

Iran's four-month imports of basic goods top 7 m tons: IRICA



Economy Desk

Iran imported over seven million tons of basic goods worth \$4.763 billion during March 21–July 22 period, according to figures released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The statistics also indicated that exports from Iran fell by eight percent in the four months to July 22 compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

IRICA figures showed that Iran's exports reached a total of \$15.906 billion in March–July, down 7.97% against the same period in 2022.

The figures also indicated that Iranian export shipments had risen by 28.56% in value terms year on year over the four months to late July to a total of \$45.758 million tons.

Petroleum products accounted for a bulk of shipments exported from Iran in March–July, with liquefied petroleum gas sales generating \$1.633 billion in revenues over the period, followed by liquefied propane at \$1.14 billion and liquefied butane at \$0.823 billion, revealed IRICA figures.

China remained the largest customer of Iranian export commodities over the first four months of the Iranian calendar year with \$4.644 billion worth of purchases, followed by Iraq at \$2.927 billion and Turkey at some \$2 billion, the customs data showed. IRICA said imports into Iran had risen by 6.18% in volume terms and by 10.82% in value terms year on year in March–July to reach 11.842 million tons worth \$19.539 billion.

Main commodities imported into Iran over the four months to late July included animal feed corn worth \$1.29 billion worth of shipments, followed by mobile phones at \$0.7 billion and soybeans at \$0.647 billion, it said.

The customs figures showed that the United Arab Emirates, the largest re-exporting center in the Persian Gulf, had been the largest supplier of goods to Iran over the four months to late July with \$5.818 billion worth of exports, followed by China at \$5.558 billion and Turkey at \$2.09 billion.

Iranian carpets reign supreme in global quality, beauty Rivals market their products as Iranian rugs



By Sadeq Dehqan

Staff writer

Iran's tradition of crafting handwoven carpets boasts a rich historical legacy, securing its top position globally in terms of both quality and aesthetic allure. A significant archaeological revelation was made at a site called Pazyryk, unearthing the world's most ancient handwoven rug. This artifact, dating back three millennia, stands as a testament to the Iranian mastery in carpet weaving.

The worldwide association of handwoven carpets with Iran is an unmistakable fact. The very mention of Iran conjures images of these exquisite creations, a recognition unparalleled and unchallenged by any nation. The identity of Iran is intricately woven into these pieces, such that international conceptions of the country frequently intertwine with thoughts of its iconic handwoven carpets.

However, recent years have seen India ascend to the forefront of the global carpet trade, displacing Iran from its long-held position. The competition in the realm of handwoven rug production and export is fierce, with India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Turkey vying for prominence alongside Iran. These rivals strategically capitalize on Iranian designs, mimicking local patterns and styles, all while marketing their products under the Iranian carpet banner.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Ahmad Karimi Esfahani, the head of Iran's Union of Handwoven Carpet Exporters, says despite



IRNA

the shifting landscape, Iranian carpets "continue to reign supreme in terms of quality on the global market".

He underscores the disconcerting trend of competitors leveraging Iranian designs without appropriate acknowledgment, a practice that blurs the lines between authenticity and imitation.

"India, for instance, markets its wares as 'Kashan Indian' or 'Isfahan Indian,' notwithstanding the absence of any connection to these Iranian locales," the businessman said.

The period spanning 1979 to 1995 witnessed handwoven carpets constituting a substantial share — approximately 40-45% — of Iran's non-oil exports. During this era, the export value of Iran's handwoven carpets reached a \$1.75 billion annually, a substantial fraction of the country's total

non-oil exports valued at \$4 billion.

Esfahani traces a decline in handwoven carpet exports after 1995 to various hurdles, including restrictive trade regulations and shifting customer preferences. A diversification in rug styles worldwide challenged the traditional notions of carpets, prompting a decline in demand. This shift culminated in a gradual reduction in Iran's handwoven carpet exports, currently amounting to \$50-55 million annually.

Resolving impediments tied to exportation, including issues arising from sanctions and financial transactions, is deemed crucial by Esfahani. He asserts that without a resolution to these challenges, remarkable growth in exports remains elusive. However, optimism is kindled by the prospect of overcoming these hindrances, potentially cat-

apulting current export figures to multiple times their current standing.

The businessman emphasizes a crucial aspect that Iranian authorities must consider to bolster exports: effective market regulation. This measure aims to ensure that carpet weavers are not confronted with shortages of essential raw materials, thereby obviating the need to resort to chemical dyes in their productions.

"A hallmark of Iranian carpets lies in their utilization of natural and herbal hues and materials, underscoring the significance of preserving this tradition." A diverse array of nations spanning the Western and European regions, Central Asia, East Asia (including Japan), and even African countries comprise the traditional clientele for Iranian handwoven carpets.

Esfahani highlights the

urgency of expanding into new markets for Iranian carpets, suggesting that the economic attachés in Iranian embassies across the globe should intensify their efforts.

He said several export destinations have been curtailed due to multifarious reasons, including sanctions, necessitating the pursuit of alternative markets to offset such losses.

The handwoven carpet sector of Iran stands as a cornerstone of sustainable employment generation across villages and cities across Iran. Esfahani highlights a striking statistic: approximately two million households in Iran rely on handwoven carpets for their livelihoods. Given an average household size of four individuals, the economic sustenance of nearly 10% of Iran's population is either directly or indirectly linked to the handwoven carpet industry.

Gov't to pay more subsidy to 29m Iranians: Deputy minister

Economy Desk

A sum of 29 million Iranians to receive more subsidy under the new plan of Iran's Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare.

Speaking in a press conference in Tehran on Sunday, Alireza Asgarian, the deputy labor minister for welfare and economic affairs, also said that his ministry is cooperating with 90,000 markets across the country to implement the new subsidy plan.

"Eight large chain stores across the country cooperate with the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare in the implementation of the economic



Alireza Asgarian, the deputy labor minister for welfare and economic affairs, speaks at a press conference in Tehran on August 6, 2023. IRAN DAILY

project," the official noted. Asgarian added that the main goal of implementing the subsidy plan is to ensure people's needs.

The more purchase Iranians make, the possibility of identifying and solving the problems of the plan increases, he said, noting that in the future, there is

a possibility to add other groups as beneficiaries of the plan.

The official concluded that 11 main products of milk, cheese, eggs, chicken meat, edible oil, rice, dairy products, beans, pasta, sugar, and frozen beef have been included in the subsidy coverage of the ministry.

Parliament greenlights free trade zone on Afghanistan border

Iranian lawmakers approved a bill to establish the Dogharoon Special Economic Zone on the Iran-Afghanistan border.

In a Sunday session of the Iranian Parliament, the legislators discussed a report compiled by its Economy Committee concerning a bill to set up the Dogharoon Special Economic Zone. The bill along with its notes was passed with 160 in favor, 18 against, and 10 abstentions, IRNA reported.

According to the bill, the Iranian government is allowed to set up the zone in Razavi Khorasan Province. The Dogharoon Special Economic Zone will be

managed in accordance with the notes mentioned in the law and on the basis of the law to regulate the management of free trade zones in Iran, which was approved on August 29, 1993. Furthermore, any change in the ratified articles of the law should be proposed by the cabinet and approved by the parliament.

Also in the session, the outline of a bill to establish the Mazandaran Free Trade-Industrial Zone was approved.

The outline of a bill to set up the Sarakhs Free Trade-Industrial Zone was also approved in Sunday's session.