Europe Sends Medical Gear To Iran In First Sanction-Bypass Deal

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Berlin: European nations have delivered medical goods to Iran in the first transaction under the Instex mechanism set up to bypass American sanctions on Tehran, the German foreign ministry said Tuesday.

"France, Germany and the United Kingdom confirm that Instex has successfully concluded its first transaction, facilitating the export of medical goods from Europe to Iran. These goods are now in Iran," the ministry said in a statement.

The first successful transaction comes over a year after Britain, France and Germany announced the creation of Instex, months that have been marked by Iranian chafing against European delay.

"Now the first transaction is complete, Instex and its Iranian counterpart STFI will work on more transactions and enhancing the mechanism," Berlin said.

Britain, France and Germany were among a list of countries that Iran reported receiving medical aid from earlier this month as it battles a serious outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

On Monday, the number of cases in the country passed 40,000, and the government warned the epidemic could run for several more months and cost over 10,000 lives.

Some 2,757 people have already died in Iran from the coronavirus.

Tehran's struggle to bring the virus' spread under control has been made more difficult by US sanctions.

The blockade was re-imposed under President Donald Trump after he withdrew from a 2015 deal in which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear activities in exchange for easier access to global trade.

But the European sanctions-skirting scheme aims to keep the nuclear deal alive, holding Iran back from developing a bomb.

Supreme leader Ali Khamenei said last week that Iran would not accept help from Washington after Trump offered aid at the end of February.

The American proposals "to help us with medicines and treatments, provided we ask for them, are strange," he said, calling the US Iran's "most ferocious and vicious enemy".