

**Ahmadinejad says Iran has done nothing wrong**  
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HAVANA, Jan 12 — Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad flashed the victory sign and said Iran had done nothing to warrant enmity from its enemies after he arrived in Cuba yesterday amid heightened international tensions.

He said nothing about the bomb attack that killed an Iranian nuclear scientist in Tehran earlier in the day, which his government blamed on Israel and the United States, the leaders of international opposition to Iran's nuclear programme.

President Ahmadinejad at his Nicaragua stop before Cuba: With President Daniel Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo in Managua, January 11, 2012, where Ahmadinejad attended Ortega's swearing-in ceremony. — Reuters supplied pic  
Ahmadinejad was to meet with President Raul Castro later, but shortly after arrival in the Cuban capital he told students in veiled remarks at the University of Havana that Iran was being "punished" for no good reason.

"Have we assaulted someone? Have we wanted more than we should have? Never, never. We have only asked to speak about and establish justice," Ahmadinejad said.

Earlier, he declined to comment upon landing at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport, where he smiled and flashed the victory sign several times at reporters as he was met by Esteban Lazo, one of Cuba's vice-presidents.

Cuba was his third stop on a Latin American tour meant to show support from four leftist-led nations — Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Ecuador — as Iran is increasingly isolated by tightening Western economic sanctions.

The four countries are united with Iran primarily in their antipathy towards the United States, and political and economic ties with the Islamic Republic have expanded in recent years. They also have endorsed Iran's right to develop nuclear energy.

The international standoff over Iran's nuclear activities has hung heavy over Ahmadinejad's tour, although he and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez joked on Monday about having an atomic bomb at their disposal.

#### New sanctions

The United States slapped new sanctions on Iran on New Year's Eve, making it difficult for most countries to buy Iranian oil. The European Union is expected to follow with its own tough measures later this month.

In retaliation, Iran has threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz, which leads out of the Gulf and is the main export route for Middle East oil. The United States, with a large naval fleet in the area, says it will ensure the strait stays open.

Iran has said it is only developing nuclear capabilities for energy and other peaceful purposes, but the United States and its allies accuse it of wanting to create a nuclear

weapon.

The situation worsened with the death of nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, 32, who was killed yesterday by a magnetic bomb attached to his car in a busy Tehran street.

Three other Iranian scientists, at least two of whom were working on nuclear activities, were killed in 2010 and 2011 when their cars blew up in similar circumstances.

Iranian Vice-President Mohammad Reza Rahimi, in charge while Ahmadinejad travels, told Iranian state television "this terrorist act was carried out by agents of the Zionist regime (Israel) and by those who claim to be combating terrorism (the United States) with the aim of stopping our scientists from serving" Iran.

He said Iran's nuclear programme would go on.

The White House denied any US role in the car bomb attack and Israel has declined to comment. But the controversy overshadowed the display of Iran's ties with Cuba, which is just 145km from the United States, its long-time ideological foe.

Iran has granted several hundred million dollars in credits to Cuba, which the island has used primarily to get new Iranian-made train cars for its deteriorating rail system.

Trade between the two countries totalled US\$27 million (RM84.7 million) in 2009, down from US\$46 million the previous year, according to the latest Cuban government figures available.

The two also share the distinction of being two of the four countries on the US State Department's list of terrorism-sponsoring countries, the others being Syria and Sudan.

Before his speech, the University of Havana awarded Ahmadinejad an honorary doctorate in political science, saying he had strengthened relations with Cuba and other Latin American countries and "valiantly defended the right of his people to self-determination" in the face of international pressure.

It was not yet known if Ahmadinejad would visit former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, who is now mostly retired at age 85 but still meets occasionally with visiting foreign leaders.

He was to leave early this morning en route to Ecuador, the final stop of his trip. — Reuters

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