

## Rasht-Astara railway construction deal to be inked soon:

**Envoy**



**Economy Desk**

Iran's ambassador to Russia said on Monday that the Rasht-Astara railway route would not change as the ultimate expense has been determined, adding that the final agreement would be signed soon as the Iranian side is ready to finalize the project.

Talking to ILNA, Kazem Jalali also stated that Iran must accelerate its own efforts to increase its share of transit revenues with greater presence in trade routes. "The world will not wait for our inactive presence in trade routes, so we must strive to speed up our measures."

"President Masoud Pezeshkian and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin had agreements regarding this project during Pezeshkian's recent visit to Kazan," the envoy said, adding that the Iranian president is earnestly following up on the signing of the deal.

Russia is fully interested in the Rasht-Astara railway project, Jalali stressed, noting that with the formation of the new government in Iran, the implementation of the projects will gain momentum.

The Iranian ambassador emphasized that Russians will also invest in Iran's energy projects, adding, "Russia is negotiating with Iran on the gas swap, and the talks are underway. Most of the negotiations have been finalized, and some minor issues have been raised that will be resolved in the near future."

About the amount of Russian investment in the Iranian energy sector, we do not yet have an accurate estimate, but the project is to establish a gas pipeline from Russia through Azerbaijan to Iran, Jalali concluded.

Iran and Russia see the 162 km Rasht-Astara railway as an important link in the International North-South Transport Corridor. In addition to the Rasht-Astara railway line, Russia is interested in investing in the construction of a railway with a Russian gauge from Parsabad to Bandar Abbas, Jalali said at a meeting with Pezeshkian on Saturday.

At the meeting, Pezeshkian stressed that the development of railway infrastructure from north to south will bring significant benefits to both the country's economy and its citizens, and will also meet the needs of Iran and Russia. The Iranian president instructed to speed up the implementation of the Rasht-Astara line project.

# CBI to allocate \$3b to production units

**Economy Desk**

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will provide 2 quadrillion rials (approximately \$3 billion) in cash to the country's production units, according to the CBI governor.

The CBI has plans to help providing liquidity to production units, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Mohammadreza Farzin said on Monday, reported IRNA.

"For more than a year, we have been looking for a base for our policies in the currency area, and we will bring the currency to a unified market or an exchange market based on the auction price," the official stated.

Farzin went on to say that in the field of exports, measures have been designed to offer more facilities to Iranian exporters.

"The upcoming reforms by the CBI will be gradual, as we believe that there should be no shock to Iran's economy, because once a shock is created, the side effects resulting from it cannot be treated," he noted. The CBI is working to increase capital, and has announced that bank capital will increase by 2.5 quadrillion rials (approximately \$3.75 billion) this [Iranian] year, and each state-run bank must have at least 200 trillion



Governor of the Central Bank of Iran Mohammadreza Farzin (c) speaks to reporters in Tehran on November 18, 2024.  
cbi.ir

rials (approximately \$300 million) in capital by the end of the year (March 20, 2025), Farzin added. The CBI governor, noting that the most burden has

been put on the banking system to provide financing, emphasized, "We are pursuing non-inflationary financing, and we are working with the Ministry

of Economy to attract foreign investment." Farzin said, "If we can issue bonds valued at \$2 billion needed for financing, we can do a lot of great things."

"Recently, the sale of bonds has begun by the CBI, and the mechanisms for this have been implemented since last year," the official stated.

## Deputy minister: Iran produces 70% of gasoline with Euro-grade quality



**Economy Desk**

Iran meets 70 percent of its gasoline needs with

Euro-grade quality and 64 percent of produced diesel is in accordance with Euro-grade stan-

dard, as announced by the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) on Monday. Mohammad-Sadeq Azimifar, referring to the importance of implementing quality improvement projects in the oil refining industry, stated, "The Clean Air Act requires the Ministry of Oil to provide its products including gasoline and diesel

with Euro-4 and Euro-5 standards within three years," ISNA reported. The implementation of the quality improvement projects of crude oil in the refining industry, which has been halted for years, has turned into a national challenge, the deputy minister said. He went on to say that over the past three months, the NIORDC has added about eight million liters of gasoline per day, equivalent to 7 to 8

percent of the country's gasoline production, to the refineries' capacity, in order to reduce the dependence on gasoline imports and provide a better quality of gasoline to consumers. Iran's gasoline consumption averaged 124.5 million liters per day from the start of the [Iranian] year (March 20) through November 2, representing a 7.4% increase compared to the same period last year, when the

average was 116 million liters per day, according to the NIOPDC's managing director. Speaking in a press conference in Tehran on November 4, Keramat Veys-Karami also said Iran mainly imports gasoline through swap deals, with the country importing an average of 8.5 million liters of gasoline per day in the first six months of the current year (March 20-September 21).

## Anti-Iran resolution...

Others, however, have taken a more optimistic view, emphasizing the director-general's meetings with Iranian officials and Tehran's promise to cooperate with the IAEA, expressing hope that Iran's differences with the agency will be ironed out through cooperation. This group of analysts has understood Grossi's unprecedented visit to Iran's two nuclear sites (Fordo and Natanz) as a sign of Iran's good faith intention to cooperate. In this context, it is expected that Grossi's report, following his visit to Tehran and consultations, will focus on the future of Iran-IAEA cooperation in a way that will prompt the European troika to put the brakes on issuing a new resolution against Iran and escalating tensions. This is especially true given

that a new Iranian government with a platform of engagement and dialogue has taken office. Past experiences at the Board of Governors' meetings have shown that unconstructive measures, such as passing a resolution, have pushed Tehran to react by increasing its nuclear activities and limiting some of the IAEA's monitoring in Iran. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on social media after meeting with Grossi in Tehran, referring to his frank and important discussions with the director-general and emphasizing that Iran would continue its full cooperation with the IAEA. "Now it's the turn of the European Union and the three European countries. We are ready to negotiate based on our national interests and

undeniable rights, but we will not negotiate under pressure and intimidation," Araghchi said. It appears that Europeans have dragged some of their non-nuclear grievances with Iran, such as allegations of Tehran's military support for Russia against Ukraine, into the nuclear file. They recently imposed sanctions on Iranian airlines and yesterday, the European Council announced that it had blacklisted Iran's shipping lines, as well as four Iranian and Russian entities, for their alleged role in transferring Iranian drones to Russia for use in the Ukraine war. Although the claims of Iran sending missiles and drones to Russia for use against Ukraine have not been proven, officials in Iran's new government have expressed their willingness to engage

in dialogue with Europeans to clear up misunderstandings on this issue. Regardless, the path Europe has chosen to take with Iran is not a recipe for resolving differences, but rather a recipe for escalating them. During his previous presidency, Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal burned many bridges and inflicted unnecessary costs to both Iran and the West. The JCPOA is set to expire in a year, and according to Resolution 2231, Iran's file will be removed from the UN Security Council's agenda. There are speculations that Europeans might try to use the "snapback" mechanism during the remaining time to revive the sanctions that were lifted and bring Iran's file back to the Security Council, which would mark

the beginning of a confrontational approach instead of cooperation, with negative consequences for both sides. Esmail Baghaei, the spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, emphasized yesterday during a press conference that this confrontational approach by some European countries would not benefit anyone. Meanwhile, Laurence Norman, a Wall Street Journal reporter who covers nuclear issues, tweeted on the eve of the Board of Governors' meeting: "As far as I can tell in Vienna, nothing as yet on Iran is nailed down for this week." The prospect of Donald Trump's return to the White House has raised the speculation that US-Europe differences over NATO will resurface, while the humanitarian and economic crises caused

by the Ukraine war, and the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts will continue to plague the world. It is unclear what problem Europe aims to solve in the continent or the world by adopting a confrontational approach with Iran. As Araghchi said, it is now Europe's turn to show its willingness to reduce tensions and strengthen tranquility and stability for cooperation. According to Reuters, the US has not been involved in drafting a resolution against Iran at the Board of Governors, although it will support it if it is proposed. Therefore, the Board of Governors' meeting will be a crucial test for Europe to see whether it values the opportunity to cooperate with Iran's new government or chooses a costly and turbulent path of confrontation.