

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran stands as 12th largest producer of shoes in world

Iran is the 12th largest producer of various types of shoes across the world, said a member of the Footwear Industry Association on Saturday.

Ali Lashgari added that shoe production units manufactured 270 million pairs of various types of shoes, ranging from casual footwear to specialized shoes last year, IRNA reported.

He noted that there are 12,000 active industrial production units and 50,000 distribution networks in the footwear sector in Iran.

Notably, 95% of production units employ fewer than 50 workers, with the majority of footwear being manufactured by small enterprises.

Lashgari added that the current capacity of production units could elevate the country's shoe production to the 8th position in the world with appropriate government support.

Mobile Internet penetration rate in Iran tops 132%: Regulator

Figures released by Iran's Communication Regulatory Authority (CRA) indicated that mobile Internet penetration rate in the country has exceeded 132%.

CRA figures covered in a Saturday report by IRNA showed that the number of high-speed mobile Internet subscribers in Iran had reached a total of 112.644 million in the year to March 19, up more than 7% from the figure for preceding year. The figures showed the number of mobile users in Iran also rose by more than five million to 152.755 million at the end of the year to March 19, bringing the mobile penetration rate in the country to over 179%, which is 3.4% more than the related figure to the year ending March 20, 2023.

However, the CRA said there was a slight decrease of 1.7% in the number of Iran's fixed broadband subscriptions last year which was 28.763 million.

The figures come amid plans by the Iranian government to further boost access to mobile and fixed Internet services. The Iranian government also plans to connect over 20 million homes and businesses to the high-speed fixed fiber network by mid-2025.

Iran eyes threefold rise in cargo transit on INSTC in 2024

Iran has set an ambitious target to increase cargo transit along the eastern branch of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) by threefold in 2024, aiming to reach two million tons. According to Kazem Jalali, Iran's Ambassador to

Russia, in 2023, Iran commenced cargo transportation operations along this eastern route with the assistance of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. "The capacity was 650,000 tons in 2023. Considering the potential of this branch, Iran and Russia

have agreed to aim for 2 million tons in 2024," he was quoted by report.az. Jalali emphasized that the eastern branch of the INSTC has a capacity of 15 million tons of cargo, and efforts should be made to fully utilize this potential. The INSTC connects north-

ern Europe with the countries of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean via Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The agreement to establish this multimodal corridor was signed in 2000 between Russia, Iran, and India. Today, 12 countries

are participants in the INSTC. The corridor includes three routes: the western route along the western shore of the Caspian Sea, the eastern route along the eastern shore through Kazakhstan, and the trans-Caspian route across the Caspian Sea.

Russia hosts 8th BRICS Industry Ministers' Meeting

The 8th BRICS Industry Ministers' Meeting has been held in the western city of Nizhny Novgorod as part of Russia's BRICS Chairship in 2024.

The meeting was convened on Friday with Iran's Deputy Industry, Mine, and Trade Minister Mohammad Mousavi in attendance, IRNA reported.

The Iranian official, during the meeting, elaborated on the country's breakthroughs in the domains of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things.

He also outlined the achievements of the Islamic Republic in the fields of blockchain, cloud computing, robotics, and medical and genetic engineering.

Mousavi described Iran's membership in the BRICS group as a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences and facilitate industrial and commercial interactions. The program featured

a BRICS-EAEU-UNIDO roundtable devoted to the synergy of developing economies and international organizations to speed up industrial development and improve competitiveness.

Speaking at the event, Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Anton Alikhanov noted that the BRICS expansion is a reflection of the formation of a new multipolar world order.

He stressed that the countries of the association now account for almost 34 percent of the world's territory and more than 45 percent of its population. In 2023, BRICS contributed about 36 percent to the global GDP in purchasing power parity.

Initiatives in the chemical industry, pharmaceuticals, the mining sector, intelligent manufacturing and robotics were identified among the promising areas of cooperation.

They also discussed the initiative to establish a BRICS Centre of Industri-

al Competence on the basis of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which is at the final stage of preparation. Alikhanov said that Russia, China and India are already ready to finance the project on creation of the BRICS Centre of Industrial Competences on the basis of UNIDO.

BRICS is a bloc of the world's emerging economies. It was founded in 2006 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China under the name of the "BRIC" group. South Africa joined in 2010, making it "BRICS". BRICS seeks alternatives to existing Western-dominated world policies including those on economy, which the bloc sees as unilateral.

Iran became an official member of BRICS in January this year after the bloc invited the Islamic Republic and five more countries to join during its 15th annual summit in South Africa in August 2023.

Iran condemns Afghan violation of railway territory

The Islamic Republic of Iran Railways in a statement announced that it does not allow encroachment on the railway territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The statement was released following the encroachment of the private railway company known as "Afghanistan Railway Consortium" into Iran's railway territory, IRNA reported. The traffic of any railway vehicles, including loco-

motives, wagons, etc., in the railway territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran is possible only with permission and under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, the statement reads.

No individual or legal entity and no Iranian or non-Iranian private company is exempted from the above rule, it added.

During the past few days, agents affiliated to the private company of the Af-

ghanistan Railway Consortium took illegal actions in Iran's railway territory, it noted.

Unfortunately, the agents of this consortium beat Iranian railway personnel and broke their car windows. Agents of Afghanistan Railway Consortium Private Company illegally entered the station by breaking the lock of the building.

The locomotive was stopped and there was no danger to the locomotive.

Annual tea exports hit 12,000 tons

Head of Iran's Tea Organization (ITO) Habib Jahansaz has stated that Iran exports nearly 12,000 tons of tea per year.

During his visit to the Fuman tea factories in Iran's northern Gilan Province on Saturday, Jahansaz noted that following the removal of bans on tea exports, the tea factories in Gilan have

resumed exports of the product, reported Mehr News Agency. Referring to Iran's tea export to 23 countries including neighboring countries and European countries, he added that the country exported 15,000 tons of tea last year. Tea exports to neighboring countries and Europe brings in \$20 million an-

nually, he stated. Tea harvest season in Iran starts in farmlands across the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran in early May.

More than 55,000 families grow tea in over 28,000 hectares of farmland in the two provinces, accounting for 90 percent of the country's total tea production.

