

A policeman was killed and another seriously wounded after armed men blew up a tanker truck carrying liquefied gas in the western province of Lorestan early on Wednesday.

Syria's stability among Iran's main goals: Rouhani

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Syria's security and stability is one of Iran's important regional and foreign policy objectives.

Speaking at a Wednesday meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem in Tehran, Rouhani described Iran-Syria ties as "brotherly and stronger than ever" and said the relationship will continue in line with the interests of both nations, president.ir reported.



"One of the important regional and foreign policy goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the stability and complete security of Syria... and the return of the people of this country to their normal lives," he stated.

Reiterating Iran's unwavering support for Syria, Rouhani also congratulated Syria on its triumph in the fight against terrorism, saying, "We have no doubt that your victory in the face of a grand plot in the region led by the US and some other countries is a triumph for both the Syrian nation and the entire region."

The Iranian president and the Syrian top diplomat praised the two countries' success in defeating the United States' plots targeting the two nations and the entire Middle East region.

The Syrian foreign minister said Iran had proven to be capable of defeating US plots thanks to its conviction and steadfastness, Press TV reported.

"Undoubtedly, the Islamic Republic's success in defeating such plots is a great victory for the entire region, including Syria," he noted.

Muallem said the Syrian government and people were grateful to Iran for its unstinting assistance in the war on terrorism, support for Syria's territorial integrity, and opposition to foreign occupation. Tehran has been lending military advisory support to Damascus since 2011, when the Arab nation found itself in the grip of militancy and terrorism fueled and funded by the US and some of its Western and regional allies.

Baghdad not to be part of anti-Iran sanctions: Iraqi PM

Iran, Iraq finalize payment mechanism

Compiled from Dispatches

Iraq will not be part of the anti-Iran sanctions, said Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi in a meeting with Iran's Central Bank Governor in Baghdad on Wednesday.

Abdolnaser Hemmati conferred with the Iraqi prime minister on the latest situation of banking and monetary relations between the two countries, IRNA reported.

Hemmati and his accompanying delegation also met the Iraqi President Barham Saleh, who called for the removal of barriers to economic and commercial cooperation between the Iranian and Iraqi private and public sectors.

The Iraqi President expressed his satisfaction with the agreement reached between the central banks of the two countries on Tuesday.

Iran and Iraq agreed on a payment mechanism that will enable the two neighbors to do business in the face of US sanctions on Tehran.

The mechanism was discussed in a meeting between Hemmati and his Iraqi counterpart Ali Mohsen Ismail al-Ala'i in Baghdad and the details were signed off on a document Tuesday night.

Hemmati arrived in the Iraqi capital on Tuesday to discuss banking relations and payments backlog related to Iran's gas and electricity exports to the Arab country, he wrote on his Instagram account.

Iraq is Iran's biggest trade partner, but their relations are increasingly coming

under pressure from the US which imposed unilateral sanctions on Tehran in May after abandoning an international nuclear agreement.

On Tuesday, Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh summed up the tricky situation.

"Every month, \$200 million worth of Iranian gas is exported to Iraq which does not pay it, saying you are under sanctions. At the moment, we have \$2 billion owed by Iraq for the gas and electricity sold to the country," he said.

Nevertheless, Iraq relies on Iran for electricity and consumer goods and trade ties are still strong.

Accounts in Iraqi banks

The governor of Iran's central bank said on Wednesday that Iranian traders can open accounts with Iraqi banks to carry out their transactions under the new payment system agreed between the two neighbors, Press TV reported.

"According to an agreement reached with the Central Bank of Iraq, Iranian exporters can operate through Iraqi banks, and in this regard, Iranian banks can have dinar-denominated accounts in Iraqi banks," he said.

Hemmati met Iraqi bank directors, members of chambers of commerce and traders on Wednesday, saying the two sides had reached "good agreements."

"According to the agreement, the Central Bank of Iran will have euro- and dinar-denominated accounts in Iraqi banks



and gas and oil exchanges will be carried out via these accounts," he said.

"Iraqi companies can also open accounts in Iranian banks and do trade in dinars," said Hemmati who also announced that he agreed with a request for Iraqi banks to open branches in Iran.

"Therefore, with these agreements and the blessing of the Iraqi prime minister, banking relations between Iran and Iraq will be much stronger, and the expansion of trade relations between the two countries will take shape on this basis," he added.

Gas imports from Iran generate as much as 45 percent of Iraq's 14,000 megawatts of electricity consumed daily.

Iran transmits another 1,000 megawatts directly, making itself an indispensable energy source for its Arab neighbor.

Basra was hit by violent protests which spread to other cities last summer, partly because of a halt of Iranian electricity exports.

Iranian officials have said the country is pushing forth with a 2025 vision plan to raise its exports to Iraq to \$20 billion a year despite US pressures on Baghdad to keep Tehran at arm's length.

Foodstuff, livestock, construction materials and plastic products constitute the bulk of Iran's exports to Iraq. Iranian vehicles and food items are a ubiquitous sight in Iraq.

Four contracts signed between Japanese government, Iranian NGOs

Four GGP contracts were signed between the Embassy of Japan in the Islamic Republic of Iran and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area of medical and healthcare at a total amount of \$22,459 by Mr. Toru Morikawa, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Embassy of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 February 2019.

"Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects" by the Government of Japan,

known as "GGP", mainly focuses on projects that are highly beneficial at the grass-roots level and are particularly effective when financed by small-scale assistance, which require swift humanitarian support.

The contracts signed between the two sides are given below:

1. The contract on granting a donation of \$18,183 to Kurdistan MS Patients Association regarding "The project for introduction of physiotherapy equipment for the

patients with Multiple Sclerosis in Kurdistan province".

2. The contract on granting a donation of \$70,912 to Kurdistan Diabetics Support Association regarding "The project for introduction of medical equipment for the underprivileged people in Kurdistan province".

for introduction of equipment for training and empowerment of destitute women with special diseases in Hormuzgan province".

"The Embassy of Japan has supported the projects proposed by various bodies such as NGOs and local governments, since 1999.



3. The contract on granting a donation of \$4,000 to Foundation Supporting Children Suffering from Cancer or Abandoned in Ardebil Province regarding "The project for introduction of medical equipment for the children suffering from leukemia in Ardebil province".

4. The contract on granting a donation of \$9,364 to Charity of Hormuzgan Special Patients regarding "The project

The Embassy of Japan in the Islamic Republic of Iran has carried out 140 projects in this country in the fields of primary education, medical care, public welfare, and rural development, so far.

The Government of Japan intends to further continue its assistance to NGOs and local governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the humanitarian and development fields.

Iran-EU talks on INSTEX in Paris soon

the sixth round of Iran-France political consultations with French Foreign Ministry Secretary

Iran and its three European partners in the 2015 nuclear deal will soon begin talks in Paris, France, in an effort to work out the operational details of a newly-launched financial mechanism meant to protect Tehran-Europe trade ties against US sanctions.

On a visit to Paris on Tuesday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi reached an agreement with French officials to hold a first round of expert-level discussions in the near future on the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchange (INSTEX), the official name of the non-dollar trade mechanism, Press TV reported.

The planned talks will involve Tehran and the three shareholders of the trade system, namely France, Germany and Britain. INSTEX was launched last week in a bid to protect European business links with Tehran by circumventing the US bans, which were reimposed against Iran last year following Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The mechanism has been registered in Paris and will be financed jointly by the three European countries and run by a German banker. It is initially intended to be used for selling food, medicine and medical devices to Iran, but it could be expanded to cover other areas of trade in the future.

Araqchi was in Paris to take part in

General Maurice Gourdault-Montagne.

They discussed the latest developments regarding bilateral relations, the JCPOA's implementation, INSTEX, France's commitments under the nuclear deal, regional issues and the fight against terrorism.

Speaking to Le Figaro, Araqchi announced Tehran and Paris had decided to exchange ambassadors in the near future, after a six-month break.

"After six months of absence of representatives of the two countries, the exchange will be carried out in the near future," he said on Tuesday.

France announced in September it would not name a new ambassador to Tehran due to what it described as a failed bomb plot against a meeting of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization terrorist group in Paris last June.

Iran has been accused by several European governments of having a role behind the plot. Tehran denies any role and officials have said the plot could be a false flag operation set up by Israel to damage Iran-Europe relations at a time when the US withdrawal from the nuclear accord has pushed them closer together. France's former ambassador to Iran, Francois Senemaud, departed in the summer. Iran is also yet to replace its departed ambassador to Paris.

There are speculations that Bahram Qassemi, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, will be appointed as Iran's ambassador to France.

Rouhani: Iran ready to accept US if...

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The US has always failed in its plots against Iran, be it its attempt to dismember Iran, coup, war and sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The United States' calculations about the Iranian nation, both before and after the revolution, have been wrong, he said.

The Iranian nation has proven to the world that it is following the right path, said Rouhani. "The Iranian nation stood and succeeded against the war, terrorism

and sanctions by relying on nation's power".

"We have made great progress in science, health and new technologies, he said. The Iranian nation has proved its commitment to and support for the people of the region.

Saddam invaded our country for eight years, but we were a safe place for the Iraqi and Kuwaiti people during the second Persian Gulf War, he said.

"We came to the aid of the nations of the region without expecting anything from them," Rouhani said.

In the coalition against Saddam, the United States was eyeing the Kuwaiti and Saudi money.

If it were not for our nation's support, the situation in Baghdad and Damascus would have been different today.

"We rushed to the help of any country that needed our help," he said. "We have proved that we are very accurate in signing a deal, but we live up to what we have signed".

Referring to Iran nuclear deal, he said, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA) is a symbol of Iran's commitment to international agreements.

We have lived up to our commitments more precisely and better than the other parties to it.

The United States made problems for itself, Iran, the region and the world by withdrawing from the JCPOA, Rouhani said.

Those who created al-Qaeda and ISIS tried to create a false Islamic revolution, but they realized their grave mistake, he said.

