



Rouhani calls for enhanced ties with Azerbaijan

IRAN DAILY



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Gibraltar wants to ease tanker standoff with Iran



Iran: UK shows interest in resolving issue

AFP

International Desk

Gibraltar said on Tuesday it was seeking to de-escalate issues arising with Iran since the detention of the Grace 1 tanker.

"We continue to seek to de-escalate issues arising since the lawful detention of Grace 1," a spokesman for Gibraltar said. The current detention order on the vessel expires on Saturday night, the spokesman said.

British Royal Marines seized the supertanker carrying Iranian oil on July 4 off the coast of the British Mediterranean territory of Gibraltar on suspicion of violating EU sanctions

by taking oil to Syria, which Tehran denies. Iran called the seizure of the ship "piracy" and warned it would not let the interception go unanswered.

On July 19, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps impounded the British-flagged Stena Impero oil tanker in the strategic Strait of Hormuz for breaking "international maritime rules".

Iran in touch with Gibraltar

Iran's port authority said Tuesday it has been in contact with British authorities as part of efforts to secure the release of the tanker.

A court in Gibraltar is to decide the fate of the ship on Thursday, when an order for its detention lapses.

Jalil Eslami, the deputy head of Iran's port authority, said that Britain had shown an interest in overcoming the problem and documents had been exchanged.

"Efforts from Iran and the port organization have been made for the release of this ship," he said.

"I hope this problem will be resolved in the near future and that the ship can continue its movement with the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Reuters and AFP contributed to this story.

Turkey, Iran resume train service after four years



INHA

Turkey and Iran have restarted a train service between Ankara and Tehran after a four-year hiatus, in a further blow to US sanctions.

Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (IRIR) Saeed Rasouli flagged off the Trans Asia Express from Tehran railway station for the Turkish capital which will run on a weekly basis every Wednesday. Carrying passengers and freight, the five-car train takes about 60 hours to arrive in Ankara, Press TV wrote on Tuesday.

The decision to resume the service came in May after meetings between Iranian and Turkish officials. Trains between the eastern Turkish city of Van near the Iranian border and Tehran resumed in late June.

The new service involves two train travel segments and a ferry journey. The IRIR train leaving Tehran will have a layover in the Iranian city of Tabriz before heading to Lake Van in eastern Turkey.

Passengers will then ride a ferry across the lake before taking a train operated by Turkey's state railway agency to Ankara.

The service marks yet another milestone in burgeoning trade ties between Iran and Turkey whose leaders have dismissed unilateral American sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Washington has been tightening the screws on Tehran's main source of income, aiming to cut Iran's oil sales to zero, after President Donald Trump reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic in November.

According to data released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce Industries Mines and Agriculture on Monday, Turkey imported \$2.2 billion worth of goods and services from Iran in the first quarter of the Iranian year which began in March.

The figure marked a five-fold jump compared to the similar period in 2018, it said.

Tehran and Ankara have repeatedly reiterated their resolve to increase annual trade to a target of 30 billion dollar, around triple current levels.

Earlier this year, Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mohsen Salehnia said Iran and Turkey were negotiating the possibility of setting up joint industrial parks.

"The Turks are demanding cheap Iranian energy for joint production and in case we manage to reach a conclusion with the ministry of energy, a joint town will be set up," he told a news conference in Tehran.

On Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for expansion of cooperation in various areas in a phone conversation.

Iran is one of the biggest oil suppliers for Turkey, which is almost completely reliant on imports to meet its energy needs. It also imports natural gas from Iran, the country's second largest supplier after Russia.

Turkey has said it is looking into establishing new trade mechanisms with Iran, like the INSTEX system set up by European countries to avoid US sanctions reimposed last year on exports of Iranian oil.

President Erdogan has previously slammed the sanctions, saying they are destabilizing for the region.

His country is also facing US sanctions over Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 missile defense systems, which has seriously strained relations between the NATO allies.

UN urges reluctant EU nations to help stranded migrants



AP

The United Nations refugee agency urgently appealed to European governments Tuesday to let two migrant rescue ships disembark more than 500 passengers who remain stranded at sea as countries bicker over who should take responsibility for them.

The people rescued while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa are on ships chartered by humanitarian aid groups, which the Italian government has banned from its territory. The archipelago nation of Malta has refused to let the ships into the country's ports, AP reported.

"It's unclear where they might find safe harbor, even though the Italian island of Lampedusa appears closest. About 150 of the rescued passengers have been on the Spanish-flagged charity ship, the Open Arms, since they were plucked from the Mediterranean 13 days ago.

"This is a race against time," Vincent Cochetel, UNHCR special envoy for the Central Mediterranean, said in a statement. "Storms are coming, and conditions are only going to get worse."

While the number of migrants reaching Europe by sea has dropped substantially so far this year, UNHCR says nearly 600 people have died or gone missing in waters between Libya, Italy and Malta in 2019.

The agency said many of the people onboard the ships "are reportedly survivors of appalling abuses in Libya." Cochetel said the ships "must be immediately allowed to dock" and their passengers "allowed to receive much-needed humanitarian aid."

"To leave people who have fled war and violence in Libya on the high seas in this weather would be to inflict suffering upon suffering," the envoy said.

The captain of the Open Arms, Marc Reig, sent a letter Monday to the Spanish Embassy in Malta asking Madrid to grant asylum to 31 minors on his ship. A senior Spanish official said Tuesday that Reig's request carries no legal weight because the captain doesn't have authority to seek protection for the minors.

Protester blockade triggers second day of Hong Kong airport chaos

Hundreds of flights were cancelled or suspended at Hong Kong's airport Tuesday as protesters staged a second disruptive sit-in at the sprawling complex, defying warnings from the city's leader who said they were heading down a "path of no return".

The new protest came as China sent further signals that the 10 weeks of unrest must end, with state-run media showing videos of security forces gathering across the border, AFP reported.

The crisis, which has seen millions of people take to Hong Kong's streets, was already the biggest challenge to Chinese rule of the semi-autonomous city since its 1997 handover from Britain.

But the two days of protests at the airport, one of the busiest in the world, raised the stakes yet again.

All check-ins were cancelled on Tuesday afternoon after thousands of protesters wearing their signature black T-shirts made barricades using luggage trolleys to prevent passengers from passing through security gates.

Scuffles broke out between protesters and travelers who pleaded to be allowed past.

"I want to shut down the airport just like yesterday so most of the departure flights

will be cancelled," a 21-year-old student said.

On Monday a crowd that police said num-



AFP

"Violence... will push Hong Kong down a path of no return," she said.

Lam, who faced fierce questioning from local reporters and at one point appeared to be on the verge of tears, appealed for calm.

"Take a minute to think, look at our city, our home, do you all really want to see it pushed into an abyss," Lam said, although she again refused to make any concessions to the protesters.

In an interview with the BBC, Hong Kong's last colonial governor Chris Patten agreed the city was "close to the abyss".

The protests began in opposition to a bill that would have allowed extraditions to the mainland, but quickly evolved into a broader bid to reverse a slide of rights and freedoms in the southern Chinese city.

Authorities in Beijing on Monday slammed violent protesters who threw petrol bombs at police officers, linking them to "terrorism".

On Tuesday state media upped the ante, calling protesters "mobsters", warning they must never be appeased and raising the specter of mainland security forces intervening. Meanwhile, videos promoted by state media showed Chinese military and armored vehicles appearing to gather in the southern city of Shenzhen, which borders Hong Kong.

The UN's rights chief on Tuesday voiced concern over police force used against protesters, and called for an impartial probe.

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