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## IRAN OFFICIALLY JOINS ASEAN

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The bill which supported Iran's accession to the ASEAN was referred to the Expediency Council (EC) after the Guardian Council found some problems with the Parliament's approval in this regard but it was finally approved by the EC on July 7 after removing differences.

Iran is due to sign a cooperation treaty with the ASEAN in a move which could lead to wider economic cooperation between the country and East Asia.

Singapore's non-resident Ambassador to Tehran Ong Keng Yong was quoted by media as saying that the treaty would be signed at an upcoming gathering of ASEAN's foreign ministers.

Ong said Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif would sign the document at the event that would open in Singapore on July 30.

"The ASEAN countries welcome anyone who wants to sign onto the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, Ong said.

The treaty would come only two months after US President Donald Trump pulled the US out of an international nuclear agreement with Iran.

Trump announced on May 8 that Washington would no longer remain part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and promised to re-impose the highest level of economic sanctions against Iran.

The sanctions reinstated on Iran on May 8 included boycott of Iran's crude supplies and bans on transfer of its crude revenues. There is a 180 days interval before these sanctions come into effect. Other US secondary sanctions are reinstated this month.

After Trump's declaration, the Iranian government issued a statement, calling the US withdrawal as "unlawful". The statement underlined Iran's prerequisites for continuing the deal with the five world powers. These conditions that were reiterated later by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei later mainly included Iran's guaranteed crude sales and transfer of its revenues back home.

Two months later, the other five powers party to the nuclear deal have failed to satisfy Iran. President Rouhani voiced his disappointment over a recent package of incentives proposed by the European Union countries to Tehran, and said that the Islamic Republic expected a much better, clearer and explicit stance by the EU.

"Unfortunately, the EUs package of proposals lacked an operational solution and a specific method for cooperation, and featured just a set of general commitments like the previous statements by the European Union," President Rouhani said in a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on July 5.

President Rouhani pointed to US' unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal, and said, "After the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran has been dealing with economic issues and problems in banking relations and oil, and foreign companies that have invested in Iran are skeptical about continuing their business."

The Iranian president, however, said that the package proposed by the three European countries (the UK, Germany, and France) on how they are going to live up to their commitments and cooperation under the JCPOA was disappointing.

President Rouhani reiterated that the JCPOA was a mutual commitment, and said, "Iran had expected a clear plan from the three European countries after the two months time they have been given to come up with solid guarantees to ensure Iran's economic interests would continue to be met despite US pullout and reinstatement of sanctions."

The Iranian president, however, said that Tehran would continue cooperation with Europe if the outcome of the July 6 Vienna talks would be promising.

If the process of the European foreign ministers meeting in Vienna, which is aimed at encouraging Iran to cooperate, is promising, we will continue our cooperation with Europe, Rouhani added.

But the Vienna talks on July 6 among foreign ministers from Iran and the five world powers (Russia, China, Germany, France and Britain) failed to satisfy Iran with senior officials in Tehran complaining that the Europeans had offered nothing new to ensure Iran's continued merits under the deal.

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/middleeast/top-stories/iran-officially-joins-asean/ar-BBKVhZk>

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