

Tehran-Ankara nine-month trade hits \$8.5b: **IRICA**



The total value of trade between Iran and Turkey in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2023) topped \$8.5 billion, announced the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Iran exported 6.4 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$3.3 billion, to the neighboring country from March 21 to December 22, 2023, registering a 12.5 percent hike in volume terms and 15 percent decline in value terms compared to 2022's corresponding period, IRNA reported.

Iran imported three million tons of commodities worth \$5.3 billion, from Turkey in the nine-month period, showing a 12 and a 17 percent rise in volume and value terms, respectively, compared to the corresponding figure of the preceding year, Mohammad Rezvaniyar added.

He noted that Iran exported natural gas, aluminum, iron ingot, and bitumen to the neighboring country.

In return, Iran imported sunflower oil, gold ingots and animal corn from Turkey during the period.

The deputy minister of economy pointed to the volume of transit of goods exchanged between the two countries and noted that 1.6 million tons of products were exchanged between the two countries from March 21 to December 22, 2023.

World Bank puts Iran's economic growth in 2023 at 4.2%

The World Bank (WB) in its latest report put Iran's economic growth in 2023 at 4.2 percent, which is two times more than that of the average economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to the estimate of the international body, Iran's economy has registered a hike in 2023 compared to a year earlier, IRNA reported. The World Bank had put Iran's economic growth in 2022 at 3.8 percent, as it expects that the country's economy will grow by 3.7 percent in 2024.

The average economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa stood at over 1.9 percent in 2023.

Saudi Arabia's economic growth was -0.5 percent in 2023 as the country experienced an economic recession in this period.

The average economic growth rate of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the region stood at only 1.6 % in 2023. Among the 19 countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, Iran ranked 3rd in 2023 in terms of economic growth.



Africa Iran's first option for developing extraterritorial cultivation

Iran's Ministry of Agriculture plans to select an African country, Tanzania, as the first option for extraterritorial cultivation.

Expansion of relations with African countries is the agricultural diplomacy in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi and for this reason, a coordination meeting of the Iran-Tanzania Joint Economic Cooperation Commission was held at the venue of Iran's ministry of agriculture with the participation

of the concerned officials of the two countries, IRNA reported.

The meeting aimed to prepare the necessary platforms for negotiations in the upcoming meetings between senior officials of the two countries.

The First Specialized Exhibition of Export Potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held in Tanzania on November 21-24 as licensed by the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI).

Over 370k tons of pistachio expected to be produced by yearend: **Official**

The director general of the dried fruits affairs department at Iran's Ministry of Agriculture said more than 370,000 tons of fresh pistachio are expected to be produced in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024).

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting held at the venue of the ministry, Dariush Salempour said unlike the previous year, the export of pistachio products is

on an upward trajectory in the country in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2023), IRNA reported.

He said that the document of Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) between Iran and FAO is considered an important, applied and strategic document, according to which, all the production processes, processing and health supervisions are updated efficiently.

South Africa's ICJ case against Israel

After more than three months, Israel's onslaught on the Palestinian territory has now reached the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where South Africa has become the first country in the world to file a suit against the regime for the crimes it has committed in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, is set to hold hearings on January 11 and 12 on the case, which has accused Israel of genocide in Gaza. In the first step, South Africa seeks an emergency suspension of Israel's military operation which has so far claimed the lives of more than 23,000 Palestinians in the besieged territory and caused widespread destruction there.



Humanitarian crisis

The UN has recently said that the Palestinian territory has been "uninhabitable" due to the destruction caused by the Israeli strikes.

The UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths warned that famine was looming and a public health disaster unfolding.

In a grim assessment of the devastating impact of Israel's military operation, Griffiths said that Gaza's 2.3 million people face "daily threats to their very existence" while the world just watches.

He said tens of thousands of people, mostly women and children, have been killed or injured, families are sleeping in the open

as temperatures plummet and areas where Palestinians were told to relocate have been bombed.

Griffiths said, "People are facing the highest levels of food insecurity ever recorded [and] famine is around the corner". The few partly functioning hospitals are overwhelmed and critically short of supplies, medical facilities are under relentless attack, infectious diseases are spreading and amid the chaos about 180 Palestinian women are giving birth every day.

South Africa's 84-page filing has described Israel's actions as "genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group".

"The acts in question include killing Palestin-

ians in Gaza, causing them serious bodily and mental harm, and inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction," the application said.

"The acts are all attributable to Israel, which has failed to prevent genocide and is committing genocide in manifest violation of the [United Nations'] Genocide Convention," the filing says, adding that Israel also failed to curb incitement to genocide by its own officials in violation of the convention.

Call for emergency measures

The request for emergency measures is a first step in the case. South Africa has requested the ICJ to indicate provisional measures to "protect further, severe and irreparable

harm to the rights of the Palestinian people" under the UN convention.

Provisional measures are meant as a kind of restraining order to prevent a dispute from getting worse while the court looks at the full case.

They're legally binding but not always followed. In 2022, in a genocide case filed by Ukraine against Russia, the court ordered Moscow to immediately suspend its invasion. The order was ignored, and strikes continue.

"At the provisional measures stage, the court would not be making a determination that a genocide is unfolding in Gaza," said Cecily Rose, assistant professor of public international law at Leiden University.

"Instead, the court would only be evaluating whether there is a risk of irreparable prejudice to rights held under the UN Genocide Convention, in particular the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts that threaten their existence as a group," Rose told AFP.

After the court decides whether or not to apply emergency measures, it will then look at the broader case "on the merits" – South Africa's charge that Israel is in breach of the Genocide Convention. The decisions of the ICJ are binding upon countries and cannot be appealed.

Israel's stance

Israel, which has so far ignored global calls for the establishment of a permanent cease-fire in Gaza, has rejected the accusations leveled by South Africa. Israel has called them baseless and the regime's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat accused the African country of "absurd blood libel," or baseless allegations of Jewish perfidy intended to stir up lethal hatred of Jews.

Haiat claimed that Israel has made it clear that the residents of the Gaza Strip are not the enemy and that the regime is trying to limit harm to the non-involved and to allow humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.

Despite its ire, the regime, which has a history of ignoring international tribunals, has decided to send a legal team to the court. It will be represented at the

court by the British barrister Malcolm Shaw.

Also, there are reports that indicate the regime is exerting pressure on other countries to oppose South Africa's move.

According to a copy of an urgent cable obtained by Axios, the Israeli Foreign Ministry has instructed its embassies to press diplomats and politicians in their host countries to issue statements against South Africa's case in order to prevent a ruling that would suspend its military operation in Gaza.

Global support

South Africa's move in the World Court has been welcomed by many countries in the world. Bolivia was the latest country to back South Africa's application. Bolivia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Monday that it was joining the case as a signatory to the Genocide Convention.

Turkey and Malaysia have also voiced their support for the case, while Jordan's foreign minister also said Amman will back South Africa.

Meanwhile, 30 Kuwaiti associations, leagues, unions, and parties have called on

their government to join the ICJ case.

Nearly 100 Chilean lawyers have also filed a complaint before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The allegations include crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes committed in Gaza.

ICJ and ICC

What is the difference between the ICJ and the ICC? The city of The Hague in the Netherlands calls itself the international city of peace and justice. It is home not only to the ICJ, but to the ICC, based just a few kilometers away.

The two courts have different mandates.

The ICJ is the highest United Nations legal body, established in 1945, to deal with disputes between states. It should not be confused with the treaty-based ICC which handles war crimes cases against individuals.

The ICJ's 15-judge panel – which will be expanded by an additional judge from each side in the Israel case – deals with border disputes and increasingly cases brought by states accusing others of breaking UN treaty obligations.

View of the Peace Palace which houses World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, on Sept. 19, 2023.
● PETER DEJONG/AP