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'We don't have political problems with India': Iran's Zarif urges Delhi to defy US sanctions & resume buying Iranian oil

17/01/2020



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has called on India to shirk Washington's "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign and continue sourcing its energy from the Islamic Republic, arguing it's in the country's best interest.

While on a four-day visit to India, Zarif insisted Iran could best meet New Delhi's oil needs, assuring that his country would keep politics out of its business dealings and remain a reliable partner.

*"For India's economic growth you need more and more energy and energy security, which has been an area of concern," Zarif said at a meeting of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) on Thursday. "I can assure you that you can't find an energy partner which is more stable, more reliable than Iran."*

***We never involved politics in our energy relations. And if we did, we don't have political problems with India. We are the secured source of energy for India.***

US President Donald Trump has endeavored to exert "maximum pressure" on Iran's economy in the wake of Washington's unilateral pull-out from the nuclear pact signed with Iran and other world powers in 2015 – explicitly aiming to drive the country's petrol exports down to "zero." Since then, Washington has also sought to browbeat allies out of dealings with Iran, coercing

India last year to halt its imports of Iranian crude altogether. While Delhi caved to the pressure, Indian officials have expressed a desire to resume the previous arrangement, buying 300,000 barrels of Iranian oil per day.

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Barred from its first-best option, India was soon forced to boost imports of American crude to make up for shortfalls – a situation that's apparently worked out just fine for American oil firms, who are slated to make a killing off the captive market created by the US sanctions regime.

That fact was not lost on Zarif, who said on Thursday that Washington was looking to *"increase the prices of oil and energy"* for its own gain.

*"Now that the US is the biggest exporter of oil, they want to take the Iranian [market] share in Asia through the sale of their shale gas, which is much more expensive and much less reliable energy,"* the FM observed.

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The top Iranian diplomat also took direct aim at the *"maximum pressure"* campaign during the FIEO meeting, calling it an attempt to *"ensure that the people of Iran starve."*

*"We won't beg the US [for permission] to eat,"* he added.