

## India, Russia want Iran to do more to clarify doubts

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who visited Tehran last month, shared his assessment of the Iranian nuclear crisis with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Monday and both leaders stressed that diplomacy and not force alone can resolve the issue.

The two leaders, however, agreed that Iran needs to do more to clarify doubts about the nature of its nuclear programme - that it could be for developing nuclear weapons.

'There is a real concern in both countries about what's going on in Iran. But there are big issues to be resolved there. Nobody has straight answers,' an official, who did not wish to be named, said on board the prime minister's special aircraft.

'Why does Iran need a nuclear enrichment programme? Nobody wants another nuclear weapons state,' the official, who accompanied the prime minister on his two-day trip to Moscow, said.

India and Russia have similar views on the Iranian nuclear issue as both are opposed to a nuclear weapons-armed Iran and back a resolution of the issue through dialogue, he stressed.

This was the first meeting between Manmohan Singh and Putin after the Russian President visited Tehran last month - the first trip to Iran by a Kremlin leader since World War II.

The Iranian issue figured prominently among a host of global issues discussed by the two leaders at their meeting Monday evening in Moscow that lasted two hours and 10 minutes.

Putin, after visiting Tehran, strongly opposed harsh sanctions and war threats against Iran. He also implicitly warned the US not to use a former Soviet republic to stage an attack on Iran - a reference to rumours that the US was planning to use Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic, to stage possible military action against Iran.

While going to Moscow, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told reporters aboard the special aircraft that India backed 'a peaceful negotiated settlement' of the issue.

India has voted against Iran in the IAEA twice but is opposed to sanctions and the use of force to resolve the crisis.

*Manish Chand* ( © IANS / India eNews)