

Rouhani congratulates Tokayev for winning Kazakhstan's presidential elections

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani congratulated Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on winning Kazakhstan's presidential elections, expressing hope for closer ties between Tehran and Nursultan in all fields.



In a letter to Tokayev on Tuesday, Rouhani congratulated the Kazakh politician on winning the presidential election, IRNA reported.

He also hoped that the relations between Iran and Kazakhstan would grow in all arenas during the new Kazakh president's term in order to serve their common interests and enhance regional peace and stability.

Tokayev, the governing party's chosen successor to Nursultan Nazarbayev, won nearly 71 percent of the vote on June 9, far ahead of his nearest rival Amirzhan Kosanov, who received only 16 percent.

Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's 78-year-old former Communist Party chief, announced in March that he was handing over his presidential powers to Tokayev, while retaining his posts as head of the country's Security Council and the governing party.

Iran releases

Lebanese-American citizen

Iran released Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese national with permanent US residency who had been imprisoned in Iran for espionage since 2015, Judiciary Spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili announced on Tuesday.

Zakka, 52, a Lebanese-born man, was arrested in Tehran in September 2015 while attending a conference on women and sustainable development, Tasnim News Agency reported.

The IT expert residing in Washington, DC, was convicted of espionage for foreign governments and sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2016.

His release from prison follows a whole series of diplomatic contacts and arrangements between the Iranian and Lebanese authorities.

Secretary General of the Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has reportedly played a mediatory role in the case.



Lavrov: Some Western states waiting for Iran to violate nuclear deal

Some Western partners want Iran to make a mistake and declare steps, which will be in breach of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear program, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told an international forum, the Primakov Readings, on Tuesday.

"As far as the prospects of preserving the JCPOA are concerned, a lot depends on the Europeans. I will be waiting with interest for a briefing on the outcome of German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas's trip to Tehran," Lavrov said, TASS reported.

"I'm not ruling out that some of our partners want Iran to make a mistake and declare certain steps that are not in line with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," Lavrov said, adding, "then someone in the West would breathe easily and shun the responsibility with a clean conscience."

"This will be very regrettable," Lavrov said, noting that he expects that Europe would be committed to the UN Security Council's resolutions.

Lavrov warned the international community against unreasonable attempts to isolate Iran.

"We want calm to return to this region. It is necessary to normalize relations between the Persian Gulf states, and also outside players should avoid fomenting differences," Lavrov said.

These are objective differences, but it's a bad sign that they are trying to shift them from an ideological and political perspective to a military angle, he noted.

"I hope that the Arab countries [of the Persian Gulf] understand that calls to bring the policy of isolating Iran to a military scenario are risky."

Lavrov noted that Russia had tirelessly urged creating a system of security and trust in the region.

"We are suggesting particular ideas, which will enable the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Iran to establish contacts between each other, alleviate mutual concerns and ensure transparency on issues of military construction and military drills," he explained.

Lavrov's remarks came amid heightened tensions between Iran and the US which has sent an air-



craft carrier to the Persian Gulf to counter what it claims a threat from Iran.

On Monday, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas paid an official visit to Tehran aimed at easing tensions between Tehran and Washington.

Tensions have worsened in recent months after the US unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement and its recent military buildup in the Persian Gulf.

US economic terrorism

Following its pullout from the JCPOA, Washington reimposed sanctions against Iran, a move that drew international criticism.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani told the visiting German top diplomat that the European countries must resist the US economic terrorism against the Iranian nation and live up to their obligations as per the nuclear deal.

"We expect Europe to stand up to and resist America's economic terrorism against the Iranian nation and fulfill its obligations in accordance with the JCPOA,"

Rouhani said, adding that following the US withdrawal from the deal, Iran could have done the same on the strength of Article 36 of the JCPOA, but rather decided to remain patient and give other signatories a chance.

The Iranian president said the US is pressing ahead with its policy of economic terrorism through "cruel sanctions," stressing that "we believe, in particular, that we must stand against those who block people's access to medicine and food."

"The war that the US has waged against Iran since a year ago, will not serve the interest of anybody and the Iranian nation has proved during this period that it will resist against pressure and bullying," Rouhani said.

The Iranian president added that the US restrictions on the imports of food and medicine to Iran are aimed at exerting pressure on the Iranian people and are in line with Washington's policy to foment insecurity in the region, saying, "Regional security will never be achieved through imposing pressure and sanctions on the Iranian nation."

Iranian FM, ESCAP chief discuss regional, global issues



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana discussed the latest regional and international developments in a meeting on Tuesday.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the first Asia Pacific Innovation Forum (APIF) which is underway in Tehran, IRNA reported.

In the meeting, both sides discussed ongoing bilateral, regional and international developments along with mutual interests.

Tehran plays host to 70 foreign participants from countries and international organizations around the globe.

Iranian officials described the event as a golden opportunity for introducing the country's potential on technology and innovation to the world, as well as establishing new cooperation links with the international community.

In an op-ed article, Alisjahbana lauded Iran's "means and will" for investment in environmental protection plans on the road to sustainable development, warning against ignoring environmental costs of economic growth in many parts of Asia and the Pacific.

She emphasized that Iran has the means and the will to achieve a balanced sustainable development by protecting the environment.

The UN official also referred to Asia and the Pacific as the world's most disaster-prone region with the most pressing need for an integrated and multilateral response to natural disasters.

The Indonesian professor of economics was appointed ESCAP's executive secretary in September 2018.

US says 'fine' with EU trade channel...

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The Europeans say INSTEX will apply initially only to non-sanctionable essential goods, such as humanitarian, medical, and farm products.

They have said it will function under the highest international standards with regard to anti-money laundering mechanisms, combating the financing of terrorism as well as EU and UN sanctions compliance.

US authorities are reportedly worried that other nations, including America's adversaries, could use INSTEX as a model

in the future and avoid the US financial system entirely.

"The development of INSTEX is really worrying for US sanction policy in the long run," Emma Ashford, a research fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, told Bloomberg. "INSTEX sets up a framework other countries can use in the future."

According to Suzanne Maloney, deputy director of the Brookings Institution, Washington's bid to crush INSTEX "does call into question what the long-term strategy here is" with

the US sanctions.

"If there's no room for humanitarian aid for Iran, literally no viable mechanisms for facilitating those transactions, then clearly this is purely a punitive strategy and one that is intended to wreak maximum havoc on the Iranian population."

The trade of humanitarian goods, such as food, medicine and medical devices, is theoretically allowed by the US, but European companies refuse to do business with Iran, fearing secondary American sanctions.

Reuters, AFP and Press TV also contributed to this story.

Petchem chief derides US sanctions on Iran

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The hub, being branded as Iran's second Assaluyeh, will be established in Hormuzgan Province, facing Oman and the UAE across the Persian Gulf, with a capacity to produce 15-18 million tons of petrochemicals a year.

"We will use the internal ca-

capacity to attract the private sector's investment in the form of BOO to expand the region,"

the head of Iran's state-owned mines and metal holding company IMIDRO Khodadad Gharibpour said.

In September, Iran brought online 3.4 million metric tons per year (mt/y) of new methanol, urea

and ammonia capacity at a cost of \$1.85 billion.

In the petrochemical sector, the country is seeking to build 25 projects which are estimated to require \$32 billion in foreign investment. The projects range from ammonia and urea to gas-to-olefins (GTO) and gas-to-propylene (GTP) plants.