

Raisi inaugurates several projects in southern Iran



During his second visit to Fars Province, President Ebrahim Raisi inaugurated many development and infrastructure projects in various sectors.

The Shiraz-Isfahan freeway as well as eight major water transfer projects were among the most important inaugurated projects, according to president.ir.

With a total length of about 213 kilometers, the freeway has been constructed in six segments.

With the completion of the project, in addition to advantages including reducing fuel consumption, the route from Shiraz to Isfahan and the north of the country, in general, has become 135 kilometers shorter.

The inaugurated transport projects also included several rural and main roads, road maintenance, safety projects, fixing accident-prone areas, and technical building maintenance projects.

The launch of the second line of potable water transfer from Dorudzan Dam to Shiraz, with a total length of 78 kilometers, was one of the water projects which contribute to meeting the water need of 40 percent of people in Shiraz.

Arriving in Shiraz on Thursday on a two-day visit to Fars Province, Raisi was accompanied by members of his cabinet.

During the president's visit, over 100 road transportation projects and 20 infrastructure projects in industrial parks as well as over 900 gas supply projects were inaugurated.

Oil Minister Javad Owji inaugurated the first phase of a refining project in the city of Mohr on Friday.

Having a capacity of refining 6.6 million barrels of gas condensates per year, the plant is among the nine biggest refineries of the country.

The first phase project, which was implemented by the private sector, creates 200 direct job opportunities.

The plant is in the immediate vicinity of Parsian Gas Refinery and Parsian Sepehr Ethane Extraction Complex.

The construction of the refinery started in September 2014, but the executive operations had halted due to some obstacles.

Development of the Pasargad Steel Complex in the city of Kavar was another project that was inaugurated by Industry, Mine, and Trade Minister Abbas Alibadi during the provincial visit.

The projects include gas supply to two cities and 63 villages, as well as 330 industrial projects in the gas industry.

Iran to play role of gas hub: *Owji*



Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji (R) attends a specialized session of the 6th Russian Energy Week International Forum in Moscow on October 12, 2023. **SHANA**

Iran is the safest and cheapest route for energy transit to international waters, said Iran's oil minister on Thursday, underscoring that the global energy market cannot deny Iran's key role.

In addition to its rich energy resources, Iran is located at a suitable geographic position, connecting Asia to Europe, and the only land route between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, stated Javad Owji, adding that some countries around Iran are oil and gas exporters and some importers, and such conditions make it easier for Iran to play the role of an energy hub, Shana reported. Owji, who addressed a specialized session of the

6th Russian Energy Week International Forum in Moscow said that considering its natural resources and northern neighbors, Iran is the leading player of energy trade in the Middle East and can turn into a gas hub.

Iran is currently exporting gas to Turkey and Iraq, he said, while Pakistan and India are potential customers of Iran's gas. Trading and swapping crude oil, oil products, and petrochemicals have given Iran a special status, he mentioned. Import and export terminals, as well as oil and gas transmission pipelines are indicative of Iran's great capacity for turning into the region's energy hub.

Gas supplies discussion

Speaking at the plenary session of the Russian Energy Week, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tehran is discussing the possibility of Russian gas supplies with Moscow.

"Iranian partners are also discussing with us the opportunities of Russian gas supplies to the Iranian market," Putin said. Preparatory activities for the North-South corridor project are close to the end, and construction can start shortly, the Russian president noted.

"We have agreements with all the participants in this process: relevant docu-

ments are in place with Iran, and with Azerbaijan. Turkmenistan is showing interest from the other side of the Caspian Sea, and Kazakhstan," the president added.

Putin remarks on Iran-Russia energy swap welcome

Owji welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks on increasing energy exchanges between the two countries, as his reaction came during his meeting with Russian energy giant Gazprom's Alexei Miller.

Pointing to his meeting with Russian Deputy Minister Alexander Novak, Owji called

for taking practical steps to create a gas hub on the northern coast of the Persian Gulf. Miller, for his part, pointed to growing relations between Moscow and Tehran, expressing Gazprom's readiness for further cooperation with Iran.

Gazprom to help gas hub creation

Gazprom will explore the issue of potentially creating a gas hub in Iran, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in an interview with RT Arabic, adding that Moscow will participate in the project if it has potential.

"I think that our Gazprom Company will explore the issue, and if it is indeed a potentially good project it will participate in it, of course. And Russia as well. But it is necessary to assess and explore it," he said.

Earlier reports said that Iran, with the participation of Russia, Qatar and Turkmenistan, planned to create a gas hub in the industrial region of Asaluyeh in Bushehr Province.

Asaluyeh serves as the production hub for the world's largest oil and gas field, which is located in the central part of the Persian Gulf, in Iranian and Qatari territorial waters. The total geological reserves of the field are estimated at 53 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, and 7.7 billion cubic meters of condensate. The recoverable reserves are estimated at 35.6 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, and three billion cubic meters of condensate.

Iran says it has access to unfrozen funds in Qatar, rejects reports otherwise

Iran rejected a report that says the country had been barred from accessing its \$6 billion fund, recently unfrozen and transferred to Qatari banks.

"There has been no change in the issue of Iran's access to its foreign exchange resources in Qatari banks and the agreement [reached in this regard] remains in force," Nour News, which is affiliate with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, the Washington Post reported that US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo had told House Democrats that American officials and the Qatari government had agreed to stop Iran from accessing a \$6 billion

account in light of a surprise attack by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group against Israel.

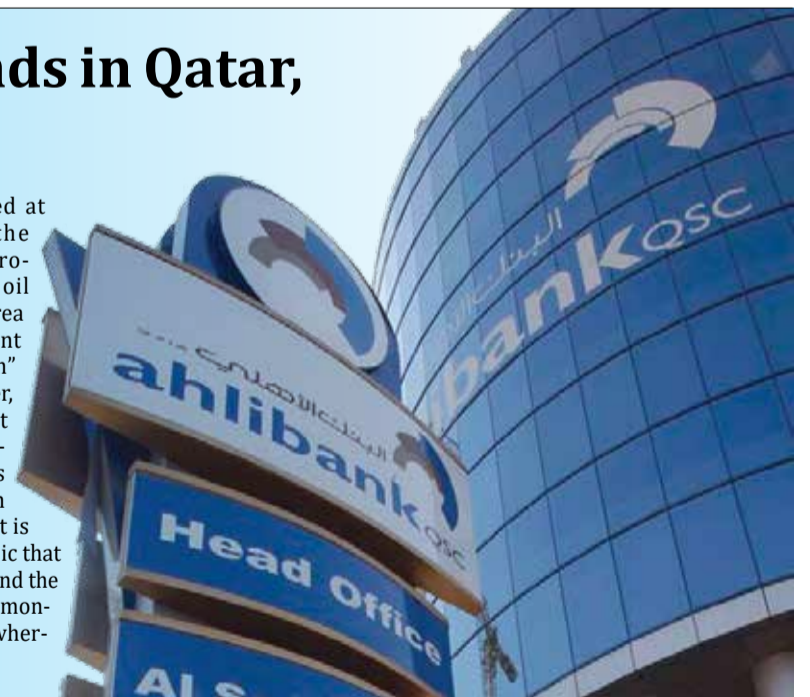
Adeyemo's remarks were cited by two people who were speaking on the condition of anonymity.

In August, Iran and the United States agreed to a Qatar-brokered deal to secure the release of some \$6 billion of Iranian funds that had remained blocked in two South Korean banks since 2018, under the pretext of US sanctions.

The money was successfully transferred last month to accounts held by six Iranian banks in Qatar's Ahlibank and Dukhan Bank.

The administration of US President

Joe Biden claimed at the time that the funds and the proceeds of Iranian oil sales to South Korea could only be spent on "humanitarian" purposes. However, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi underscored Tehran's full authority on its assets, saying it is the Islamic Republic that decides how to spend the funds and that the money will be spent "wherever we need it".



Iran's sponge iron production rises almost 6%

Economy Desk

Production of sponge iron in Iran increased by about six percent during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 21-September 22), compared to the related figure of the past year.

The sponge production during the six months to September 22 was about 18.85 million tons, 5.9%

up from last year's output of 17.8 million tons, according to ISNA.

Sponge iron, also called direct-reduced iron (DRI), is produced from the direct reduction of iron ore (in the form of lumps, pellets, or fines) into iron by reducing gas or elemental carbon produced from natural gas or coal. Many iron ores are suitable for direct re-

duction.

Also, 4.75 million tons of steel sections were produced in Iran during the six-month period, which is a 4.8% increase compared to the same period last year.

Steel production volume during the first six months of the current Iranian year witnessed a 3% surge compared to the same period last year.