

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani in a message to his Zimbabwe newly elected counterpart Emmerson Mnangagwa congratulated his victory in recent election in the African country.

Zarif: World not interested in abiding by US anti-Iran sanctions

National Desk

The Iranian foreign minister said that the world is not interested in abiding by the US sanctions against Iran, adding that important countries are trying to stand against the sanctions.

Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters that measures taken by the European countries indicate that they are committed to the nuclear deal in both word and action.

Zarif said the European Union's move to activate the "blocking statute" on Tuesday and their consultations with different countries show that they are trying to save the 2015 nuclear deal, but it is important how far they would go.

The EU on Tuesday activated the blocking statute to safeguard its firms active in Iran against US secondary sanctions.

The sanctions, which took effect on Tuesday, prohibit Iran from using US currency. They also bar trading in cars, metals



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and minerals that include gold, steel, coal and aluminum. Iran will also be barred from buying US and European aircraft.

'Propaganda'

The Iranian foreign minister described US President Donald Trump's recent calls

for direct talks with Tehran as "propaganda." He said if they want to prove their sincerity, they should go back to the 2015 nuclear deal.

"The Americans have never been honest and Trump's move was propaganda," Zarif said.

"The main reason for it is that Trump has no concern for the Iranian people or international obligations," the top diplomat added.

"Trump's main goal is opposing the Iranian people (and what proves this is that) the first batch of sanctions relates to planes," Zarif said, adding that Iran had planned to receive 200 passenger planes but the purchase was canceled because of the US sanctions.

"The planes were to be used by the Iranian nation, so they are lying and their target is the Iranian people," he added.

The comments came after Trump last week voiced a willingness to meet with Iran's leadership, without preconditions.

President to attend Caspian Sea Summit in Kazakhstan

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani plans to visit Kazakhstan on Saturday to participate in the Caspian Sea Summit.

The two-day summit will be held in Kazakh city of Aktau on the eastern bank of the Caspian Sea, said Parviz Esmaili, an official

at presidential office on Wednesday.

Esmaili added that a number of cabinet members will accompany president during the visit.

The Iranian president will return to Tehran on Sunday, Esmaili said.

Iran labor minister fails to secure vote of confidence

National Desk

Iranian lawmakers voted Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ali Rabiee out of the government on Wednesday.

Of 243 votes, 129 were against the impeached minister, 111 for and three abstentions.

Rabiee, who had survived the impeachment vote twice, attended the Parliament's session after 40 lawmakers called for his ouster over his "poor performance."

The outgoing minister was blamed for the country's currency devaluation, unemployment rate and failure to handle the case of oil tanker Sanchi that sank in the South China Sea in January after a collision with the Chinese freighter CF Crystal.

The Iranian economy is grappling with high unemployment, a nose-diving rial, which has lost half its value since April, and the US reimposition of sanctions.

Last month, President Hassan Rouhani's cabinet replaced the central bank governor in a bid to address the problem.



IRNA

Over 200 sickened by dust storm in southeastern Iran

National Desk

Since August 6, 2,423 people have referred to hospitals in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, southeastern Iran, due to respiratory disorders caused by dust storms, a crisis management official said.

"These people suffered heart, breathing and ocular conditions and had to refer to hospitals and emergency centers," Reza Arbabi told IRNA.

"Only 40 of them, though, had to be hospitalized," he added. "The drought of Hamun Lake led to the dust storm, threatening the health of the residents of the province."

Meanwhile, a meteorology expert said on Wednesday that the concentration of suspended particles grew 16 times larger than

the standard limit – five times over the crisis limit.

"The figure has reached 2,486 micrograms per cubic meter," said Morteza Farajji.

The province is the second largest in Iran with an area of 180,726 sq. km and a population of 2.5 million.



IRNA

China, Germany defend...

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European countries, hoping to persuade Tehran to continue to respect the deal, have promised to try to lessen the blow of sanctions and to urge their firms not to pull out. But that has proved difficult: European companies have quit Iran, arguing that they cannot risk their US business.

Among those that have suspended plans to invest in Iran are France's oil major Total, its big car-makers PSA and Renault, and their German rival Daimler.

Danish engineering company Haldor Topsoe, one of the world's leading industrial catalyst producers, said on Wednesday it would cut around 200 jobs from its workforce of 2,700 due to the new US sanctions on Iran, which made it very hard for its customers there to finance new projects.

The chief executive of reinsurance group Munich Re said it may abandon its Iran business under pressure from the United States, but described the operation as very small.

Turkey, however, said it would continue to buy natural gas from Iran.

In Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told Iran Daily that a US plan to reduce

Iran's oil exports to zero would not succeed.

US officials have said in recent weeks that they aim to pressure countries to stop buying oil from Iran.

"If the Americans want to keep this simplistic and impossible idea in their minds they should also know its consequences," Zarif said. "They can't think that Iran won't export oil and others will export."

"The Americans have assembled a war room against Iran," Zarif said. "We can't get drawn into a confrontation with America by falling into this war room trap and playing on a battlefield."

Iran has dismissed a last-minute offer from the Trump administration for talks, saying it could not negotiate while Washington had reneged on the deal to lift sanctions.

In a speech hours before the sanctions were due to take effect on Tuesday, President Hassan Rouhani rejected negotiations as long as Washington was no longer complying with the deal.

"If you stab someone with a knife and then you say you want talks, then the first thing you have to do is remove the knife," Rouhani said in a speech broadcast live on national television.

Reuters and AFP contributed to this story.

Abadi: Iraq opposes US sanctions on Iran but will abide by them

Iraq does not agree with US sanctions against Iran but will abide by them to protect its own interests, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday.

Abadi said at a news conference that as a matter of principle, "We are against sanctions in the region," Reuters reported.

Blockades and sanctions destroy societies, he said.

"We consider them (sanctions on Iran) a strategic mistake and incorrect but we will abide by them to protect the interests of our

people. We will not interact with them or support them but we will abide by them," he added.

US President Donald Trump pledged on Tuesday that firms doing business with Tehran would be barred from the United States, as new US sanctions against Iran took effect.

The United States and Iran, increasingly at odds, are Iraq's two biggest allies, and the sanctions put Abadi's outgoing government in a difficult position.

Iran's Vaezi: Media's role crucial...

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We are required to attempt to be able to distinguish between correct and incorrect information."

Commenting on the new package of policies – expected to help strengthen Iran's national currency (the rial) which has lost nearly half of its value against the US dollar since March 2018 – unveiled by the Iranian government and the Central Bank of Iran, he said in addition to staples and drugs, pulp and paper have also been approved in this package to be imported using the dollar sold at the official exchange rate (42,000 rials).

"This is aimed at preventing any rise in the price of books and print media."

Vaezi described the country's present condition as critical, saying most of the problems

currently besetting Iran have been caused due to the psychological war waged by the triangle of US, Israel and Saudi Arabia against Tehran.

Nevertheless, the Iranian government is conducting its activities amid this psychological warfare waged against the country.

Government discourse

Prior to Vaezi, addressing the same gathering, Managing Director of Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) Zia Hashemi said the government's discourse reflects the people's demands and has been approved strongly by them. That is why in Iran newspaper and its affiliated papers, we defend this discourse, which is the discourse of the majority of the Iranian people.

OPINION

Clever diplomacy can secure Iran's interests

By Seyed Ali Khorram*

Amid the reimposition of US sanctions on Iran, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif once again touched upon Tehran's distrust toward Washington.

Meanwhile, an EU "blocking statute" took effect on Tuesday to nullify US legal action against European firms in connection with Iran.

Although the EU's move secures parts of Iran's interests, two main problems remain unresolved. The first is the United States' hostile approach toward Iran. The second is Washington's anti-Iran sanctions.

Iran should adopt a logical and clever approach to change the US diplomatic game into a game which could lead to the Islamic Republic's advantage.

Recently, experts have discussed US President Donald Trump's offer of talks with Iran. Some experts have called for giving a cautious response and voiced concerns about the plots which may have been hatched by his administration.

However, experts have failed to discuss ways which could help Iran benefit from the present circumstances through diplomatic methods.

It seems that analysts only believe that Iran should either continue to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) through Europe's support, or hold talks with the Trump administration. The analysts have also called for strengthening ties with Asian countries and Russia as another alternative in the wake of US sanctions.

I believe such approaches are wrong. Iran's foreign policy apparatus can follow four strategies in its talks with the world to benefit from ongoing conditions as the US continues to put pressure on Tehran via sanctions.

These four strategies include managing domestic economic problems; making efforts to minimize the impacts of sanctions; continue talks with the EU, China and Russia to preserve the JCPOA, as well as redoubling efforts to neutralize US hostility.

These four ways can be pursued simultaneously. In other words, taking one path does not mean that the other three paths cannot be taken.

I hereby explain the fourth strategy.

Carrot and stick policy

Trump has obtained good results through implementing its carrot and stick policy. Merely upon his announcement to reimpose sanctions, Iran's markets were adversely impacted. Through its economic power, the United States has been able to create chaos in the economic markets of other countries. Over the past days, the Turkish currency lost its value against the US dollar after Trump said he would impose sanctions on Ankara over a diplomatic row.

When Trump said he would be ready to hold direct talks with Iran, the country's currency and gold markets reacted positively.

During his talks with North Korea, Trump showed that the reaction of the media is more important to him than the content of negotiations.

Although sanctions have not been lifted on North Korea and Pyongyang has not abandoned its nuclear program, Trump wishes to convey the message to the media that he has achieved diplomatic success merely by holding talks with the North.

These talks, however, have eased pressure on North Korea. Now we should weigh the situation to see how we can take political advantage of Trump's show-off approach.

Bad cop, worse cop

Following Trump's offer to hold talks with Iran, all eyes are on the Islamic Republic's foreign policy apparatus. The outright rejection of his offer will have negative consequences for Tehran.

Americans have adopted a planned strategy to vilify Iran.

If Trump took the role of the "bad cop" by withdrawing from the JCPOA, his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo became the "worse cop."

In fact, Trump and Pompeo are pursuing the same scenario against Iran although the latter set conditions for talks with Iran after his boss spoke about talks without any preconditions.

Pompeo makes remarks which appear to run counter to Trump's statements. Pompeo wants to make an offer to Iranians which they will reject. He wants to convey the message to the world that Washington is interested in talks, but Iran is not.

Hence, Iran's foreign policy apparatus should exercise vigilance, and the Iranian nation should cement its unity to defuse the adverse impacts of such a scenario.

Defiance does not mean that Iran accepts the offer outright.

The US president resorts to bluffing, reversing realities, cheating and not showing his hand – the most efficient tactics in gambling. Since Washington has benefited from such tactics in its foreign policy, Iran can do the same.

One of the problems of Iran's foreign policy apparatus is that it publicly talks about its demands from talks, which is a wrong approach.

To sum up, clever diplomacy can turn Trump's offer for talks with Iran into a game which will secure the Islamic Republic's interests.

Seyed Ali Khorram is a former diplomat.