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Number 6387 • Tuesday January 14, 2020 • Dey 24, 1398 • Jamadi al-Awwal 18, 1441 • Price 20,000 Rials • 12 Pages • www.iran-daily.com • newspaper.iran-daily.com

## Rouhani urges collective efforts to de-escalate tensions



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### Political Desk

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday called for collective efforts to stabilize the region and reduce tensions.

"In the current situation, we should all strive for peace and stability in the region and work together to reduce tensions," Rouhani told Pakistan's visiting Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Tehran.

The president said "disagreement and division" in the Muslim world are "in no one's interest."

"We fully welcome Pakistan's efforts to promote peace and stability in the region," he said.

The Iranian chief executive warned that the breakout of a regional conflict "could be very dangerous," saying Iran does not seek to "ignite a war."

"Iran, while fully prepared to defend its own interests, never seeks to ignite a war," he said.

Rouhani stressed that "dialogue and close cooperation" among regional nations are in the interest of all.

He also expressed gratitude for Islamabad's solidarity with Tehran regarding Washington's assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani last week.

"The leaders of the United States and the Israel, along with leaders of terrorist groups

around the world such as Daesh, were happy with the assassination of Soleimani," Rouhani said.

"However, people who seek peace and security in the region were saddened [by the incident]," he added, calling on "all countries to firmly condemn Washington's act of government terrorism."

Qureshi said Pakistan believes the region cannot afford any more conflicts and that efforts should focus on preventing further escalation of tensions.

The Pakistani minister urged Rouhani to pursue diplomatic means to reduce tensions and resolve all issues amicably.

He also vowed that Islamabad

will not allow his country's borders to be used to threaten Iran and that Pakistan regards itself as "a partner in the peace and stability" of Tehran.

"We believe that the borders between the two countries are borders of peace and friendship," he noted, adding that Islamabad was determined to deal with those seeking to create insecurity in the border areas.

Tensions between Iran and the United States have spiked in recent weeks after the US assassinated the top commander in a drone strike in Baghdad, Iran retaliated by targeting two US bases in Iraq.

Press TV contributed to this story.

## Japan's Abe warns conflict with Iran will impact entire world



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Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo warned that military confrontation with Iran will affect global peace and stability, as he visited the Middle East in the hope of easing tensions spiked by the recent US assassination of a top Iranian general.

His comments came at the start of a five-day Persian Gulf tour after Tehran responded to the US attack on Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by launching a barrage of missiles at bases hosting American troops in Iraq last week, prompting fears of all-out war, AFP reported.

But as those concerns receded, the Japanese premier decided to go ahead with the visit and on Sunday discussed regional tensions during an hour-long meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in northwestern al-Ula Province, according to Foreign Ministry spokesman Masato Ohtaka.

"Any military confrontation in the region that includes a country like Iran will have an impact not only on peace and stability in the region but the peace and stability of the whole world," Abe said, according to Ohtaka.

Abe called "on all relevant countries to engage in diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions", Ohtaka added.

The spokesman said the two leaders agreed on working closely on maritime security in the region and discussed Tokyo's decision to send a destroyer for intelligence activities along with two P-3C patrol aircraft to the Middle East.

Japan, however, will not join a US-led coalition in the region.

Tokyo has walked a fine line in balancing its alliance with Washington and its longstanding relations and interests with Tehran.

Ohtaka said that Abe stressed the importance of a continuous and stable Saudi oil supply to Japan.

The prime minister's tour will also include visits to the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

## France, Russia want to safeguard Iran nuclear deal: Macron

France and Russia have a shared desire to safeguard Iran's nuclear deal, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday.

Macron said in a statement he had a phone call on Sunday with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Leaders of Britain, France and Germany on Sunday called on Iran to return to full compliance with a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and refrain from further actions.

"It is essential that Iran return to full compliance with its commitments under the agreement," Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

"The Europeans' call on Iran to fully comply with the nuclear deal stands in contrast to their failure to protect the Islamic Republic from unilateral US sanctions on Tehran after Washington abandoned the accord. Tehran has particularly been disappointed with the European trio's failure to protect its business interests under the deal after the United States' withdrawal. After patiently watching for more than a year and seeing no clear action from the other signatories of the nuclear deal, Iran invoked Articles 26 and 36 of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to let go of some of the limitations put on its nuclear work. In their statement Sunday, the European leaders said the Iranian countermeasures "must be reversed".

"We have made clear our regret and concern at the decision by the United States to withdraw from the JCPOA and to reimpose sanctions on Iran," they said.

"We remain committed to the JCPOA and to preserving it; we urge Iran to reverse all measures inconsistent with the agreement and return to full compliance," they added.

So far, Tehran has broken free of some limitations of the accord in five stages, the last of which came on January 5. The country has made it clear that it will reverse its measures as soon as Europe finds practical ways to shield mutual trade from the US sanctions. While Europe appears reluctant to rock the boat in its relations with Iran, it has dangled the threat of triggering a mechanism that could result in UN sanctions being reimposed on Tehran. European diplomats have been cited as saying that unless Iran passes a certain threshold, the bloc will not push toward sanctions, but it is unclear what the Europeans' breaking point would be.

In their Sunday statement, Europeans said they "remain ready to engage with Iran on this agenda in order to preserve the stability of the region".

Reuters, AFP and Press TV contributed to this story.

## Iran deems US expulsion from region as real revenge for its crime: VP

Iran's First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri says the real revenge for the US criminal act in assassinating top Iranian general, Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, is the expulsion of all American forces from the West Asia region.

Jahangiri made the remarks in a Monday meeting with the visiting Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis in Tehran, adding, "Unwarranted interference of Western countries, the US in particular, is the cause of insecurity and instability in the region."

"The United States has committed grave crimes across the region, especially in Iraq and Syria, through formation of such terrorist groups as Daesh," he added.

A US drone carried out an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport early on January 3, assassinating Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), as well as eight other people.

Jahangiri hailed the huge



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turnout of the Iranian nation in Soleimani's funeral processions as an "unprecedented event in history" and said Iranians now hate the US more than ever before.

He emphasized that the Islamic Republic will continue to stand by the Syrian government and nation and go on with its support for the Arab state, saying, "Iran supports Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty in order to establish stability and tranquility" in that country.

The Iranian first vice president expressed Tehran's interest in developing economic relations with Syria and stressed the importance of implementing agreements signed between the two countries during his visit to Damascus.

He said Iran's private sector is eager to play an active role in the reconstruction of Syria, expressing hope that positive steps would be taken this year in this regard.

During Jahangiri's trip to Damascus in January 2019, Iran and Syria signed 11 agreements, including a "long-term strategic economic cooperation" deal, in a sign of changing winds in the Middle East which is shaping up to new

realities. The Syrian prime minister said at that time that his country and Iran signed a "unique" and "historic" agreement which includes industry, trade and agriculture, calling it "a message to the world on the reality of Syrian-Iranian cooperation."

### 'US plotting war in region'

The Syrian prime minister, for his part, said the assassination of top Iranian general showed that the US is hatching plots to impose war on regional countries, adding that the bitter event was the outcome of US acts of aggression in the region.

"Syria emphasizes the Islamic Republic's right to defend itself against enemies' acts of aggression and we declare our solidarity with our brethren in the Islamic Republic of Iran," Khamis added.

He noted that regional nations would always remember Soleimani's great efforts in his fight against terrorism.

Khamis said the US is incessantly planning to attack regional countries, noting, "We

must maintain an adequate degree of readiness and boost our coordination and collaboration, because expansion of bilateral cooperation can play a deterrent role against the US plots."

Syria is trying to resist the enemies' plots through defensive, economic, military and diplomatic plans, the premier said, adding that his country will achieve final victory only through support of Iran and friendly countries in the region.

Khamis also said the assassinated Iranian general was posthumously awarded Syria's highest medal of honor by the Arab country's President Bashar al-Assad, which shows his high respect for Soleimani.

### Shamkhani: US behind regional insecurity

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, also met Khamis. He said insecurity will not end as long as the "terrorist forces" of the US are present in the region.

The senior official deplored the US targeted killing of

Gen. Soleimani and said "US President Donald Trump and his stupid advisers thought that by assassinating the brave commander of the Resistance Front, they would cause the collapse of the front in the region."

However, the move backfired and the blood of the martyr and his companions strengthened the Resistance Front and led to further hatred of the regional nations toward the US, he added.

"As long as the US' terrorist forces are present in the West Asia region, this region will not achieve lasting stability, peace and security," Shamkhani stated.

"The expulsion of evil US forces will undoubtedly take place through the unity of regional nations and governments," he went on to say.

The Syrian prime minister, for his part, offered his condolences on the martyrdom of Gen. Soleimani and said the noble objective of the martyr was to defend the oppressed against the US and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Press TV and Tasnim News Agency contributed to this story.