

Iran's Foreign Ministry official: Global efforts underway to challenge dollar hegemony

IRAN DAILY: Many experts believe the Iranian president's trip to Indonesia was in line with Tehran's 'Look East' policy. What is your assessment? What outcomes will the Islamic Republic derive from this visit?

MOHAMMAD BOROUJERDI: Indonesia has an important place in East Asia and the world. Hence, it is an important country for Iran. It has a population of nearly 300 million. Indonesia has the largest economy in East Asia, and has a major role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. ASEAN is comprised of major regional economies, which have established strong connections with the world's big economies. Since Iran is interested in a multipolar world, ASEAN is important for it. Presently, Indonesia is the 16th largest economy in the world. Estimates suggest that Indonesia will rank among the top ten economies in the world by 2030. These estimates also indicate the country will later rank among the top four economies in the world. That's why some call Indonesia 'a small China'.

Over the past years, Iran has developed ties with Indonesia but our trade transactions have mainly pertained to oil. Although the U.S. sanctions have minimized our oil exports, we have maintained a good level of non-oil transactions with Jakarta. Iran has never had any major political problems with Indonesia; the two countries have supported each other in international organizations.

Therefore, Indonesia is an important country for Iran. Raeisi's trip and, in particular, the economic aspects of his trip were also important. The two countries signed 11 memoranda of understanding and they will ink new deals in the future. In Indonesia, Raeisi announced that Tehran and Jakarta aim to increase bilateral annual trade to \$20 billion, which is indicative of the two nations' high potential. The two sides also put emphasis on efforts to eliminate foreign currencies in trade transactions, relying on national currencies. As a result, Raeisi's trip to Indonesia could be considered as his most important visit to a foreign country, given the fact that a new economic era has begun in relations between the two countries.

You said Iran's oil exports to Indonesia face restrictions due to U.S. pressure. Can U.S. sanctions pose obstacles to the implementation of documents signed between Iran and Indonesia? We cannot deny the impact of cruel U.S. sanc-

tions on Iran's economy. These sanctions have also adversely affected Iran's society. When financial transactions are restricted, humanitarian exchanges become impossible or at least difficult. But U.S. sanctions are unilateral while the entire world is not under U.S. domination. As you know, many countries and companies continue trade with Iran through various ways. The memoranda of understanding signed between Iran and Indonesia pave the ground for implementing cooperation deals. Without these documents, bilateral relations cannot be expanded. In any case, the U.S. is dissatisfied with the expansion of relations between Iran and other countries. But facts on the ground show that many countries do not link their activities to U.S. demands.

Apart from Iran, Indonesia has established good ties with China and Russia. Beijing and Moscow have also been under relentless pressure by the West, particularly the U.S. Is Iran seeking to create a new bloc to counter Western pressure?

We do not believe in a unipolar or bipolar world. Hence, we do not enter into any polarization because we see the world as diverse and multifaceted. In the multipolar world, each country, even if it considers itself a superpower, will fail to completely impose its will on the entire world.

The presence of blocs such as BRICS, ASEAN and Shanghai Cooperation Organization shows the diversity of the world in terms of power and the role of countries. Presently, some countries have surpassed the U.S. in economic fields; now, it is Washington that needs them.

Besides, many countries seek to eliminate the hegemony of the U.S. dollar due to global financial mismanagement. For example, a country in Latin America signs a deal with another country in South-East Asia to conduct trade via their national currencies. Such developments show that the world is moving toward multilateralism and overcoming the dominance of the dollar. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic is playing its role as a regional power.

In line with Iran's 'Look East' policy, two years have passed since Iran and China signed a long-term comprehensive cooperation agreement. Has the Iranian government's expectations been fulfilled?

The Iran-China long-term deal, known as the 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, was proposed during the Chinese president's trip to Iran in 2016, and it

was signed in 2021. This plan outlines the visions of Iran-China cooperation in the next 25 years and paves the way for the two countries to tap into each other's potential.

Has the government moved toward using these potentials and turning them into tangible deals?

Yes, the government has moved toward this path. According to the 25-year plan, long-term cooperation is comprehensive. In line with efforts to implement the plan, Iranian and Chinese officials have made mutual trips over the past two years. During each trip, a part of the cooperation agreement has been fulfilled. However, I do not deny the role of obstacles in the face of the implementation of the deal. When U.S. piracy and nuisance hamper financial exchanges, we naturally face hurdles. Despite such U.S. pressure and obstructionism, our oil and non-oil exports and, on the whole, the volume of our trade with the East and other regions across the world have increased. As a result, cooperation over the 25-year deal with China is moving forward on its natural path.

Some believe that the implementation of comprehensive cooperation deals depend on developing infrastructure, while lack of infrastructure makes it impossible to use the potentials of friendly countries. With regard to cooperation deals that were signed with Indonesia, don't we have any infrastructural problems?

The realization of foreign cooperation deals needs domestic infrastructure. A part of the necessary infrastructure pertains to software such as memoranda of understanding signed between countries. Another part is related to hardware such as transport system, services and customs. Some parts are also linked to administrative and legal affairs.

With regard to Indonesia, in my opinion, the most important infrastructure which is related to memoranda of understanding signed in the economic, trade, investment, agriculture, tourism, energy and IT sectors. So, I don't think the implementation of the MoU will face any special problems. This is because on this trip, available capacities in Iran were taken into consideration.

As an example, an Iranian medical robot was unveiled to perform remote surgery. This robot makes it possible to carry out surgery from an island in Indonesia on a patient who lives on another island in the country. Indonesians welcomed this robot. The success of this robot will encourage other countries to show enthusi-



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asm in using such Iranian medical equipment.

Raeisi's trip coincided with U.S. attempts to isolate Iran. Aside from the economic advantages, did the trip convey a special political message?

Although this trip conveyed political messages, it mainly focused on bilateral economic cooperation. The trip paved the way for promoting economic relations between Tehran and Jakarta. Raeisi's trip to Indonesia was multifaceted but paid special attention to economic aspects to ensure national interests. It also conveyed the message that the idea of isolating Iran is just a mirage.

What is your take on future economic ties between Iran and some other countries in Asia, such as Japan and South Korea? Relations between countries are defined on the basis of mutual interests. Our situations with Japan and South Korea are different from that of Indonesia. We have established relations with some countries in East Asia on different levels and, at the same time, have some problems with some of them. Our economic ties with countries that side with anti-Tehran sanctions face restric-

tions. However, efforts are underway to promote ties with these countries. I cannot foresee whether we will be able to promote cooperation with these states because relations between countries are based on bilateral interests.

Do you think Raeisi's recent trip to Indonesia will positively affect Iran's relations with other countries in South and East Asia?

There are obstacles to developing ties with some countries. For example, countries that have frozen Iran's assets (South Korea) under the pressure of others. The releasing of our assets is the first precondition for promoting ties with them. Iran has shown good will in dealing with these countries. We have also stressed that Iran has adopted an independent policy in line with ensuring its national interests. We have received positive signals from these countries, which show they wish to promote ties with Tehran. I believe that Iran's ties with other countries in South-East Asia will develop in the wake of the president's trip to Indonesia. This is because these countries have realized that attempts made at isolating Iran will not succeed.

U.S. sanctions are unilateral while the entire world is not under U.S. domination. Therefore, many countries and companies continue trade with Iran through various ways. Besides, many countries seek to eliminate the hegemony of the U.S. dollar due to global financial mismanagement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Erdogan defies predictions of political demise



REUTERS – President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defied forecasts of his political demise in Turkey's elections, rallying voters with a potent mix of religious conservatism and nationalism that looks set to propel his rule into a third decade on Sunday.

Though he has yet to clinch victory – Erdogan must first beat Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Sunday's runoff – his momentum has only grown since he emerged with a solid lead in the first round on May 14, and analysts fully expect him to win.

Russia says its border regions attacked

AP – Russia's southern Belgorod region bordering Ukraine came under attack Friday from Ukrainian artillery fire, mortar shells and drones, authorities said, hours after two drones struck a Russian city in an area next to the reunited Crimea Peninsula.

Moscow's forces, meanwhile, struck a building containing psychology and veterinary clinics in the city of Dnipro, in Ukraine, killing two people and wounding 30, Ukrainian officials said.

Sweden a European hub for drug smuggling



AFP – A port in southern Sweden has become a European hub for cocaine being smuggled from South America to the continent, Swedish customs warned Friday following several large drug seizures this year.

Swedish customs agents have seized 867 kilograms of cocaine at the Helsingborg port since the beginning of this year, the customs agency said, compared with the 822 kilograms seized in the whole of Sweden last year. Including seizures abroad destined for Helsingborg, a total of 1.3 tonnes of cocaine had been seized since September 2022.