

## Turkmenistan proposes to construct joint economic zone with Iran



Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan has expressed his country's interest in developing ties with Iran and proposed to construct a joint economic zone with Iran.

Rashid Meredov made the remarks addressing the opening ceremony of the economic conference of Iranian and Turkmenistan businessmen in the Turkmen capital city of Ashgabat on Saturday, IRNA reported.

He said that developing trade exchanges, seeking new routes of cooperation, and employing the two countries' capacities are the goals of the conference to provide vast investment opportunities. Referring to the positive economic ties between Iran and Turkmenistan, he added that Turkmenistan has an active economy, natural gas, and oil reserves that provide many opportunities for Iranian investors.

Pointing to the role of border markets in the growth of trade, he noted that Bajgiran border markets are active in two countries and Turkmenistan proposes the creation of a joint economic zone in the Sarakhs and Incheh-Borun regions.

Iran's companies enjoy modern technology, he said, asking Iranian companies to cooperate with Turkmenistan.

Meredov pointed to Iran-Turkmenistan's electricity cooperation, and said that the construction of a power transmission line with 400 kWh is under negotiation with an Iranian company.

Meanwhile, Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy pointed to the capabilities of Iranian companies and expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to implement development projects in neighboring Turkmenistan.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of the Iran-Turkmenistan Economic Forum on the sidelines of the "Iran Project" Exhibition, Mehdi Safari said the two countries have high potential to increase bilateral trade.

Turkmenistan is Iran's strategic partner in political and economic terms, he added.

Promoting relations with neighbors is one of the priorities of the current administration of Iran, he said.

Today, the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries has increased to about \$500 million, Safari added.

# Iran oil output up 50% despite sanctions, to hit 3.6 mbd: *Owji*

Iran's oil production has increased 50 percent since the 13th administration took office two years ago, said Oil Minister Javad Owji.

The minister, who made the announcement at a meeting with some religious sources of imitation, including Ayatollah Seyyed Hashem Hosseini Bushehri and Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli, in the holy city of Qom, north-central Iran, added that the country's oil production stood at 2.2 million barrels per day (mbd) when the incumbent government took over in August 2021, while the output has now soared to 3.3 mbd, and will hit 3.6 mbd by the end of the upcoming winter, Shana reported. The country's oil production has witnessed a 50 percent hike, and crude exports have increased 2.5 times under the 13th administration in spite of intensified sanctions, he pointed out.

Iran's oil industry was controlled by foreign advisers before the Islamic Revolution and they plundered the country's products, said Owji. "The oil industry has witnessed great events after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, over the past 44 years. No foreign advisers are now present in the country's oil and gas industry, and Iranian oil experts are developing the domestic industry."

In the pre-revolution era, he continued, one gas refinery and one petrochemical plant had been built, while 23 refineries and 65 petrochemical complexes are operating now, said the oil minister, adding that \$14 billion in revenues earned from petrochemical exports in the previous year were deposited into Iran's Integrated Forex Deals System



(NIMA).

A few cities and villages were supplied with gas before the revolution, recalled Owji, adding that 98 percent of the urban population, and around 84 percent of the rural population have now been connected to the gas grid, as 5,700 villages and 40 towns, mainly underprivileged and cold areas, have been provided with gas since two years ago.

The country is currently making 80 percent of the products and equipment needed by the domestic oil industry, said the minister, underscoring that the 13th administration has accel-

erated the implementation of oil projects.

"We have become self-sufficient in the oil and gas industry and are exporting technical and engineering services to countries sanctioned by the US," said Owji, explaining that Iran started exporting technical and engineering services to refineries in Venezuela and Latin America under the 13th administration and reactivated their oil industry, which had come to a standstill due to sanctions.

The incumbent administration has given top priority to the completing of partly-finished projects and the launching of

new projects such as the newly-inaugurated Phase 11 of the South Pars (SP) Gas Field, he pointed out.

Qom Province's gas consumption in all sectors is between four and five million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), said Owji, adding that SP Phase 11 produces some 14 mcm/d and its production will increase by drilling more wells.

Under the 13th administration, he said, domestic gas output has jumped 50 mcm/d, while the country faced no problems with gas supplies during last year's severe winter.

Shifting to projects for reducing

air pollution, the oil minister referred to the collecting of associated petroleum gas (APG), stating 11.5 mcm of flare gas has been gathered per day since the 13th administration took office and the volume of APG to be captured by the end of the year (March 19, 2024) will be equal to the amount produced by one phase of the SP field.

Owji pointed to the impacts of the oil industry on the country's economic growth, concluding that the oil and gas sectors' economic growth stood at 10.5 percent in the year to March 20, 2023, and rose to 19.6 percent in the spring of 2023.

## IPGL to soon start operations at Chabahar port

State-owned India Ports Global Ltd. (IPGL) — formed to develop and run Chabahar port in Iran — will soon sign an agreement with the Iranian Port Authority to start a full-fledged operation, Indian Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Secretary TK Ramachandran said. Located in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, on Iran's energy-rich southern coast, Chabahar port is being developed by India, Iran and Afghanistan to boost connectivity and trade ties, PTI reported.

"(To start a full-fledged operation of) Chabahar Port... the agreement was to be signed between IPGL and the Iranian Port Authority. That is in process. It will happen soon," Ramachandran told reporters.

Chabahar is an oceanic port. It leads to the Indian Ocean and is the closest route to Afghanistan.



## CBI sees oil industry annual economic growth at 15.2%

The Iranian oil industry's economy is projected to grow 15.2 percent this Iranian year (started March 21, 2023), said the country's top banker.

Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammadreza Farzin pointed to a 24 percent growth in crude oil output and a 16,000-barrel-per-day (bpd) increase in gas condensate production in the first half of the current Iranian year, forecasting a 15.2 percent economic growth for the oil sector, Shana reported. Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to hit 4.3 percent by mid-March 2024, he continued.

The industrial sector's growth will be mixed, said Farzin, adding some industries will post high growth and some will report decline.

Estimates are based on growth in main domestic industries including oil and agriculture and balance of payments (BOP).



## European passenger planes overhauled in Iran: *CAO*

The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) revealed the repair and maintenance of passenger planes of other countries, including Latin American, European and Asian countries, in Iran.

Mohammad Mohammadibakhsh said countries from Latin America, Europe and Asia bring their planes to Iran for repair and maintenance services or send the engines of their planes to the country for overhaul operations, Tasnim news agency reported.

He added that planes sent to Iran for repair and maintenance operations are Boeing and Airbus.

It has been years that no Iranian planes have been sent to other countries for repair and maintenance services, as Iran has turned into a destination for overhauling services of other countries' planes.

This important national achievement has been made

while Iran is under the toughest sanctions imposed by Western countries including the United States, the CAO chief added.

Mohammadibakhsh said that his organization is seeking more direct flights between Iran and Turkmenistan.

The CAO has instructed Qeshm Air to launch two weekly flights to Ashgabat starting last week, he noted.

Given the commonalities between Iran and Turkmenistan, it is hoped that preliminary steps will be taken to increase the number of flights between the two countries following a visit by Iran's minister of roads and urban development to the Central Asian country, he said. Talks are underway between officials of the two countries for increasing the number of flights, he said, adding that a memorandum of understanding will be inked between Iran and Turkmenistan in the near future.