

Deputy FM: Iran's policy aimed at ensuring regional stability



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Iran's chief nuclear negotiator and deputy foreign minister for political affairs said "mutual political trust" is the key to the success of Iran's neighborliness policy, which is aimed at regional peace and prosperity.

Speaking at a meeting with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Muscat on Sunday, Ali Bagheri Kani cited the recent rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the result of Tehran's successful neighborliness policy, according to Press TV.

Praising Oman's constructive role, the senior diplomat said, "The agreement between Riyadh and Tehran to start a new era of relations showed that the neighborliness policy is the [Iranian] administration's smart strategy to secure the country's national interests and advance foreign policy goals."

"The key to the success of Iran's neighborliness policy is mutual political trust. The purpose of this strategic policy is to establish stability and calm in the region and enhance economic cooperation in order to promote development in all countries and prosperity for all regional nations," added Bagheri Kani, who is also Iran's lead negotiator in the talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

On Friday, following days of intensive talks in Beijing, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies seven years after relations were severed.

In a joint statement, Tehran and Riyadh highlighted the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another.

They agreed to implement a security cooperation agreement signed in April 2001 and another accord reached in May 1998 to boost economic, commercial, investment, technical, scientific, cultural, sports, and youth affairs cooperation.

The top Omani diplomat, for his part, welcomed the Iranian-Saudi deal, saying it will serve as a basis for strengthening the spirit of cooperation and greater interaction among regional states.

During the meeting, the two sides also exchanged views on bilateral and regional issues as well as regional negotiations to boost peace and security.

Earlier on Sunday, Bagheri Kani attended the ninth round of political consultations between Iran and Oman.

Leader: States under U.S. sanctions must join hands to destroy them



Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi (r) and his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko shake hands after signing a comprehensive cooperation roadmap in Tehran on March 13, 2023.

president.ir

The Leader noted that Iran and Belarus can cooperation in many areas, including science and technology, trade, and political activities in international organizations.

Referring to the issue of the North-South Transportation Corridor, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Launching the North-South Transportation Corridor will be to both countries' benefit and also [to the benefit of] Rus-

sia and [the entire] region, and both sides must strive to get it launched."

Raeisi remarks

In remarks during a press conference with his Belarusian counterpart earlier in the day, Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi said the Islamic Republic has turned the threats posed by unilateral sanctions into an opportunity to make significant progress.

"Iran has created an opportunity from the sanctions enforced on the country, and we have made remarkable progress despite the threats. We are ready to share our experiences with our friend Belarus," Raeisi said.

He added that both Iran and Belarus oppose unilateralism, and that is the way to neutralize sanctions and make progress. Lukashenko arrived in Tehran on Sunday at the invitation of Raeisi.

During their joint press conference, Raeisi also said that the two countries have had relations for three decades and the ties between them

have deepened during the current administration.

"Both countries are determined to improve their relations and trade," he noted, adding, "The economic relations between Iran and Belarus are not comparable to the past."

Raeisi also said that Iran and Belarus signed agreements in sectors such as industry, mine, trade, and agriculture, expressing hope that the agreements would pave the way for improved bilateral relations.

"We are determined to promote our regional and transregional relations with Belarus and had fruitful negotiations with the Belarusian president," Raeisi said.

He added that Iran and Belarus can enhance bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Lukashenko said, "It is a fact that no sanctions and pressure could stop Iran from progressing, and a strong Iran continues to

progress. Many documents were signed today; if we implement all of them, we can increase the annual trade between the two countries to \$100 million."

"Sanctions are opportunities and two countries should not miss these opportunities," the Belarusian president added. "The positions of the two countries are similar in international and regional issues, and both want a just and multipolar world," he noted.

Lukashenko also invited the Iranian president to Minsk. Prior to the press conference, the Iranian president and his Belarusian counterpart signed a roadmap for expanding comprehensive cooperation in addition to several agreements in various fields at a ceremony, according to Tasnim News Agency.

Ministers and high-ranking officials from the two countries also signed seven other cooperation agreements at the same ceremony.

The deals entail interaction in the fields of trade, trans-

portation, agriculture and culture, extradition of convicts, and implementation of plans on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries. Last month, the Belarusian president had expressed his desire to travel to Tehran to discuss bilateral issues and current international and regional issues.

"Since Iran has shown rapid economic and welfare growth in today's complex conditions, this country is considered an important player in the region and the international arena," he said in a February 11 message to Raeisi on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Belarus is a member of the EAEU, an international Russia-led economic union that plans to enter into a free trade arrangement with Iran.

Iran has been in a preferential trade agreement with the EAEU since 2019. The two sides have held five rounds of free trade negotiations in recent months.

Tehran: Iranian, Saudi FMs to meet soon

The Iranian and Saudi foreign ministries are making arrangements for a meeting between the countries' top diplomats in the near future. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remark in an address to a weekly press conference, commenting on a recent landmark agreement signed between Tehran and Riyadh in Beijing on the resumption of normal diplomatic relations, Press TV reported.

"Given the goodwill that exists, we hope that this meeting will take place in the near future and that the implementation of the [Iran-Saudi] agreement will be expedited," he added.

Kanaani noted, "There is no obstacle to the meeting of the two top diplomats, and God willing, the arrangements will be made through diplomatic channels." He said Iran's enhanced re-

lations with Saudi Arabia not only can help secure the interests of both nations, but also boost joint cooperation and convergence with the aim of consolidating peace and stability in the region, and the Persian Gulf in particular.

Kanaani said that boosting stability benefits all countries in the region.

The remarks came three days after Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to restore diplomatic ties and reopen embassies seven years after their relations were severed.

China mediated the rapprochement between the two Middle Eastern powers. "The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to return to their natural political relations can once again activate the two countries' high capacity in various fields," Kanaani said.

"By expanding their cooperation, Tehran and Riyadh can

help secure the interests of their nations. They can also have a positive effect on strengthening joint cooperation and convergence in the region in order to consolidate regional peace and stability, especially in the strategic Persian Gulf."

He also hailed China's important role in brokering the Iran-Saudi deal, noting that Beijing showed that it wants to contribute to the stability and security of the region as well as Asia with goodwill.

Kanaani also appreciated the constructive role played by Iraq and Oman regarding the Iran-Saudi pact, saying the two countries hosted almost eight rounds of talks between Tehran and Riyadh.

Asked about the recent visit by an Iranian parliamentary delegation to Bahrain, he said that the positive reactions to the Iran-Saudi deal show that the diplomatic breakthrough can

have positive effects on regional relations, including those between Iran and other countries, adding that Iran-Bahrain ties are not an exception.

The Islamic Republic's political will revolves around the neighborliness policy and the expansion of relations with the neighboring and Asian countries, the spokesman added.

"Fortunately, with the positive atmosphere that we are witnessing in the region, this positive development (the deal with Saudi Arabia) can happen in connection with other regional countries as well, including Bahrain. We should further trust the path of diplomacy and take steps in this direction," he explained.

Kanaani said that Iran already has a political relationship with Jordan, but stands ready to expand ties with the Middle Eastern state. "The

Islamic Republic's principled policy is strengthening relations with neighbors. We are definitely ready to develop ties with Jordan."

Prisoner swap

Also in his remarks, the spokesman said there is a written agreement between Iran and the United States on the exchange of prisoners.

"We already reached an agreement on some issues, including the exchange of prisoners, and a written agreement was formed last March. It was also signed by the American representative. The American side agreed that the prisoners swap should be done without negotiations on the lifting of sanctions, but at another time they tied the issue to the talks," Kanaani explained.

"We are ready for the prisoners exchange as a human-



AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

itarian issue. The problems of the American side are related to themselves. If the American side adopts a realistic approach, the exchange of prisoners can be done."

Referring to the Saudi war on Yemen, he said the end of the war on the impoverished country has always been one of the top priorities of the Islamic Republic.

"It is expected that the new positive atmosphere, which has been formed in the Iran-Saudi relations, will have positive and good results in the issue of Yemen."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Judiciary chief: 22,000 arrested during riots pardoned

National Desk

Iran has pardoned 22,000 people arrested during the recent riots in the country, said the judiciary chief.

Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei made the remark in an address to a meeting of the Judiciary's High Council on Monday, putting the entire number of the inmates having granted mercy at 82,000, according to mizanonline.ir. He added the figure is expected to increase.

Of the pardoned arrestees of the riots, Mohseni-Ejei said, some had been convicted

and some were waiting for their trials, stressing that a few number of them were in prison, with the majority released on bail.

In addition to the unrest's arrestees, 60,000 other individuals have also either been pardoned or seen their sentences commuted.

In February, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei pardoned or commuted the sentences of thousands of convicts, including large groups of detainees found guilty of involvement in the recent foreign-backed riots

in the country.

Riots erupted in Iran in mid-September when 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini died in a hospital in Tehran, three days after she collapsed at a police station. An investigation later attributed Amini's death to her pre-existing medical condition, rather than alleged beatings by the police.

Rioters went on a rampage, brutally attacking security officers and causing massive damage to public property. Dozens of people and security personnel were killed in the riots.