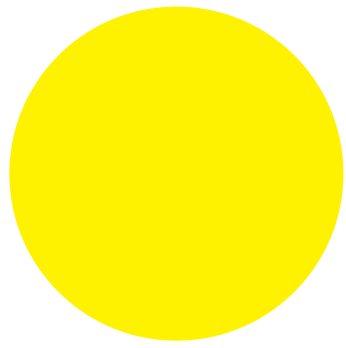


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Iran eyes becoming top petchem exporter in region

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New Trump admin. can or cannot choke off Iran's oil sales



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

US President-elect Donald Trump reportedly plans to tighten the screws on Iran by reinstating his "maximum pressure" campaign after returning to the White House.

The Trump administration slapped "toughest-ever" sanctions on Iran in 2018 shortly after walking out of a multilateral nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The sanctions targeted nearly the entire Iranian economy, including its oil sales, which served as the backbone of the country's economy and its financial lifeline. The bans pushed Iran's oil sales from 2.2 million barrels per day to below 200,000 bpd, although they were never able to achieve the declared goal of bringing exports to "zero."

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks to reporters after a cabinet meeting in Tehran on November 13, 2024.
PRESIDENTIR

Expediency Council head says Iran implemented 40 provisions of FATF



Economy Desk

Speaking to private sector businesspersons on Wednesday, the chairman of Iran's Expediency Council announced that 40 provisions of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) are currently being implemented in the country.

Referring to previous talks held on FATF, Sadeq Amoli-Larijani noted that, "We have certain issues when it comes to raising topics in the Expediency Council. The question arises whether, after a period of reviewing a subject, we are allowed to bring it up again or not," ISNA reported.

The official explained that the FATF includes 42 provisions which is not a single-part agreement but rather a collaborative action framework. "Out of the 42 provisions, 40 are already being implemented in the country," he noted.

Amoli-Larijani further pointed out that the FATF required four primary acts from Iran. Two were approved, while the Palermo Convention and the CFT (Countering the Financing of Terrorism) were not. "I personally worked on this issue and supported the approval of the Palermo Convention. I also informed my colleagues that, from a technical standpoint, I believed we had the right to make reservations. According to international conventions, we can practice the right to reservations when it does not conflict with the fundamental nature of the agreement," he said.

The official went on to say that, "I believe we could have reservations regarding Palermo, as the areas we sought to reserve did not pose conflicts. However, I have some considerations about the CFT, as it includes provisions that international bodies could potentially use against us, although these issues should be resolved."

He added, "Other bodies, such as the Supreme National Security Council, should also discuss this issue. In my view, it is possible to resolve it."

Amoli-Larijani stated that he had a discussion with President Masoud Pezeshkian to explore possible solutions. "However, the key question is whether the FATF is significantly impactful under sanctions," he remarked.

Iran eyes becoming top petchem exporter in region

Economy Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref said on Wednesday that the petrochemical industry plays strategic role in national wealth creation and economic development, adding that, "We have no choice but to become the leading exporter of petrochemical products in the region."

In a meeting with the CEOs of major petrochemical companies of Iran, the VP stressed the importance of addressing the challenges and issues facing the petrochemical sector, noting that to implement the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan (2024-28) and achieve the targeted 8% economic growth outlined in the plan, the petrochemical sector must be more active, according to fvpresident.ir.

He reaffirmed that the industry, as a driving force of the country's economy, plays a crucial role in enhancing added value, generating employment, and boosting the national economy.

Aref referred to a \$150-billion need for foreign investment to realize the 8% growth goal in the Seventh Development Plan, underlining that the petrochemical sector is one of the most vital areas for attracting foreign investment, which, in turn, would open up significant global markets for Iranian companies' products.

The top official emphasized



Iran's First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (C) attends a meeting with the CEOs of major petrochemical companies of Iran in Tehran on November 13, 2024.
fvpresident.ir

the importance of adopting advanced technologies in the national industry, particularly in the petrochemical sector as he pointed out that, given the rapid and extensive technological advancements worldwide, the industry must align with up-to-date global technologies.

Aref added that the petrochemical sector has been at the forefront of adopting cutting-edge technology, as traditional approaches hinder competitiveness in global markets due to high production costs.

He stressed the necessity of employing advanced technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, which can significantly improve efficiency and reduce costs. The vice president also highlighted the essential role of research and development (R&D) in the industry, describing it as an investment rather than an expense.

"R&D leads to substantial profitability and returns for companies and industries. For instance, major automotive companies allocate 3% of their sales

revenue to R&D. However, this area has been neglected domestically, with a ceremonial approach causing harm. Fortunately, the petrochemical sector has paid adequate attention to R&D, though they need to take this aspect even more seriously," he explained.

Aref stated that the government aims to involve large private sector enterprises in an initiative by the government to train 1,000 superior professionals along with the Leader's directive to train 100 elite managers for the country's senior

management roles.

"These trained professionals can contribute to the industry and, if they assume governance roles, their deep understanding of the challenges facing major and leading industries, including petrochemicals, could help resolve many issues," the top official said. Aref also criticized the lack of adequate focus on trade diplomacy in previous years and stressed that the current administration is prioritizing exports and the significance of economic and trade diplomacy.

He also stated that petrochemical companies, due to their substantial role in non-oil exports, can support the government in this way.

In the meeting, Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari, the secretary-general of the Employers Association of the Petrochemical Industry, presented a report on the industry's role in the national economy.

Also, the CEOs of major petrochemical companies voiced their concerns and challenges during the meeting.

Iranian MPs pass bill on free trade pact with Syria

Iranian lawmakers passed the outlines and details of a bill amending the appendix to the free trade agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic. In an open session of

Parliament on Wednesday, the report of the Economic Committee on the bill was put on the agenda of the legislature, and the bill was eventually passed by the representatives, IRNA reported.

The amendment includes several provisions, reflecting ongoing efforts to strengthen economic collaboration and trade volume with Syria through systematic reductions in trade barriers.

The free trade agreement between Tehran and Damascus aims to bolster economic ties by reducing tariffs on various goods traded between the two countries to zero, fostering a more open trade environment.



New Trump admin...

With President Joe Biden having taken office in 2020, which was followed by major developments in the international arena, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, US and EU energy sanctions started to rain on Russia and resulted in the loss of some Russian oil from the market — an opportunity for Iran to seize and boost its oil trade.

The third largest OPEC producer called in its experience in bypassing US oil sanctions and ratcheted up crude exports to an average of over 1.7 million bpd. The Biden administration has consistently come under fire from rival Republicans for "going easy" on

Iran's oil sales, despite turning up the heat on the Islamic Republic with additional sanctions over the past four years.

However, facts on the ground suggest that Iran's oil has continued to flow to its customers, with China being the largest buyer. Small private refineries in eastern China, known as "teapots", have been purchasing around 90% of Iran's oil since 2019, according to data by analytics groups like Kpler, Vortexa and TankerTrackers.

Since these small refineries operate outside the US financial system, penalizing them for violating sanctions would most probably have no impact on them.

The question on everyone's mind is how the new Trump administration plans to bring back the "maximum pressure" campaign, particularly when it comes to Iran's oil sales.

One possibility is that US officials might try to seize Iranian oil tankers, a move that has been attempted by the previous Trump administration and its successor, but has been met by Iran responding in kind.

Tracking and seizing Iranian tankers is a daunting, arduous and costly task as it needs the US navy warships to keep a constant eye on oil tankers carrying Iranian oil in the high seas or gulfs.

Past seizures of Iranian vessels, such as the detention of

the Iranian oil tanker *Adrian Darya* near the Strait of Gibraltar by the UK, a key US ally, in 2019, and the seizure of several Iranian oil tankers en route to Venezuela by the US, have led to retaliatory measures by Iran in the Persian Gulf, stoking tensions between Iran and the West. In September, Chief Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Hossein Salami said that the country had attacked 12 Israeli ships in retaliation for strike on 14 Iranian oil tankers.

Such tit-for-tat measures demonstrate that impounding or attacking oil tankers is a high-risk policy that would trigger Iranian vessels as the country re-

gard them "piracy in broad daylight."

Another option on the table for the upcoming Trump administration might be to press China to stop buying Iranian barrels.

During his first term, Trump launched a bruising trade war with China, imposing import tariffs on Chinese goods aimed at reducing their presence in the US market and forcing American manufacturers to relocate their factories from China to the US to help bring down unemployment.

Trump might again wage a trade war with China, having several goals on agenda, including pressure on the world's largest importer of crude to halt Iranian oil im-

ports. This could be one of the most effective tools at the US disposal to disrupt Iran's oil trade.

According to former Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji, Iranian oil, which accounts for 13% of China's crude oil imports, is sold to the Asian economic powerhouse at a discount of at least \$5 per barrel, making it a lucrative and profitable business for Beijing.

If the Trump administration opts for this policy, it remains to be seen whether China, the US largest trading partner, will choose to buy cheap oil from Iran or avoid disrupting trade with America.

It seems that tough and tumultuous days are ahead.

Ecotourism; a catalyst for rural development in East Azarbaijan Province



Maragheh
● maragheh.ac.ir

Iranica Desk

The development and expansion of ecotourism, particularly as village-based tourism, stands out as a highly effective strategy for revitalizing identity-oriented tourism in the country. This approach not only introduces local cultures from various regions but also promotes their economic growth. Ecotourism, defined as “tourism based on the traditional lifestyles of small rural areas,” embodies a deep respect for the culture and history of communities that have thrived in specific ecosystems for generations, adhering to the customs and traditions of their ancestors. Investments in this sector can significantly bolster the culture, arts, and customs of diverse ethnic groups and regions across the nation, according to IRNA.

Global context and economic impact

Globally, ecotourism is vital for attracting both domestic and international tourists, with significant investments made in countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Russia, and various European and American nations. These investments not only benefit small rural areas but also contribute substantially to the overall economy by generating valuable foreign currency revenue, according to IRNA.

A hub for ecotourism

East Azarbaijan Province, endowed with extensive ecotourism potential and over 2,700 inhabited villages, is recognized as a key area for ecotourism. By nurturing this form of tourism, the province can emerge as a central hub within the country, maximizing its benefits from this income-generating industry, IRNA wrote.

Recent developments

With its diverse climate, numerous visitor-friendly villages, rich historical sites, unique rural products, and a wide variety of agricultural offerings, East Azarbaijan Province has made significant, albeit modest, strides in ecotourism in recent years. If cultural initiatives and investments persist, the province holds the potential to become a veritable paradise for ecotourism in Iran. The East Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization — the main authority responsible for the promotion of ecotourism — has implemented extensive and varied programs aimed at this sector. Despite being in its infancy, the industry continues to grow, buoyed by a warm reception from both domestic and foreign tourists, indicating a bright future ahead.

Focus on investment in rural areas

Alireza Bayramzadeh, deputy head of the East Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization for tourism affairs, emphasized that ecotourism is a central focus of the province's tourism development strategy. He noted that, given the region's geo-

graphical and climatic advantages, prioritizing investments in rural areas could transform ecotourism into a primary driver of economic growth for the region and potentially at the national level.

Standardization and training initiatives

Bayramzadeh highlighted that with over 2,700 habitable villages spread across 21 cities, a favorable four-season climate, an abundance of historical sites, and breathtaking natural landscapes, East Azarbaijan is poised as one of the most promising provinces for the development of ecotourism. He announced plans for a new program aimed at enhancing the image of ecotourism units in East Azarbaijan compared to previous years. This initiative will entail a more focused and meticulous approach towards standardizing these units over the coming years.

Challenges and opportunities

Rahim Hosseini, the head of East Azarbaijan Province's Ecotourism Association, emphasized that this province, with its scenic villages and unique historical landmarks, stands out as a premier destination in the field of ecotourism. He emphasized that prioritizing this emerging industry should be a key focus for relevant support organizations, as modern tourists increasingly prefer ecotourism. Hosseini noted that East Azarbaijan Province has been a pioneer in the country's ecotourism sector, which has experienced significant growth in recent years. Despite facing some challenges, ecotourism is gradually becoming a central focus of the province's tourism strategy.

Regional comparisons

One of the main challenges, he mentioned, is that stakeholders in this field are highly motivated and eager to improve ecotourism indicators. Hosseini pointed out that cities like Kerman, Shiraz, and Yazd have successfully leveraged local culture, customs, and traditions as valuable resources and attractions. He expressed hope that this important focus would be prioritized in the agendas of his colleagues and the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization.

Unique appeal of ecotourism

Hosseini described ecotourism as one of the most important branches of the tourism industry, often regarded as the cleanest industry in the world. He acknowledged that inter-departmental inconsistencies and the nascent nature of this industry present challenges that must be addressed through collective effort and cooperation among executive and service organizations. He defined ecotourism as an experience that engages visitors with traditional and untouched rural and nomadic environments. As a result, ecotourism accommodations offer a unique setting that differs from other tourism experiences, leaving a lasting impression on visitors for years to come.

Current status of ecotourism accommodations

Hosseini noted that approximately 10% of the ecotourism accommodations in East Azarbaijan Province are currently inactive for various reasons. He stated that about 60% of these units are located in Kaleybar, while the remainder are active in Osku, Varzaqan, Maragheh, Khoda Afarin, and other counties.

Growth in ecotourism units

Ahmad Hamzehzadeh, the director general of East Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization, announced that there are currently 240 ecotourism units in the province. He highlighted that this sector has seen significant growth due to the area's unique natural beauty and architecture, as well as its attractive villages. He noted that the number of ecotourism accommodations has surged from just three units four years ago to 240 today.

He pointed out that these statistics reflect a rising interest in the ecotourism potential of East Azarbaijan Province, driven by its favorable climatic conditions, the presence of all four seasons, and unique cultural and social characteristics. He emphasized the importance of reviving rural culture and traditions through the growth of ecotourism, viewing “identity creation” as a vital benefit with extensive social, cultural, and historical implications for various regions of the country.

Strategic focus on rural ecotourism

He asserted that the future of the tourism industry in Iran and East Azarbaijan Province should focus on rural ecotourism. To this end, cultural heritage authorities must seriously consider how to utilize rural capacities to develop nature-based and ecotourism accommodations to promote tourism across the counties.

According to Hamzehzadeh, Kaleybar, Maragheh, Varzaqan, Ahar, and Osku counties have the highest number of ecotourism units, which will contribute to the overall development of the tourism industry throughout the region. He stated that for foreign tourists, the key motivation for visiting Iran lies not in modern entertainment and shopping but in experiencing the authentic lives of the local people and staying in rural areas with pristine nature. To meet the needs of tourists, provincial executive agencies must prioritize infrastructure development, particularly in information technology, road construction, and urban development, focusing on villages with ecotourism accommodations. Additionally, there should be a structured program in place to preserve the natural beauty of these areas and the local rural architecture. Hamzehzadeh reaffirmed the commitment of the provincial cultural heritage organization to promote rural tourism and ecotourism, adding that the number of ecotourism accommodations is expected to increase significantly in the near future. He also pointed out that this type of tourism is economically viable for travel agencies due to its low accommodation costs.



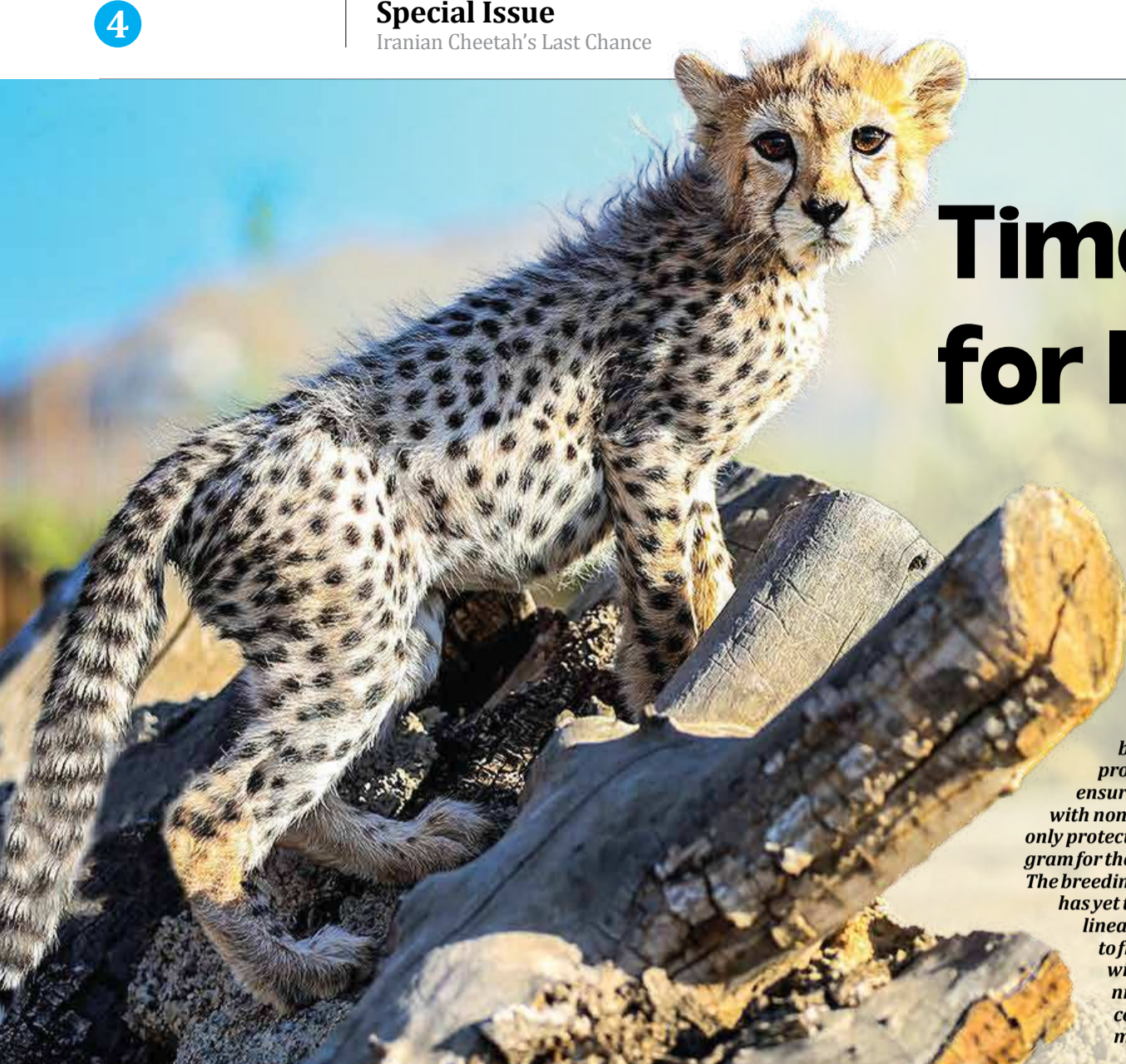
Kaleybar
● otaghak.com



Varzaqan
● tripman.ir



Osku
● daghchilar.com



Time is running out for Iranian cheetah

By Sadeq Dehqan & Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The Asiatic cheetah is one of the most endangered felines in the world, with the last remaining individuals of this rare species found only in parts of Iran, earning it the nickname "Iranian cheetah". Some studies have suggested that the Asiatic cheetah differs

from its African counterpart in terms of size, with the African one being slightly larger. However, the distinguishing feature of the Iranian cheetah is its thicker mane, which serves to keep it warm in the harsh winters of Iran's high-altitude steppes.

Estimates from the past year or two indicate that only around 12 to 20 cheetahs can be found in the remote areas of central Iran's desert fringes. As a result, a conservation project for the Asian cheetah was launched in 2011, with extensive efforts underway to ensure the survival and prevent the extinction of this majestic animal. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations and experts, the Department of Environment has not only protected the cheetah's habitats and wildlife sanctuaries but also initiated a breeding program for the species in captivity.

The breeding program, which has seen the birth of several cubs followed by their untimely death, has yet to yield any results, leaving concerns about the continuation of the Iranian cheetah's lineage unabated. If this trend continues, it is likely that in a few years' time, the only place to find the Iranian cheetah will be in wildlife books and documentaries, and its footprints will be erased from Iran's geography, unless an urgent plan is devised to save the Iranian leopard. To gain insight into the life and status of leopards in Iran, as well as the country's leopard breeding programs, Iran Daily had an interview with Morteza Pourmirzaei, an expert and CEO of the Iranian Cheetah Society.

IRAN DAILY: How many cheetahs have survived in Iran, and how do you assess the efforts made to conserve this species?

POURMIRZAEI: The cameras installed along the cheetah's migration routes and habitats in Iran show that fewer than 20 individuals are living in the country. All of these cheetahs are concentrated in the Semnan Province and the Turan region, towards the Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in the northeastern North Khorasan Province. The organization has made efforts and taken measures in recent years to maintain and increase the cheetah population, but these efforts have not been sustained. They have also enlisted the help of academics and independent activists, but this collaboration has not continued.

Recently, live bait was transported to the cheetah habitats for feeding, which, in my opinion, was more of a show. The Department of Environment transferred a number of rams and ewes to the south of Turan to feed the cheetahs, but cheetahs are nomadic animals that do not stay in one place. Based on this, considering that there are approximately 20 cheetahs scattered over an area of more than 2-3 million hectares,

releasing a few rams and ewes in such a vast area cannot contribute to strengthening the cheetah population.

On the other hand, it was announced last year that fencing had begun along the notorious "Cheetah Death Road". Typically, during this road, collisions between cars and cheetahs attempting to cross the road result in the animals' death. In March, it was announced that the fencing had been completed, but when we visited the area, on the Tehran-Mashhad Road between Miami and Abbasabad, only about 500 meters of the foundation had been laid, and there was no sign of the fence.

However, the good news is that with the change of government, there have been developments in the Department of Environment, and Hamid Zahrabi has been appointed as the caretaker of the Deputy of Natural Environment and Biodiversity, who is an expert in the field of natural environment conservation and collaborates openly with environmental researchers. He traveled to South Africa in 2019, accompanied by the Iranian Cheetah Association, to visit the cheetahs' living conditions, as South Africa is the only place in the world where cheetahs

have a growing population. He is also familiar with the cheetah conservation program in Africa and can provide valuable assistance in this area.

What is your assessment of the Asiatic cheetah breeding program in captivity?

The breeding program in captivity has not yielded any positive results, and after the death of Pirooz, the only cub born in captivity, the authorities decided to keep the conservation and breeding program behind closed doors and in silence, without providing any detailed reports. They simply claim that the program is progressing.

To implement the breeding program in captivity, Firooz, the only dominant male cheetah in the region, was separated from the wild and used for breeding. This was a high-risk move for the cheetah population in the wild, as the only identified male cheetah was removed from the natural environment. The first mating of Firooz resulted in the birth of Pirooz and his brothers, all of whom have since died. In other words, the program has completely failed. It has been claimed that two breeding cycles have been completed, but no offspring have been produced.

How many cheetahs do we currently have in the breeding program in captivity?

In the breeding program in captivity, we have one male cheetah named Firooz and five female cheetahs named Iran, Delbar, Azar, Touran, and Gisoo. Azar and Touran are two female cheetahs that were captured by a shepherd about two years ago, allegedly after being separated from their mother. Another cheetah, Gisoo, was captured in the north of Turan last year, when she was about a year old, and was transferred to the breeding center. However, the fate of her mother is unknown - whether she was killed or not. We do not even know if she had any siblings. In short, the breeding program in captivity has not achieved any results so far.

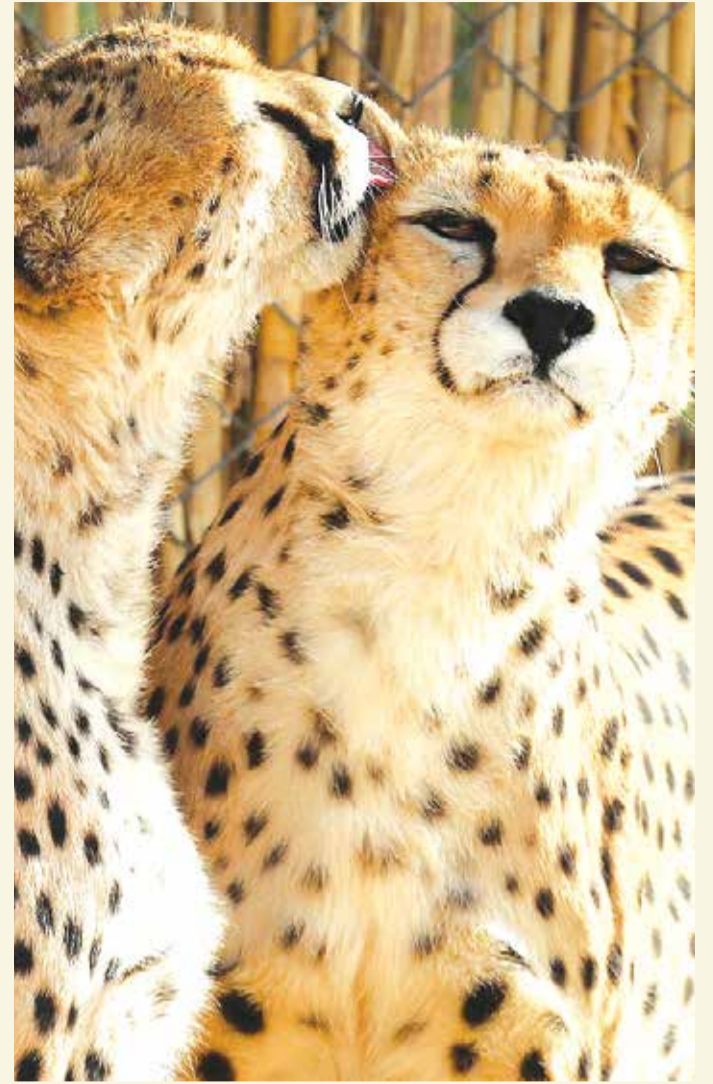
Is there any hope for the breeding program in captivity?

As an expert, I must speak based on evidence and documentation. I need to see Firooz's sperm report to determine whether, as the only male in captivity, he is still fertile. If he is, then why has there been no successful breeding so far? If his fertility has decreased or disappeared, it needs



Morteza Pourmirzaei





to be investigated whether the problem lies in his diet or veterinary issues.

We currently have two other male cheetahs identified in the wild, one of which is named Faraz. Another cheetah was spotted in the Touran Protected Area, located in the Shahroud county, but no images of it have been recorded for some time, and it may have perished. When the breeding program in captivity takes such a risk by removing one-third of the males from the wild, and has

not achieved any results so far, it indicates that the conservation program needs to be pursued more carefully and transparently.

What, in your opinion, is the best course of action to conserve the cheetah population?

The Department of Environment needs to realize that the conservation program for cheetahs is different from that of other animals, such as the urial sheep, because we are dealing with a carnivore

species that is rapidly approaching extinction. This requires not only a conservation program but also a rescue program. We need to conduct genetic sampling of all available cheetahs, both in captivity and in the wild, to determine their genetic diversity and understand the genetic relationship between them. If the genetic distance between them is significant, the future will be brighter. However, if they have become inbred, their genetic similarity has increased and they have suffered from inbreeding depression. This often occurs in small animal populations, where cheetahs with a family relationship mate with each other, increasing their likelihood of disease and reducing their tolerance to environmental stress, ultimately leading to the disappearance of the cheetah population because we have reached a point where cheetahs can no longer live long lives.

If we have reached this stage, the task becomes even more daunting. We hope that if the Department of Environment collaborates with us, we can initiate a research project with the University of Gorgan to estimate the genetic similarity of cheetahs. From a scientific and international

standards perspective, when the population size of a species falls below 30, it reaches a critical genetic threshold, and such a species cannot survive in the long term in the wild. If our six-month study reveals high genetic similarity, our only option will be to introduce cheetahs from Africa and inject new genes into the population to preserve the Iranian cheetah, even if it means compromising its purity. Although the cheetahs may not retain 100% Iranian purity, we can still preserve the Iranian cheetah with 50% purity, and we know that our cheetahs will be stronger. This approach is better than allowing the Iranian cheetah to become extinct and then, like India and Saudi Arabia, being forced to import African cheetahs that have no compatibility with Iran's climate and conditions, and cannot be considered as Iranian or Asian cheetahs.

Finally, assuming the current trend continues, how many more years can we hope to preserve the Iranian cheetah?

This depends on the genetic study, but based on the evidence available to us today, I doubt that the Iranian cheetah will survive in the next 10 years.



From a scientific and international standards perspective, when the population size of a species falls below 30, it reaches a critical genetic threshold, and such a species cannot survive in the long term in the wild.



Weightlifting World Championships: Iranians in the mix to capitalize on Talakhadze's absence

Sports Desk

Lasha Talakhadze's decision to skip next month's IWF World Championships means weightlifting fans could be treated to the tightest race for the superheavyweight crown in years.

A triple world-record holder in the men's +109kg weight class, the Georgian sensation picked up a milestone third successive Olympic gold in August, in what was deemed as an average campaign by his standards.

Clearly far from his dominant form in Paris, Talakhadze finished second to Bahrain's Gor Minasyan in the snatch event, and then did just enough to top the clean & jerk contest with 255kg and secure the ultimate prize with 470kg in total – 18 kilograms shy of the Games record he had set in Tokyo three years ago.

With Talakhadze out of the picture, a handful of top contenders will now be looking to make the most of his absence when the world event gets underway in Manama on December 4.

Armenian Varazdat Lalayan, who took the silver in Paris, will be the favorite to finish atop the podium in the Bahraini capital, and become the first weightlifter other than the Georgian giant to win the world superheavyweight gold since Russian Ruslan Albegov did in 2014.

A winner of two silvers and a bronze in the previous three editions of the World Championships, Lalayan has registered a highest entry record of 460kg



– alongside the host's Minasyan – for the upcoming competitions. Minasyan is also tipped for success in Manama, having beaten Talakhadze and Lalayan to the top spot of the snatch contest in Paris by one kilogram before eventually settling for the bronze.

Simon Martirosyan, also from Armenia, was absent in Paris but has registered a tally of 450kg – third-highest in the 25-man entry list – and will be eager to add

the +109kg glory to his double world titles in lower weight divisions.

Iranian trio

Iranian Ali Davoudi, who stood runner-up to Talakhadze in the Tokyo Olympics but missed out on the podium in Paris, is also in the mix, though he will have to improve on his entry record of 390kg to win a second world medal following his clean & jerk bronze in Riyadh last year.

Davoudi overcame 205kg in the Olympic snatch event, before starting his favorite C&J campaign with a 242kg lift. A successful 257kg effort would have seen the Iranian win the bronze in Paris, but two failed attempts saw Davoudi finish fourth with 447kg.

Iran has also named Ayat Sharifi and former world junior champion Alireza Yousefi in the entry, list but only of them will join Davoudi in representing the

country in the +109kg class.

Sharifi has submitted the same weight as Davoudi for entry – 10 kilograms more than Yousefi's record.

Yousefi, however, is confident of making an impressive breakthrough in Manama, should he be given the opportunity to participate.

Yousefi, who established a new world junior C&J record of 246kg to win the 2023 Asian seniors' silver behind Minasyan,



Iran's Alireza Davoudi (c) is seen alongside other superheavyweight weightlifters ahead of the men's +102kg contests in the Paris Olympics on Aug. 10, 2024.

● ALIREZA SOTAKBAR/ISNA

said in an interview with Mehr News Agency last week that he has already set his sights on bettering Talakhadze's 267kg-mark in the category in the Bahraini capital.

North Korea 'not a pushover', Iran's Ezzatollahi warns ahead of World Cup qualifier

Sports Desk

Saeid Ezzatollahi warned his Iranian teammates they will have to play with "full intensity" when they face North Korea in a World Cup qualifier in Vientiane, Laos, today.

Iran will step onto the pitch at the Lao National Stadium KM16 – a neutral venue for North Korea's home fixtures – on the back of three wins and a draw, sitting atop Group A of the Asian qualifiers with 10 points. Amir Qalenoee's men hammered Asian Cup champion 4-1 last time out in October to overtake Uzbekistan on top of the six-team table, while North Korea fell to a 1-0 away defeat against the Kyrgyz Republic and is bottom of the standings with two points.

Ezzatollahi, however, believes Team Melli will still need to deliver "a performance worthy of Iranian football" to come out on top against today's opponent.

"We know North Korea is not going to be a pushover at all, as they have proved to be a tough opponent in their previous

games in the group," Shabab Al Ahli midfielder said in a pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

"The head coach told us to forget all about the Qatar victory when we began preparation for this game. We will have to play with full intensity for the whole 90 minutes to achieve what we want.

"Nothing is predictable in football, but we have been working hard to peak our physical and mental form. We can't afford to get caught off guard by North

Korea."

Today's game will be followed by a visit to Bishkek for Iran to take on Kyrgyzstan at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium on Tuesday.

Iran is six points clear of third-place UAE in the group, and with a top-two finish sealing direct qualification for the 2026 finals, maximum points in the double-header will see Qalenoee's men all but secure a place in the showpiece in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.



● FFIRI

Australia bracing for 'new coach bounce' against Saudi Arabia

REUTERS – Australia will hope the much-travelled Herve Renard will not wield his old magic on his return to the Saudi Arabia dugout when the teams clash in a crunch World Cup qualifier at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium today. While Renard was the man in charge during the Saudis' stunning win over eventual champions Argentina at the 2022 World Cup, he is viewed darkly in Australia for torpedoing the Socceroos' hopes of automatic qualification for Qatar.

A 0-0 draw in Sydney in 2021 and a 1-0 home win over Australia the following year sent Graham Arnold's team down the perilous playoffs route to earn their ticket to Qatar.

Australian soccer had a measure of revenge last year when the Matildas knocked Renard's France out of the Women's World Cup quarter-finals via a penalty shootout.

With Australia second in Group C, locked on five points with the Saudis and Bahrain but ahead of both on goal difference, today's match could go a long way to deciding which teams qualify directly for the 2026 finals in North America. Japan are five points clear at the top and in the box seat to claim one of the group's two automatic



● OZAN KOSE/AFP

tickets to the global showpiece. Australia have enjoyed their own "new coach bounce" under Tony Popovic, who put the Socceroos' qualifying campaign back on track with a 3-1 win over China and a gutsy 1-1 draw in Japan in the last window.

Prior to that, Australia had suffered a rare home loss to Bahrain and were held 0-0 by Indonesia, prompting Arnold to quit after a storm of criticism.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, are looking to right the ship after parting ways with Italian Roberto Mancini following a 2-0 defeat by Japan and 0-0 draw with Bahrain. Renard will be familiar with much of the squad he has inherited and can hope for better relations with senior players following reports of

discord under Mancini. Given the Green Falcons' mostly poor record on the road and their recent scoring woes, Renard and his players will likely be content to eke out a draw against Australia before heading to Indonesia next Tuesday.

Australia defender Cameron Burgess told reporters on Wednesday they were preparing for the unexpected.

"It could be some different things thrown at us," he added. "They've got a new manager and a different way of playing. "They've had that manager before so they'll be familiar with each other.

"So, yeah, there's things to look at, and obviously, more importantly, what we can do to hurt them."

Araghchi calls for reduction in costs of Iran-US differences

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has called for the implementation of relevant management strategies to reduce the cost of Iran's standing differences with the United States. "We have to implement [relevant] management [strategies] so that the cost of Iran's differences with the United States [can] be reduced," the top diplomat said on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Press TV reported. He said channels of communication between the two

countries are constantly there. The official, however, noted that some of the Islamic Republic's differences with the US were "very substantive and foundational." "Those differences may not be solvable, but we have to adopt [relevant] management [courses of action] so that their costs and [standing] tensions [can] be reduced." Araghchi made the comments a day after warning Washington against resumption of its so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran. The first version of the

American policy was met with "Maximum Resistance" from Tehran, resulting in Washington's "Maximum Defeat," he wrote in a post on X. "Attempting 'Maximum Pressure 2.0' will only result in 'Maximum Defeat 2.0'. Better idea: try 'Maximum Wisdom'—for the benefit of all," he wrote. The US adopted the policy under former president Donald Trump, unilaterally leaving a historic and multi-party nuclear agreement with Iran, and resuming the illegal sanctions that the deal had lifted.

The sanctions, preserved under the administration of US President Joe Biden, have restricted the financial channels necessary to pay for basic goods and medicine, undermining supply chains by limiting the number of suppliers willing to facilitate sales of humanitarian goods to the Islamic Republic. Trump, who has been re-elected the US president, now seeks to ramp up the economic measures even further, despite warnings and pieces of advice issued by Iran against fueling the tensions between the countries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks to reporters after a cabinet meeting in Tehran on November 13, 2024. [president.ir](#)



Pezeshkian: Gov't plan to remove Internet curbs will enhance online governance

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his government's plan to remove Internet restrictions does not involve the abandonment of the virtual space but rather it aims to fortify online governance. "Scientific assessments and analyses of the social impact of [Internet] filtering have shown that none of the objectives of this plan has been achieved, and instead, it has created additional drawbacks. It's astonishing that we still insist on continuing this futile and counterproductive trend," Pezeshkian said as he addressed a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. Iranians often bypass the government-imposed ban on the Internet by utilizing Virtual Private Network (VPN) software applications, which make their computer appear to be located in another country. The Internet filtering, which is being monitored by the Internet Filtering Committee, led by the prosecutor general, restricts users from accessing websites and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube, due to their offensive and

criminal content. During the session, Pezeshkian said that the government's plan to lift filtering does not mean giving free rein to the virtual space, but will instead lead to the development and reinforcement of online governance, enabling people to make optimal use of it. "The government's focus is on developing educational content, particularly for teenagers and young adults, as well as increasing government services on social media platforms, which will result in the optimal utilization of the Internet," the president said. He stressed that the government is seeking a common ground with other governing bodies on the issue of lifting filtering, and underscored the need to expedite the implementation of the resolution passed by the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, and to set up a special task force to examine the various aspects of the issue, address concerns, and present the findings to the next session of the council for a final decision. Pezeshkian instructed the country's Supreme Council of Cyberspace on



Tuesday to form a working group to review the lifting of Internet restrictions, citing public dissatisfaction as a key factor in the decision. "Continuing Internet filtering, given the widespread dissatisfaction it has caused, is unacceptable," he said, warning, "Decisions that do not satisfy the public could backfire, eroding social capital and posing security challenges." The president highlighted that governance should not be based solely on assumptions without considering public satisfaction and stressed the importance of understanding how society perceives the decisions made for their lives. Meanwhile, the government spokesperson emphasized that efforts to

lift Internet restrictions and bring about a more regulated online environment are underway, stating that, "No mafia can stand up to the unity of the Iranian people." Speaking on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, Fatemeh Mohajerani said, "The Ministry of Telecommunications presented a report on the special task force for digital economy, which was approved." She added that the government's plan to present to the Supreme Council of Cyberspace was discussed, but ultimately, a task force was assigned to review it.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a cabinet meeting on November 13, 2024. [president.ir](#)

Iran, IAEA seek fresh start as Grossi arrives in Tehran

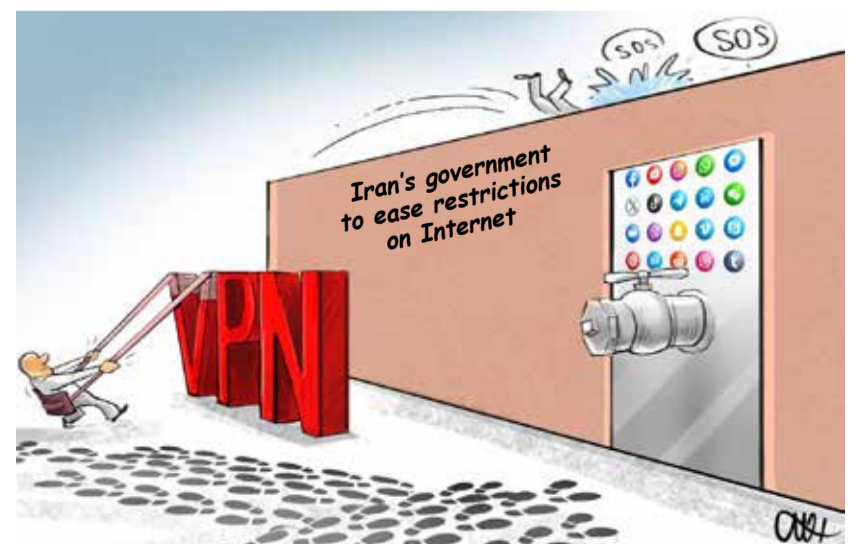
International Desk

Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi arrived in Tehran on Wednesday for crucial talks on Iran's nuclear program, with both sides expressing hope that a new path to be opened up for cooperation. Ahead of the IAEA chief's two-day visit to Iran on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described Grossi's tone in his conversations with Iranian officials in Vienna as "upbeat", expressing hope that, "With this positive attitude, we can pave the way for a new chapter in cooperation between Iran and the agency," ISNA reported. Meanwhile, ahead of his trip to Iran, Grossi said in an interview with CNN that the purpose of his visit to Iran, which certainly won't be the last one, is important to find diplomatic solutions to remaining issues. Referring to the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Grossi said that it was not a secret issue and since the new Iranian government assumed office, Tehran has been looking for solutions in this regard. While the IAEA is allowed to carry out inspections in Iran, Grossi stressed the need for "more visibility" into Iran's nuclear program, given its scale and objectives. "They have a lot of nuclear materials that could be used eventually to make a nuclear weapon," the IAEA chief told CNN on Tuesday, adding, "They do not have a nuclear weapon at this point." Grossi also told AFP that, "The margins for maneuver are beginning to shrink," adding that, "It is imperative to find ways to reach diplomatic solutions." On Wednesday, the Iranian foreign minister asserted that the Islamic Republic



continued its constructive cooperation with the United Nations nuclear body. Araghchi hoped that Iranian officials would be able to reach some agreements with the agency during an upcoming visit to the country by Grossi. Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs said in an X post on Monday that the trip is in line with the joint statement issued during Grossi's visit to Tehran on March 4, 2023. In their joint statement, Tehran and the UN nuclear watchdog recognized that bilateral positive engagement can pave the way for wider agreements among state parties. They also agreed that bilateral interactions will be carried out in a spirit of collaboration, and in full conformity with the competencies of the IAEA and the rights and obligations of Iran based on the comprehensive safeguards agreement. The joint statement came after the IAEA leveled Israeli-influenced accusations against Iran's peaceful nuclear activities. In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with six world powers. However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo. In 2019, Iran started to roll back the limits it had accepted under the JCPOA.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



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Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei (2nd L) pays a visit to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on November 13, 2024, where he met with Hossein Jaber Ansari (1st L), the agency's chief, and subsequently toured various departments of the media organization. [ASGHAR KHAMSEH/IRNA](#)





By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
 Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

The new government took office during the scorching heat of August, and now more than ever, it requires robust energy diplomacy and significant foreign investments in this sector. The fourteenth administration needs to know that resolving the energy imbalance issue, particularly in residential and industrial sectors, demands strategic planning and investment in energy fields. This includes developing gas fields, increasing power plant capacity, adopting renewable energy sources, and employing modern technologies for energy consumption optimization and resource efficiency.

On July 22, Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, the CEO of Tavanir Company stated that the heatwave in some Iranian cities has been unprecedented in 50 years, causing a substantial increase in electricity consumption, reaching critical levels. He said that for every one-degree increase in temperature, electricity consumption rises by about 2,000 megawatts. Consequently, over 4,000 megawatts of additional power demand have been recorded due to the extreme heat. To supply electricity to people, many industrial and manufacturing sectors have had to shut down during working hours.

Energy Ministry analyzing ways to solve electricity shortage challenges

Power plants' nameplate capacity and electricity consumption

As of late July, Iran's installed power generation capacity reached 93,000 megawatts, with an annual production of 380 billion kilowatt-hours. Of this, 84% comes from thermal power plants, which rely on natural gas for 81% of their fuel. Thus, Iran faces dual energy imbalances in both gas and electricity sectors. Over the past five years, annual electricity consumption has risen from 259 billion kilowatt-hours in the

Iranian year of 1397 (ended March 20, 2019) to 333 billion kilowatt-hours in the last year which ended March 19, 2024, marking a 28% increase. Last Iranian year, industrial and residential sectors accounted for 36% and 31% of total consumption, respectively. The highest recorded electricity demands this year reached 77,514 megawatts, and peak daily power usage hit 1.6 billion kilowatt-hours.

Critical conditions

The rising demand for electricity in Iran continues amid serious concerns, as Hassanali Taqizadeh, the chairman of the Power Producers Syndicate of Iran warned of an 18,000-megawatt electricity shortage. "Without solutions in the next five to seven years, significant social and economic crises are expected in Iran," he said on July 18. Taqizadeh blamed flawed policies by the Ministry of Energy and projected that if left unaddressed, this figure could reach

27,000 megawatts, or one-third of the country's electricity consumption, within a decade. The economic loss for industries during last Iranian year was estimated at over 100 trillion tomans (\$1.5 billion), and this year, the figure could exceed 150 trillion tomans (\$2.3 billion). These losses stem from industries halting production, declining efficiency, increased costs, equipment damage, and lost market opportunities.

Future energy deficits

Experts warn that shortages in gasoline, oil, gas, and electricity will likely intensify, potentially turning Iran from an energy exporter into an importer. Despite significant potential for renewable energy, with up to 3,200 hours of sunshine annually and 24 windy regions, Iran has only achieved a meager 2% renewable energy share compared to the global average of 35%, which is projected to rise to 50% by the end of this decade. Currently, 92% of Iran's electricity comes from thermal plants, while renewable energy contributions remain minimal. Although the former Iranian administration aimed to establish 2,600 megawatts of wind and solar power, less than 2% of that target was realized.

Roots of deficit

The roots of Iran's energy crisis trace back several decades. Mismanagement, international sanctions, and inadequate investments in energy infrastructure have exacerbated the situation. During the 1980s and 1990s, priorities centered on rebuilding war-damaged infrastructure, with efforts to expand power generation and gas networks. From the 2000s onward, foreign investments and modern technologies were pursued, yet sanctions and bureaucratic hurdles persisted. The past decade has seen worsening energy deficits amid intensified sanctions, internal policy missteps, and declining oil revenues. While governments tried to boost efficiency and promote renewables, inadequate funding and poor management limited success. Meanwhile, neighbors like Turkey, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq attracted foreign investment, while flawed domestic policies in Iran foiled similar efforts.



Need for foreign investment

A lack of investment in power generation has led to continued electricity imbalances. On March 30, Robert Beglarian, a former Iranian MP who has served as a member of Iranian Parliament's Energy Committee highlighted that resolving the 12,000 to 15,000-megawatt shortage

would require building 30 combined-cycle power plants (500 MW each) at a total cost of €8-9 billion. Without adequate investment by 2035, Iran could face severe crises affecting both power and gas sectors, including refinery and gas extraction challenges, he warned.

Proposed solutions

- 1 Reforming the energy market structure along with establishing an independent electricity regulator and involving the private sector
- 2 Expanding electricity exchange with neighbors
- 3 Increasing generation capacity by adding 2,000 MW yearly to meet demand
- 4 Upgrading gas power plants by adding 5,000 MW to steam sectors to increase efficiency and reduce environmental impact
- 5 Facilitating private sector electricity exports for off-peak days
- 6 Ramping up renewables with increasing renewable energy share from 1% to 20% within five years and investing in high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission technology
- 7 Distributed electricity generation by building plants of 5,000 MW in industrial zones to reduce transmission losses
- 8 Accelerating implementation of agreements between energy and industry ministries for enabling industries to construct power plants and sell excess electricity
- 9 Upgrading distribution networks with replacing aerial wires with self-supporting cables and refurbishing substations
- 10 Promoting efficiency through collaboration with engineering bodies to enhance building and appliance standards
- 11 Installing more smart meters across the network
- 12 Providing accurate and detailed data on power production and limitations

Power stations fuel mix and constraints

Currently, 85% of thermal power stations in Iran use natural gas, 9% use diesel, and 6% use mazut. In contrast, the US utilizes a more diverse energy mix. Iran exports less than 1% and imports under 2% of its total electricity needs.

As electric vehicle presence in Iran grows, an additional 10,000 MW in capacity will be required. This year, consumption management mainly involved limiting industrial usage, causing significant losses to the sector. Iran's electricity consumption per GDP is inefficient, with electricity-intensive peaks for roughly 300 hours annually, demanding reserve power solutions.

