

Turkey Will Not Abide by Sanctions on Iran: Envoy

ANKARA (Dispatches) -- Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Hakan Tekin has deplored new U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic as illegal, saying his country will not comply with the move.

"We will do our best to prevent Tehran-Ankara relations from being affected by the US sanctions against Iran," Tekin told the Anadolu news agency here. "We will not abide by anti-Iran unilateral and illegal sanctions," he noted. He underlined the important role of the Islamic Republic of Iran as Turkey's energy partner and said Turkey has imported nearly 50 percent of its crude oil from Iran.

Kayhan

International

Senior Cleric Urges Banking Reforms

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- A top Iranian clergyman on Friday called for a major reform of the country's banking system, saying the three branches of power should work together towards the common goal of boosting the country's economy.


Addressing Friday worshippers here at Friday prayers, Muhammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard echoed Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's call for boosting economy, and asked for a reform of the banking system.

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Viewpoint

Puppeteers Behind the Latest Terrorist Blasts

Renowned Iranian Actor Passes Away at 94



Iran, Top Asian Football Team in Latest FIFA Ranking



Zionist Regime's New Construction Plan 'Declaration of War'



Imran Khan Elected Pakistan's New Prime Minister

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) -- Pakistani lawmakers elected former cricket legend Imran Khan prime minister on Friday and he pledged to bring to justice "all those who have robbed this country" through corruption.

Parliament's move cleared the way for the 65-year-old Khan to set up a coalition government and his first major task will be to avert a brewing economic crisis after his party swept to election victory on July 25.

Khan saw his party sweep to victory in a July 25 general election promising to fight corruption and lift millions of people out of poverty.

Khan has promised to create millions of jobs and build world-class hospitals and school systems in the mainly-Muslim country of 208 million people.

Among his first challenges will be to decide whether to request an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout to ease currency pressures, or seek support from China.

"I want to thank the people and I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to bring change," Khan, wearing a black waistcoat over traditional white shalwar kameez robes, said in a speech in parliament. "First of all we have to do strict accountability," Khan added. "Those who have robbed this country, I will hold each and every one of you accountable."

Khan's election was only the second democratic transfer of power since Pakistan's 1947 independence, and came at a time when relations with on-off ally the United States are fraying.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party holds 151 of the 342 seats in the lower chamber of parliament, short of a majority, but is expected to form a coalition govern-

ment with smaller parties.

In Friday's lower house vote, Khan garnered 176 votes to defeat Shehbaz Sharif from the outgoing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, who won 96 votes. Khan, who will be sworn in on Saturday, has yet to announce his cabinet.

His success in the election ended decades of political dominance by two dynastic powerhouses, the PML-N of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), founded and led by the Bhutto family.

But Khan will face a battle to push through his ambitious reforms and legislative agenda due to the thin majority in the National Assembly. The Senate, parliament's upper chamber, is controlled by the opposition.

How Khan addresses historic civil-military tensions that have dogged successive governments could define his term.

No Pakistani premier has ever completed a five-year term in office, including Sharif, whose most recent stint in power was ended by the Supreme Court last year.

Sharif, who was jailed over corruption accusations several weeks before the election, saw his second stint in power ended by a military coup in 1999.

The economy is likely to preoccupy Khan's first few months in office, with his administration facing a battle to reduce a ballooning current account gap and a high fiscal deficit, which shot up to 6.8 percent of GDP in the 12 months to end of June.

Earlier this week Asad Umar, widely expected to be appointed Finance Minister, told the English-language Dawn newspaper that Pakistan turning to the IMF would be a "fallback option" and that all other possibilities are being explored.

Trump Threatens New Sanctions, Ankara Vows to Respond: U.S.-Turkey Ties at Crossroads

ISTANBUL (AFP) -- Turkey Friday threatened to respond if the United States levied further sanctions over the detention of an American pastor, which has sparked a diplomatic standoff and battered the Turkish currency.

"We've already responded based on the World Trade Organization rules and will continue to do so," Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan was quoted as saying by the state-run Anadolu news agency.

Washington warned on Thursday that it would impose more sanctions unless pastor Andrew Brunson, described by U.S. President Donald Trump as a "hostage", was released.

Brunson's detention since October 2016 on terror-related charges has soured relations between the two NATO allies, sending the Turkish lira into a tailspin.

The lira, which earlier this week traded at well over seven to the dol-

lar, was at 5.8 against the dollar and 6.7 against euro on Friday.

Last week, Trump tweeted that his administration was doubling aluminum and steel tariffs for Turkey, and in response Ankara sharply hiked tariffs on some U.S. products.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin suggested Thursday the next spiral of tit-for-tat sanctions was coming soon, in a sign of a deepening spat.

Trump prefaced Mnuchin's remarks by saying that Turkey had not been a very good friend to America. "They have not proven to be a good friend," Trump said of Turkey during the Cabinet meeting. "They have a great Christian pastor there. He's an innocent man."

The dispute over Brunson and other frictions between Washington and Ankara have been one reason the Turkish lira has plunged 40 percent this year.

U.S. Forms 'Iran Action Group'



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announces the creation of the Iran Action Group at the State Department, in Washington, Aug. 16, 2018.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a new high-level team on Thursday to focus U.S. and international efforts to increase diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran.

The Iran Action Group will drive Washington's "maximum pressure" strategy, including potentially sanctioning other countries

which trade with the country.

The group will be headed by Brian Hook as the State Department's Special Representative for Iran.

Hook, currently director of policy planning at the State Department, was in charge of the failed effort to get support from U.S. allies for Washington's decision in May to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal.

The U.S. has laid out a long list

of activities it demands Tehran changes, including halting support for the Syrian government and the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, shutting down its nuclear development program, and freeing detained Americans.

"We want to be closely synchronized with our allies and partners around the world," Hook said.

Hook said that Washington is

stepping up its effort to get other countries to fall in line with economic pressure on Tehran, including the crackdown on Iran's oil trade, financial sector and shipping industry announced for early November.

"Our goal is to reduce every country's import of Iranian oil to zero by November 4."

"We are prepared to impose secondary sanctions on other governments that continue this sort of trade with Iran."

Critics of the administration's approach suggested that Hook's new position was a sign the U.S. was adopting a policy of regime change in Iran, something that Pompeo and other officials have denied.

Some critics noted that the creation of the Iran Action Group was announced during the 65th anniversary of the five-day period in 1953 in which former Iranian Prime Minister Muhammad Mossaddeq was overthrown in a U.S.- and British-backed coup.

Hook said the timing was "pure coincidence" and rejected comparisons between the Iran group and an earlier State Department initiative known as the "Future of Iraq Project" that was undertaken when U.S. policy was to promote the downfall of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Over 350 Newspapers Blast Trump Attacks on Press

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) -- Hundreds of U.S. newspapers devoted print space on Thursday to a coordinated defense of press freedom and a rebuke of President Donald Trump for saying some media organizations are enemies of the American people.

The Boston Globe and the New York Times took part in the push along with more than 350 other newspapers of all sizes including some in states that Trump won during the 2016 presidential election.

The Globe said it coordinated publication among the newspapers and carried details of it on a database on its website.

Each paper ran an editorial, which is usually an unsigned article that reflects the opinion of an editorial board on a particular subject and is separate from the news and other sections in a paper.

The Globe's editorial accused Trump of carrying out a "sustained assault on the free press."

"To label the press 'the enemy of the people' is as un-American as it is dangerous to the civic compact we have shared for more than two centuries," the Globe's

editorial said.

Trump has frequently criticized journalists and described news reports that contradict his opinion or policy positions as fake news.

In February 2017, for example, he tweeted that "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American people!"

The New York Times editorial said it is right to criticize the news media for underplaying or overplaying stories or for getting something wrong in a story.

"News reporters and editors are human, and make mistakes. Correcting them is core to our job," it said. "But insisting that truths you don't like are 'fake news' is dangerous to the lifeblood of democracy. And calling journalists the 'enemy of the people' is dangerous, period."

In January, U.S. Senator Jeff Flake, a Republican from Arizona, said Trump had embraced the despotic language of former Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

"The true enemies of the people -- and democracy -- are those who try to suffocate truth by vilifying

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North Korean Leader Slams 'Brigandish' Sanctions

SEOUL (Dispatches) -- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attacked "hostile forces" over "brigandish" sanctions, state media reported on Friday, as Washington seeks to maintain pressure on Pyongyang over its nuclear program.

Kim and United States President Donald Trump held a groundbreaking summit in Singapore in June, which the U.S. leader touted as a historic breakthrough.

But there has been little movement since and the North has criticized Washington for its "gangster-like" demands for complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament.

The U.S. has urged the international community to maintain tough sanctions on Pyongyang, and the U.S. Treasury this week announced measures against Russian and Chinese companies for alleged violations.

On a visit to the construction site of the Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist area, Kim rebuked what he called "hostile forces" for "trying to stifle the Korean people through brigandish sanctions and blockade," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Wonsan-Kalma is a vast development on the North's east coast, which Kim ordered to be ready by Oct 10 next year, an important public holiday which marks the founding of a precursor to the ruling Workers' Party of Korea.

North Korea recently accused the United States of trying to force other countries to strengthen their sanctions enforcement and to block high-level delegations from attending the September events.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who is to visit Pyongyang in September for his third summit with Kim, said the upcoming summit would mark a "bold step" toward a formal declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War.

Moon also talked about potential joint economic projects between the Koreas. He mentioned the resumption of joint tours to North Korea's scenic Diamond Mountain resort, restarting operations at a joint factory park in North Korea's Kaesong and also potential projects surrounding inter-Korean railways and development of North Korea's natural resources.

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