

Iran's ceramic, tile production at 720m cubic meters



Over 140 ceramic and tile production units are currently active in Iran, producing 720 million cubic meters of products each year, announced the head of Iran Ceramic Producers Association (IRCPS).

"Today, all kinds of ceramic tiles in different sizes and designs are produced in the country, as the production technology of the ceramic tile industry has been localized," Morteza Saftarizadeh told IRIB News.

He said the private sector's efforts to have a serious presence in the industry has resulted in the increase of production by domestic manufacturers, as there are 120,000 people working directly in the industry.

The official pointed to cheap energy, the existence of rich mines and the development of related industries in the supply chain as the advantages of the industry, noting that such advantages have made the production more cost efficient.

According to Saftarizadeh, currently, Iran is the fifth-largest producer of ceramic tiles in the world, and more than 46 percent of the country's total production is exported.

Iran, Armenia sign MoU on workforce exchange, economy

Economy Desk

Tehran and Yerevan inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Tuesday to cooperate in the fields of labor exchange, technical and professional training.

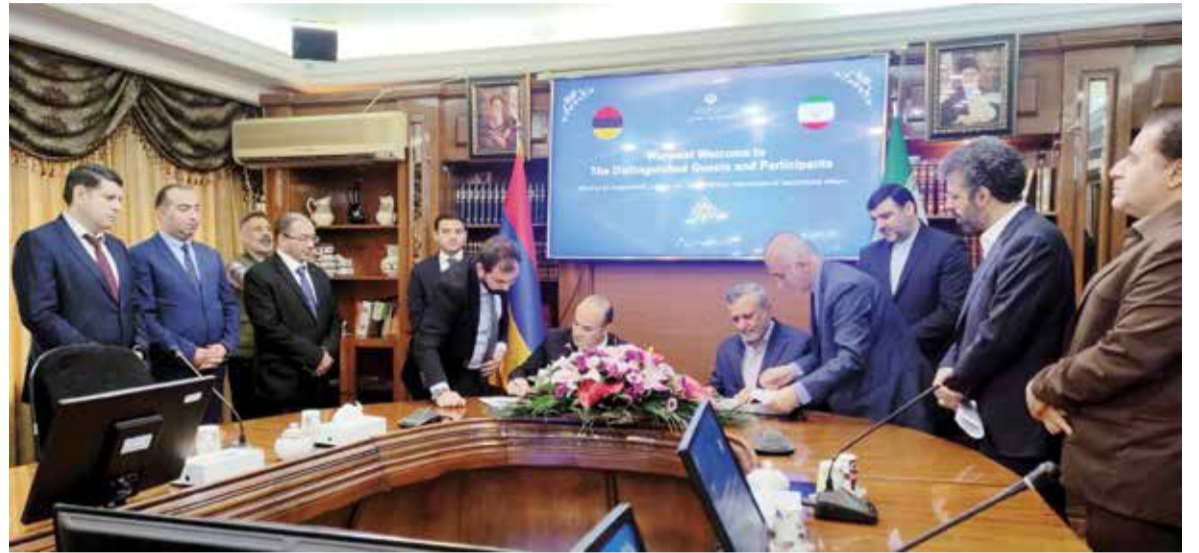
Signed by Iranian Labour and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi and his Armenian counterpart Narek Mkrtchyan, the MoU also covers economic cooperation between the two countries in the fields of petrochemicals, road and construction materials, and medicine, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a meeting with Armenian delegation in Tehran, Mortazavi said, "Iran is fully prepared to send workforce to Armenia while establishing techno-vocational training centers in the country, as

well as transferring experiences to empower the disabled and war victims." Referring to the rise in the economic exchanges between the two countries, the Iranian minister said, "Economic exchanges between Iran and Armenia have improved slightly, reaching \$700 million, but we should aim for \$3 billion in bilateral trade with a proper planning."

Mkrtchyan, for his part, admired Iran's interest in boosting trade ties with Armenia, saying, "In the few days that our delegation has been in Iran, we established ways of cooperation more than expected, and this is a source of satisfaction."

"By signing this memorandum, we can move things forward and implement the MoU as soon as possible. I am sure that we will



make arrangements so that the Iranian workforce will consider Armenia as their home when they enter the country," the Armenian minister noted.

An Armenian delegation

led by Mkrtchyan visited Iran during October 29-31, with the aim of giving new momentum to the cooperation between the two countries in the field of labor and

social protection, getting to know the best respective practices and innovative initiatives of Iran, as well as developing a constructive dialogue in this regard.



Iranian Labour and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi (l) and his Armenian counterpart Narek Mkrtchyan sign an MoU in Tehran on October 31, 2023.

● IRNA

Oil Ministry inks contracts worth \$34m with NTBFs

Economy Desk

The Iranian Oil Ministry has signed contracts worth \$34 million with new technology-based firms (NTBFs) in the past year.

According to a report by Shana on Tuesday, by the implementation of the signed deals with Iranian startups, the country will save \$305 million annually. The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has signed six contracts, with a total value of \$15 million,



the report added. The ministry also has plans to sign 20 contracts, worth \$135 million, with domestic firms during the current and next year.

Oil Minister Javad Owji told an international energy meeting in July that the country has plans to invest some \$250 billion in its massive oil and gas sector until 2031.

The minister said Iran's plans to maintain and expand its petroleum facilities have remained unaffected

by US sanctions that bar the country's access to foreign investment and technology. "Today, Iran carries out expansion and repair in its oil and gas refineries without the presence of foreign experts," he said. Experts say that US sanctions on Iran, which have been in place since early 2018, have failed to dent the country's ability to expand its massive petroleum industry.

They believe a major expansion in the Iranian nat-

ural gas sector in recent years has compensated for the relatively low levels of production and exports of crude oil in the country.

Iran is currently producing some 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil, and more than one billion cubic meters per day of natural gas.

The country has some 10 active oil refineries and 21 natural gas refineries, while it also counts on massive hard currency revenues from its petrochemicals sector.

Iran eyes energy stability as shortage bites



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Staff writer

The chronic energy shortfall in Iran has been a thorn in the side of both industries and households for years. It's a perplexing situation, given that Iran boasts the second-largest natural gas deposits on the planet, totaling about 34 trillion cubic meters. Moreover, when it comes to proven crude oil reserves, the country is ranked third globally with over 206 billion barrels at its disposal. The energy deficit becomes even more troublesome during peak seasons with electricity use breaking records every summer and heavy gas consumption in northern regions causing a pressure drop in the national distribution net-

work every winter.

Iran has already rolled up its sleeves to tackle the pressing issue. The country has pinned its hopes on renewables, considering such endless sources of energy to be a trump card to make electricity and partially fulfill its ever-growing demand for power.

A country blessed with vast deserts that get plenty of sunshine and strong winds, Iran has drawn up a grand plan to generate 20,000 megawatts of clean energy through solar panel farms and wind parks by 2027 and 50,000 MW by 2031.

To make the dream come true, the government has recently loosened the purse strings to allocate about \$5 billion from the National Development Fund to finance renewable energy projects such as solar and wind power plants. The

investment is aimed at creating 10,000 MW of green electricity in the next two years.

Iran isn't stopping there as the country is dishing out incentives to industrial sectors, especially steel and petrochemical industries that have been hit hard by seasonal power outages, to set up solar or wind parks in their vicinities to not only meet their own electricity needs but also contribute to the national grid's capacity with the surplus. In mid-October, Iran broke ground on two solar farms in southeastern Kerman and Yazd provinces, together packing a punch of 500 MW, to provide local industries with green electricity. The Kerman solar power plant, once up and running, will churn out 400 MW of electricity annually, to become the biggest solar park in Iran, right in the heart of the Lut Desert.

On top of that, Iran is eyeing a partnership with China's Qinghai province — a solar powerhouse home to the world's second-largest solar farm — to help implement renewable energy projects in Iran's northwestern Ardabil province, where local authorities have plans to generate 1,000 MW of clean power annually.

However, these projects have yet to yield results, and fresh government data suggest an uphill task ahead.

According to the latest Energy Ministry figures, renewable power plants, including wind, solar, biomass, and hydroelectric facilities with capacities less than 10 MW, contribute only 1,101 MW, or 1.2% of Iran's yearly electricity gen-

eration, which looks more like a drop in the ocean.

A local media report on October 28 added to the gloomy outlook, revealing that Iran's renewable energy capacity had grown by only 21% (less than 200 MW) over the past two years and indicating that clean energy projects coming online are quite sluggish.

When it comes to the natural gas sector, Iran's efforts seem to be paying off more tangibly. Two years ago, Iran renewed a gas swap deal with its northern neighbors, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, to make sure the pressure inside its gas pipelines stays steady during cold months.

Furthermore, it is doing its utmost to get the most out of its gas fields in the southern region, especially the colossal South Pars (SP), which is the world's largest gas field and is shared with Qatar. Iran's two major players in the energy game, the South Pars Gas Co. (SPGC) and the South Zagros Oil and Gas Production Co. (SZOGPC), which are responsible for 95% of the country's gas production, have cranked up output and extraction, all in preparation of the upcoming winter.

Back in August, the SPGC, Iran's number one gas producer, added up to 15 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas to Iran's daily production of 760 mcm, after bringing on stream the only underdeveloped phase of the SP's 24 phases.

The SZOGPC, on the other hand, announced plans earlier in October to extract an extra 7 million cubic meters of natural gas every day before the winter

hits.

And that's not all. Iran has high ambitions. The country aims to boost daily gas production by 55%, beating the milestone of 1.2 billion cubic meters within the next five years.

However, all these measures seem to be insufficient as President Ebrahim Raisi said on October 23 that the country was facing what he called a "severe energy imbalance," demanding more action be taken.

"I urge the relevant authorities to minimize the impact [of the energy shortage] on various sectors including industry, agriculture, and household consumption by redoubling their efforts to promptly address this issue," Raisi said.

Just a day later, Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Najafi said the country had failed "in practice" to tackle the energy deficit despite efforts to boost gas production. "We need more infrastructure investments in the gas sector," Najafi said, adding that Iran needed at least \$25 billion in investments to further develop its gas industry.

The MP also implied that Iran had fallen behind other nations in effectively harnessing its shared gas fields.

The upcoming five years are make-or-break for Iran, a country whose energy infrastructure has remained underdeveloped for quite some time due to Western sanctions that have diminished its revenues and scared away foreign investments. If the country fails to achieve at least half of its energy improvement goals, the pinch of the unfolding crisis would be more painful.

