

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Minister appoints national oil company CEO**

Iran's new Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad appointed Hamid Bovard as CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Iran's Oil Ministry news agency Shana reported on Thursday. "By order of the oil minister, Hamid Bovard has been appointed as deputy oil minister and CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company," Shana said. The minister also appointed members of the company's administrative board. Paknejad was approved as Iran's new oil minister on August 21, part of President Masoud Pezeshkian's cabinet.

Iran is a major producer within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Iran currently pumps an average of 3.6 million bpd of oil, according to latest government figures and international shipping data, despite sanctions imposed by the US that restrict oil exports from the country.

**Building, construction exhibition underway in Tehran**

The four-day 24th International Exhibition of Building and Construction Industries will wrap up in Tehran on Sunday.

The exhibition provides great chances for businesses, manufacturers, suppliers, commercial media, and other businesses in related sectors to put their products, services, technologies, and business ideas to show, IRNA reported. The opening ceremony of the exhibition was attended by senior officials including Head of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives Bahman Abdollahi. A sum of 800 domestic companies and about 200 foreign firms are displaying their latest products, services, and capabilities in this event. Identifying new groups of customers in domestic and international markets, increasing profitability and growth of construction industries and artisans, supporting sales activities of construction materials and equipment, introducing modern construction industry methods and equipment are among the goals of holding the expo.

**Iran's dryland crop yield at 8m tons: Official**

An official from the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture said crop yield from drylands across the country has reached some 8 million metric tons (mt) this year.

Faramak Aziz Karimi, who leads the ministry's office for grains and staple crops, said that the increase in dryland crop yield in Iran has been a

result of better planning and increased precipitation, reported Press TV.

Aziz Karimi noted that forage crop produced in dryland farms in Iran had reached an all-time high of 0.24 million mt, a figure he described as a major success for the country's agriculture sector. He said Iranian dryland farm-

ers had produced some 6 million mt of wheat, 1.2 million mt of barley, 0.34 million mt of legumes and more than 0.1 million mt of oil seeds and medicinal herbs this year.

Iran relies on dryland farming for a significant part of its wheat production. Latest government figures show total wheat purchases

from domestic farmers in Iran had reached over 11.5 million mt in the harvesting season that is nearing its end.

The country has seen a significant increase in its agriculture output and exports in recent years amid efforts by the government to diversify the economy away from oil revenues. Agriculture output in Iran rose

by nearly 20% in the calendar year to March to reach more than 130 million mt.

The Iranian customs office said earlier this week that the country had exported some \$1.453 billion worth of agricultural products in the five months to August 21, up by 33% from the same period last year.

**Iran enjoys enormous capacities for economic prosperity**

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Tuesday highlighted Iran's capacities, citing the country's natural, abundant, and valuable resources, its strategic geographic location at the crossroads of the world's major trading routes, along with its extensive coastlines. Experts believe Iran's capacities are more than enough to generate economic prosperity. They cite the country's manpower as well as its natural and geographical features which enable it to realize a boom in production, Press TV wrote on Friday.

Iran is geographically located at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa. It is flanked by the North-South Corridor on the one side and the East-West Corridor on the other where its nationwide railway network along with suitable road transport infrastructure and access to international open waters makes it a prime choice of countries for secure transporta-

tion and transit of goods.

By ramping up the cargo handling and completing the transit rail map through linking Chabahar on the Sea of Oman to Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan and Khorramshahr in southwest Iran to Basra in Iraq, Iran is forecast to generate \$26 billion in annual transit revenues.

This income, which is more than half of Iran's annual oil revenues, can trigger a boom in production and create jobs for more than 1.5 million people, beside ushering in a wave of construction and development in the populated areas where the railway passes.

Iran, a vast country and the most stable one in West Asia, is geographically located in the neighborhood of 15 nations whose population totals more than 600 million people. By the end of 2017, Iran's neighbors traded more than \$2 trillion a year, of which Iran's share was \$36 billion, or about 1.7% of the total.



Currently, Iran's annual oil and non-oil trade totals about \$100 billion. Experts say if the country increases its share of regional trade by only 5% through activating regional economic diplomacy and forging bilateral monetary agreements and indirect banking, it will be able to create trade in excess of \$100 billion with its neighbors.

This, they say, will set the basis for the creation of 4 million jobs in the country in the most pessimistic outlook. Moreover, the emergence of a market of this size will lead to a boom in domestic production. Iran also straddles the world's main orogenic belts, where some 104 billion tonnes of potential reserves of minerals, or 7% of the world's total, are locked in.

The country is home to some 68 types of minerals, which include 6% of the world's known copper reserves, 3.5% of lead and zinc, 10.5% of coal and 2% of iron ore deposits.

Their total worth is estimated at \$700 billion, which can generate added value in excess of \$4 trillion with investment in infrastructure development, processing and exports.

The discovery of oil and reliance on oil revenues consigned the extractives sector to oblivion even though it could generate several times more income than the oil sector with even less investment. The same goes for agriculture, which is one of the most important and strategic sectors in economic development, to which the

food security of a society is tied. There are about 37 million hectares of suitable agricultural land in Iran, of which 18.5 million hectares are currently cultivated. What the country needs is to promote scientific management and cultivation of agricultural lands in order to boost production and employment, strength food security and provide for abundant food and nutrition supplies.

One of the main inputs for production is energy. Many industrial powerhouses such as South Korea, Japan and European countries depend on foreign energy resources for production.

Iran is where more than 48% of the world's oil and gas is located. The country also possesses the world's largest oil and gas reserves combined. With its natural resources, mines, fertile lands, capable, educated, expert and committed human resources taken together, Iran is best placed for a leap in numerous development fields.

For this to realize, Iran has to put jihadist, tireless and scholarly management practices into the best use and bring together the indigenous capacities of various areas in order to turn the country's economy into a thriving and impregnable fortress.

**Israel-Europe conflicts ...**

In separate statements in November 2023, Germany and France con-

**Page 1 >** demned Israel's continued settlement expansion in the West Bank, stressing that these actions seriously undermine efforts to resolve the conflict and achieve a two-state solution. European countries are often concerned about the scale and impact of Israel's military operations in besieged Gaza Strip and the West Bank. European criticism typically focuses on civilian casualties and humanitarian issues, calling for proportionality and caution. During the Gaza war in 2021, the EU formally urged Israel to exercise greater caution in its military offensives in Gaza and to respect international law to prevent civilian casualties. European countries generally support Palestinian independence and push for international

recognition of Palestine, which Israel opposes. This difference affects diplomatic relations and the EU's policies towards the Middle East.

**Human rights and international law**

European countries repeatedly emphasize the importance of human rights and international law and criticize actions they believe violate these principles. European governments and organizations often express concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank, accusing Israel of disproportionate responses that exacerbate civilian suffering. Following the October 7, 2023 retaliatory attack by Palestinians, France criticized the scale and intensity of Israel's military response in Gaza, expressing concern over civilian casualties. After Israeli airstrikes in

Gaza led to widespread civilian deaths, French officials criticized Israel's conduct and called for adherence to international humanitarian law, urging measures to reduce civilian casualties. Several other European countries, including Ireland and Belgium, also expressed concern over the scale of Israel's aggression and civilian casualties in Gaza. They called on Israel to observe proportionality in its military responses and respect international humanitarian law. In November 2023, Sweden and Norway also voiced their concerns about the humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the West Bank, urging Israel to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. These countries also called for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza and the provision of access to humanitarian aid. Europe typically supports

international institutions and resolutions that criticize Israeli policies. This includes backing the United Nations and various human rights organizations that frequently issue reports and resolutions condemning specific Israeli actions.

**Diplomatic relations and EU policies**

Despite political differences, Israel and Europe have significant economic relations, including trade agreements and scientific cooperation. However, tensions can affect these relations, and there are sometimes discussions about limiting collaboration in response to specific policies or actions. In 2015, the EU decided that products produced in Israeli settlements in the West Bank must be labeled so that European consumers can identify them. This move was interpreted as a form of soft sanctions against Israel's settlement policies. After the October 7, some European

countries sought to increase diplomatic pressure on Israel, with some even proposing economic sanctions. Back then, members of the European Parliament called on the EU to exert greater diplomatic pressure on Israel to ensure it adheres to international law. Some countries, like Spain, suggested that sanctions should be imposed on Israel if it continues the violation of human rights.

The conflicts between Israel and Europe are multifaceted, and the issues mentioned above illustrate the broad disagreements that have intensified between Israel and European countries, especially following the October 7, 2023 attack. These conflicts are evident not only at the political and diplomatic levels but also in public opinion and civil society. These tensions are unlikely to subside as long as Israel continues its actions, which are perceived as contrary to humanitarian principles.