

Netanyahu win ups chances of peace: Trump



US President Donald Trump has congratulated Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on his election victory. (AAP)

US President Donald Trump says the chances for peace in the Middle East have improved after Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu won a fifth term in a close election.

US President Donald Trump has phoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to congratulate him on his re-election, Netanyahu says, thanking his ally for “tremendous support for Israel”.

Netanyahu tweeted that Trump had called him from Air Force One. The president was on a flight to Texas.

Netanyahu secured a clear path to re-election on Wednesday, and a record fifth term in office, with religious-rightist parties set to hand him a parliamentary majority despite a close contest against his main centrist challenger.

“Trump warmly congratulated (me) and the Israeli people,” Netanyahu tweeted on Wednesday.

“(I) thanked President Trump for his tremendous support for Israel, including recognition of Jerusalem and the Golan,” he said.

Breaking with decades of US policy and international consensus, Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in 2017 and Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights last month.

Trump moved the US embassy to Jerusalem last May, further angering Palestinians.

Netanyahu said that, in the telephone call, he also thanked Trump for designating

Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation on Monday.

In remarks to reporters at the White House on Wednesday, Trump said Netanyahu's re-election improved the chances of peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Everybody says you can't have peace in the Middle East, with Israel and the Palestinians," Trump said.

"I think we have a chance. I think we have now a better chance with Bibi having won," he said, referring to Netanyahu, who leads the conservative Likud party, by his nickname.

"He's been a great ally and he's a friend. I'd like to congratulate him on a well-thought-out race," Trump said.

During the election campaign, Netanyahu highlighted his close relationship with Trump, erecting billboards showing the two leaders smiling and shaking hands.

A team led by Trump's adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner has been working on an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, but has not disclosed details.

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said: "Israelis have voted to preserve the status quo. They have said 'no' to peace and 'yes' to the occupation."

The Palestinians demand a full return to the borders that existed before the 1967 war when Israel seized the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu said on Saturday that he would annex Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank if he won another term in office.

The last round of US-brokered peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians collapsed in 2014.

SOURCE AAP

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