difficult to keep the aging Boeings and Airbuses it does use safely flying. The last time Iran bought new aircraft directly from a Western company was in the early 1990s from the Dutch manufacturer Fokker, which later went bankrupt.

Beyond referring to the removal of "aviation sanctions," Rouhani did not elaborate but Iran's Transportation Minister Abbas Akhoundi has said there have been talks with Boeing and Airbus and that initial agreements will likely come in a few months' time.

"We will provide new aircraft for Iran," Akhoundi said.

Last month at the Paris Air Show, Akhoundi said Iran was prepared to spend about \$20 billion to purchase about 400 new planes over the next decade.

During the sanctions regime, Iran tried to circumvent the measures by buying second-hand civilian aircraft from third companies and managed to keep its national carrier (name please?) and other airlines going by renting aircraft from others.

In May, the US Treasury said it was imposing punitive actions on an Iraqi and a UAE company that helped Iran buy second-hand aircraft. Tehran had earlier announced that it obtained several younger planes to rejuvenate its civil aviation.

In 2013, it however allowed Boeing and General Electric to provide limited amount of spare parts for engines of US-made planes that were in service in Iran since the 1970s.

- AP