

Iran stands as world's 11th largest shoe producer



Economy Desk

The head of footwear exports commission at Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade (MIMT) says the Islamic Republic is the 11th largest shoe producer in the world despite a sizable hike in smuggling foreign-made shoes into the country.

Javad Shabanzadeh, who is also the president of the mechanical shoe industry association of Qom Province, said the footwear industry is the "driving force" of 70 other industries and Iran maintains the 11th place in shoe production in the world. Shabanzadeh described Qom as the hub of the country's machine footwear production, saying more than 70% of the country's exports are related to the province.

The official said the volume of global turnover in the shoe industry stands at 3 billion dollars, of which 100 million dollars belongs to Iran, with its shoes being sold at world's markets for an average of four to 10 dollars a pair.

Pointing to the 600-million-population export targets in the neighboring countries, Shabanzadeh said as much as 50% of Iranian shoes are exported to Iraq and Afghanistan while exports to Tajikistan and Azerbaijan register an increase in the past years. Shabanzadeh touched on the issue of shoe smuggling into the country, saying, "The entry of smuggled shoes had decreased in the past years, which unfortunately has increased sharply in the last two years and has grown by 70% based on field observations."

The official pointed to the mechanism of the stock exchange and the price of raw materials, which is higher than the global average, as an effective factor in shoe smuggling.

Iran can earn substantial revenues via exporting aquatics: *IFO official*



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran can rake in substantial revenues via exporting aquatic animals, said an official with the Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) on Wednesday, highlighting the country's "outstanding position" in seafood production.

Reza Abbaspour Naderi, the director general of the IFO fisheries affairs office, told Iran Daily that the country had "extensive reserves" of aquatic animals within reach in the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman in the south, which could provide ample opportunities to generate export income and create jobs.

Naderi noted that the marine resources had not been fully exploited except for some regions.

"For instance, these resources have been tapped into in certain regions and Iran has performed well in the Sea of Oman, ranking first in terms of tuna catch in the western Indian Ocean and second in the entire Indian Ocean among 40 countries that exploit it. Last year, Iran caught over 260,000 tons of tuna from the waters of this region." Currently, the livelihoods of



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thousands of fishermen in southern Iran, particularly in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan and Hormozgan, depend on tuna fishing. Iranian fishermen begin catching tuna in the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman from early September until early May when the turbulent waters make fishing impossible. In the Sea of Oman, there are also valuable reserves of lanternfish, which is used in industries to produce fishmeal or fish protein

powder. These products are used in poultry and fish farming.

According to Naderi, the majority of the country's fishmeal needs are met through imports.

"However, if the exploitation of the rich lanternfish reserves in the deep waters of the Sea of Oman becomes more feasible, this can reduce our reliance on imports."

The Iranian Fisheries Science Research Institute (IFRSRI) has issued permits for

the annual catch of 200,000 to 300,000 tons of these fish.

However, Naderi said the IFO had approved an annual catch of 100,000 tons to preserve lanternfish reserves for the time being which would gradually increase in the coming years. Elsewhere in his remarks, Naderi said the IFO, which is responsible to ease aquaculture and fish farming, had drawn up plans to capitalize on opportunities available in Iran's waters.

"Under the Seventh Development Plan (SDP), the sea-oriented economy has been emphasized, and in this regard, clear targets have been set for the fisheries sector," he said. The SDP is a comprehensive government-proposed roadmap for the next four years in all economic, political, security and foreign relations areas.

He also touched on the shrimp fishing in the Persian Gulf, explaining that shrimp played a key role in

the economy and livelihood of southern fishermen.

Every year, fishermen take their boats out to sea from early August to catch shrimp.

"More than 600 tons of shrimp have been caught so far this year," Naderi said. Regarding the fishing status in the Caspian Sea, he said that last year, around 37,000 tons of various types of fish were caught, showing a 13% growth compared to the same period in 2022.

Iran aims to develop CNG as alternative vehicle fuel



Economy Desk

The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Co. (NIORDC) plans to increase the share of compressed natural gas (CNG) in the country's fuel mix through a three-stage program as part of efforts to cut gasoline consumption, the CEO of the state-owned company said on Wednesday.

Mohammad-Sadeq Azimifard

said the scheme, spanning short, medium and long-term phases, would help alleviate growing gasoline shortages, Shana reported.

According to Azimifard, the short-term plan aims to get part of gasoline cars on the roads converted to bi-fuel vehicles running on both gas and CNG within six months.

Under the medium-term plan, he said, more CNG filling sta-

tions would be built across the country.

Azimifard added that, as part of the medium-term plan, Iranian automakers would also be encouraged by the ministries of oil and industry to roll out more gasoline-CNG vehicles.

"Once the number of CNG stations has increased, the long-term plan will be implemented, under which diesel vehicles will be converted to run on dual fuel," he said.

Azimifard noted that the Oil Ministry had no choice but to opt for "non-pricing policies" to curb high fuel consumption given the country's situation. His remarks can be interpreted as a rejection of rumors about an imminent fuel price hike – a sensitive issue the government has been dodging for the past five years despite the depreciation of the Iranian rial.

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad

last week denied any plans to raise gasoline prices. It came after a lawmaker said that the government would likely increase prices by 20% next year, after a six-year hiatus.

The rise in the prices of essential goods, particularly gasoline, has always been a contentious issue. In 2019, deadly street protests erupted in several Iranian cities following a surprise 200% gasoline price hike.

Over the weekend, the Iranian Oil Ministry adopted its first non-pricing measure by capping motorists' use of subsidized gasoline at the pump.

The ministry's fuel distributor announced that drivers could only top up their tanks twice a day, with a cap of 50 liters per fill-up which is 10 liters less per session, using their fuel cards.

Iran has been implementing a fuel rationing system since

2007, under which motorists get a quota of 60 liters of subsidized gasoline per month, priced at 15,000 rials per liter (around \$0.025).

Subsidized fuel is dispensed through dedicated fuel cards issued for each vehicle. For additional gasoline, drivers pay double the price of subsidized fuel while still using those cards.

Iran churns out around 110 million liters of gasoline per day, which falls short of its daily consumption by around 15 million liters. The country has been forced to import gasoline since 2021 to make up for the shortfall, with estimates indicating that around \$3 billion worth of gasoline will be brought in this year.

In September, consumption hit a record high of 142 million liters per day due to the summer's travel rush.

Iran's diplomacy to ...

Saudi Arabia is a key player in Lebanon's political spectrum and the talks between Tehran and Riyadh could lead to positive outcome regarding the situation in Lebanon. Nevertheless, it would be prudent for the Islamic Republic of Iran to engage in talks with France as

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well, as part of its diplomatic efforts to halt the war in Lebanon. France, like Saudi Arabia, has considerable influence in Lebanon's political circles. In fact, Iran could form a four-party coalition comprising Iran, Saudi Arabia, France, and Lebanon. France could play a crucial role in liaising with the United States

and Israel.

Thus, Araghchi's visit to Saudi Arabia is a follow-up to his earlier trip to Lebanon. However, to succeed in this endeavor, it is essential that we also tap into France's potential.

After Saudi Arabia, Araghchi is set to visit Qatar, which has made tireless efforts to estab-

lish peace in Gaza over the past year and has even managed to broker a prisoner swap between Hamas and Israel. Talks between Iran and Qatar are important in this regard, as they could also boost chances of a cease-fire in Gaza. Although a cease-fire in Gaza appears to be a more daunting task under

current circumstances, these collective regional diplomatic efforts can undoubtedly contribute to the peace process.

Given the challenges facing a cease-fire in Gaza, the top priority at present is to stop Israel's attacks on Lebanon and prevent a ground invasion, which could escalate the conflict. Hezbollah,

along with the Lebanese government, has expressed its readiness for a cease-fire. Therefore, if the talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia lead to a mutual understanding, and with the support of France and the Lebanese government, a cease-fire in Lebanon could be within reach.