

## **Iran will enrich uranium to 'any amount we want': President Rouhani**

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***The comments by President Hassan Rouhani come as tensions remain high between Iran and the U.S. over the deal, which President Donald Trump pulled America from over a year ago. (AP/File)***

**Tehran:** Iran's president warned European partners in its faltering nuclear deal on Wednesday that Tehran will increase its enrichment of uranium to "any amount that we want" beginning on Sunday, putting pressure on them to offer a way around intense U.S. sanctions targeting the country.

The comments by President Hassan Rouhani come as tensions remain high between Iran and the U.S. over the deal, which President Donald Trump pulled America from over a year ago.

Authorities on Monday acknowledged Iran broke through a limit placed on its stockpile of low-enriched uranium.

An increasing stockpile and higher enrichment closes the estimated one-year window Iran would need to produce enough material for a nuclear bomb, something Iran denies it wants but the nuclear deal sought to prevent.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has rushed an aircraft carrier, B-52 bombers and F-22 fighters to the region and Iran recently shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone. On Wednesday, Iran marked the shootdown by the U.S. Navy of an Iranian passenger jet in 1988, a mistake that killed 290 people and shows the danger of miscalculation in the current crisis.

Speaking at a Cabinet meeting in Tehran, Rouhani's comments seemed to signal that Europe has yet to offer Iran anything to alleviate the pain of the renewed U.S. sanctions targeting its oil industry and top officials.

Iran's nuclear deal currently bars it from enriching uranium above 3.67%, which is enough for nuclear power plants but far below the 90% needed for weapon-grade levels. "In any amount that we want, any amount that is required, we will take over 3.67," Rouhani said.

Meanwhile on Wednesday, relatives of those killed in the 1988 downing of the Iranian passenger jet threw flowers into the Strait of Hormuz in mourning.

Iranian state television aired footage of mourners in the strait, as armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard fast boats patrolled around them. They tossed gladiolas into the strait as some wept.

The July 3, 1988 downing of Iran Air flight 655 by the U.S. Navy remains one of the moments the Iranian government points to in its decades-long distrust of America. The U.S. Navy's mistaken missile fire killed 290 people.

- AP