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Cuba, Iran Discuss Jointly Countering U.S. Sanctions



Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian (3rd L) and Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz (3rd R) meet in Tehran on May 14, 2022.

TEHRAN -- Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian on Saturday hit out at broad and unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran and Cuba, saying the two countries should make use of their experience to counter the bans.

Amir-Abdollahian met Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, who is in Tehran to take part in the 18th session of the Iran-Cuba joint economic committee.

The Iranian foreign minister described Cuba as a strategic partner for the Islamic Republic and called for improvement of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

He said their joint economic committee would provide the two countries with an appropriate opportunity to discuss ways to enhance economic and trade relations and political cooperation.

Tehran and Havana also enjoy

a proper level of cooperation on health and treatment, particularly the joint production of COVID-19 vaccine, Amir-Abdollahian said, emphasizing that the Iranian administration is determined to implement previous agreements and sign new contracts with Cuba.

Cabrisas, for his part, hailed Iran's constant support for Cuba in the face of the U.S. sanctions.

He said their economic committee would help the two countries boost strategic relations to serve their common interests.

Last month, Cuban Ambassador to Tehran Alberto González Casals hailed his country's "best" cooperation with Iran not only in the production of vaccines against COVID-19 but in biotechnology and many other fields.

"We are in the best conditions to cooperate with the Iranian counterpart not only for vaccines...but in

many ways in biotechnology. Biotech is important for us. We have excellent scientific people like Iran has and we find proper ways to cooperate in both things," González told Press TV.

The U.S. has maintained a harsh economic, financial, and commercial embargo against Cuba for more than 60 years. Numerous resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly have indicated that the blockade is against international law. However, Washington has consistently voted against UN resolutions demanding an end to the sanctions against Cuba.

U.S. President Joe Biden vowed during his campaign to reverse some of his predecessor Donald Trump's Cuba measures that "have inflicted harm on the Cuban people and done nothing to advance democracy and human rights,"

Iran Beats Both COVID-19 and U.S. Sanctions

TEHRAN -- After a spirited fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, lasting more than two years, the new virus map released by Iran's health ministry has brought a big cheer to people across the country.

In a daily health bulletin, the ministry announced 385 new infections and eight fatalities.

However, what is remarkable is how the color of the nationwide coronavirus map has transformed, with no red or orange zones visible anymore.

While no city is currently marked in the "high-risk" red category, the cities in the "moderate-risk" orange category have also dropped from 4 to 0, according to the latest updates.

The number of cities with "low-risk", marked as yellow, has also decreased from 319 to 259 cities

on the latest map, as a testament to the successful fight against the pandemic that has wreaked havoc across the globe.

The highly-contagious delta and omicron variants of the pandemic, which fueled the surge in infections and deaths in Iran in recent months, have almost faded, according to health experts, taking the shape of normal flu.

The fight against the cataclysmic virus in Iran, however, has not been an easy one, because the Western powers left no stone unturned in weaponizing it against the Iranian nation.

When the first cases of the virus were detected in Iran in February 2020, the U.S. and its allies, instead of extending a helping hand, tightened the screws of cruel sanctions and created seemingly insur-

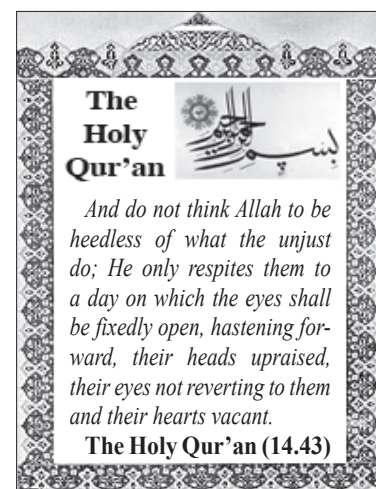
mountable hurdles for the country.

The sanctions-battered country was among the worst-hit countries in the region in the first few months of the pandemic, before it caught the industrialized nations in the West in its ominous grip.

Incidentally, the worst-affected country in the world from the pandemic has been the United States, which initially used it as a weapon to punish the Iranian nation.

While Iran has in total recorded around 7.23 million cases and 141,000 deaths, in the U.S. a total of 82.3 million infections and around 998,000 deaths have been registered since the outbreak.

Adversity often turns into an opportunity, and Iran demonstrated it by manufacturing indigenous vaccines to defeat the disease, especially after the leader of the Is-



The Holy Qur'an
And do not think Allah to be heedless of what the unjust do; He only respites them to a day on which the eyes shall be fixedly open, hastening forward, their heads upraised, their eyes not reverting to them and their hearts vacant.
The Holy Qur'an (14.43)

PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	13:01
Evening (Maghreb)	20:23
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	05:59
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	04:21

but has yet to make good on that pledge.

Iran has also been targeted by U.S. unilateral sanctions in contravention of international law.

Back in May 2018, the U.S. began to unilaterally impose sanctions against Iran after the former left the 2015 Iran agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The U.S., under former president Donald Trump, launched what it called a maximum pressure campaign against Iran at the time, targeting the Iranian nation with the "toughest ever" sanctions.

Back in July, Iran denounced the U.S. and some other Western countries for interfering in Cuba's internal affairs, urging Washington to immediately end its unilateral sanctions against Havana and other nations.

"For more than six decades, Cuba has been facing extensive U.S. sanctions which have complicated the country's economy and living conditions of its people, especially at the time of the coronavirus pandemic," Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said.

lamic Revolution refused to take vaccines from the U.S. and UK, citing a lack of trust.

The World Health Organization (WHO) also acknowledged the success of those efforts at a time when the country faced severe restrictions on supply of drugs and medical equipment from abroad because of crippling US sanctions.

According to the health ministry data, 64.42 million Iranians have received at least one dose of the vaccine, while 57.69 million have received two jabs, and more than 27.28 million have got booster shots.

Dr. Mostafa Ghanei, a member of Iran's national coronavirus vaccine committee, in an interview with Press TV, said the country has highly accurate test kits today to

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IRGC Confiscates Ship Smuggling Fuel

In a separate incident, the Navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) seized a vessel and detained its four crews for smuggling thousands of liters of fuel in the Persian Gulf.

Mojtaba Ghahramani, head of the Justice Department of Iran's southern province of Hormozgan, said Saturday that the IRGC Navy forces intercepted a vessel carrying more than 42 thousand liters of fuel.

"All four crew members will remain in custody during the inves-

igation process and the ensuing legal procedure," he added, but did not provide any details on the nationality of the confiscated vessel.

"Such criminal acts by fuel smugglers will not go unpunished by the judiciary system, and the perpetrators of such crimes will be penalized heavily and without clemency," Ghahramani said.

Vessels carrying smuggled fuel are subject to seizure and forfeiture according to the law, he said adding, the smugglers are punished by jail sentence and paying fines.

The IRGC Navy has foiled several attacks on Iranian and foreign tankers alike.

In April, IRGC confiscated a foreign vessel smuggling 220,000 liters of smuggled fuel in Parsian sounty, south of Hormozgan and arrested the entire crew members.

During the second such seizure in less than a week from the first event, IRGC announced that a ship, smuggling 250,000 liters of fuel, had been confiscated.

The incidents came after a series of seizures of smuggler vessels by Iranian Navy forces in the sea lanes serving the Persian Gulf, where a large portion of the world's oil is produced and shipped.

In November 2021, the IRGC announced the seizure of a foreign boat carrying 150,000 liters of smuggled diesel and the arrest of 11 foreign crew members.

The force released detailed footage of its confrontation on October 25, 2021 with an American act of piracy targeting an Iranian fuel shipment.

During the episode, U.S. forces confiscated the tanker that was carrying a cargo of Iranian oil in the strategic Sea of Oman, transferring its consignment of crude to another vessel.

The IRGC then staged a maritime operation against the second vessel, landing its helicopters on its deck and navigating the ship towards Iranian waters.

Top Security Official Shamkhani: U.S., Europe Squandered Luxury of Iran Goodwill

TEHRAN -- Iran says negotiations on the revival of the 2015 nuclear agreement can bear fruit if the West has the will to return to the landmark deal.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said the several rounds of negotiations held in the Austrian capital of Vienna over the past year have failed to bring the U.S. back into compliance with the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The Vienna talks have reached a stage where the knot can only be untied through the adherence of the violator party to Iran's logical and principled approaches," Shamkhani said.

"The United States, by breach of promise, and Europe, by inaction, scuttled the opportunity to benefit from Iran's proven goodwill. If they have the will to return, we are ready and an agreement is within reach," he added.

Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian said Iran and the

P4+1 group of countries still have the opportunity to reach a "good and reliable" agreement if the United States makes the necessary decision and honors its commitments.

Amir-Abdollahian made the comments following his phone conversations with European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and meetings with his deputy Enrique Mora.

Mora, who was in Tehran on a two-day visit this week, met with Amir-Abdollahian and Ali Bagh-

eri Kani, the chief Iranian negotiator to the Vienna talks. They discussed efforts to salvage the deal, which has been on life support since the U.S. withdrawal in 2018.

The U.S. administration, under former president Donald Trump, unilaterally left the JCPOA in May 2018 and launched a maximum pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic, despite the latter's full adherence to its commitments under the deal.

Since April 2021, several rounds of talks between Iran and the five

remaining parties to the JCPOA -- Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia -- have been held in the Austrian capital to bring the U.S. back into the Iran deal. The Vienna talks, however, exclude American diplomats due to their country's withdrawal from the deal.

Talks have been on hold since March as the U.S. insists on its refusal to undo past wrongs, including remove Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) from its foreign terrorist organization list.