

New capital, new era:

Puzzle of relocating capital, a step toward development



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OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

For decades, the idea of relocating Iran's political and economic capital from Tehran, located in the heart of the central plateau, to another region—especially the southern coasts—has been a recurring topic. This proposal stems from the ongoing crises Tehran faces, including water shortages, excessive population density, traffic congestion, and air pollution. It also reflects the broader geopolitical shifts at the regional and global levels. The plan aims to harness the untapped potential of the southern coastal regions and fundamentally restructure the country's political and economic framework.



President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday touched on the launch of feasibility studies for the relocation of the Iranian capital, Tehran, a proposal he had put forward in September as the only viable solution.

In separate meetings with the members of the parliament members of Hormuzgan and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces, Pezeshkian stated that Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref has been tasked with overseeing the examination of this plan, adding that ignoring this issue could lead the country to face environmental crises and other various problems in the future.

During a visit to an infrastructure exhibition by the Khatam-ol Anbiya Construction Headquarters in September, President Masoud Pezeshkian, along with top military officials, emphasized the necessity of uniting the country's resources to fully implement the national development plans. He acknowledged the challenges facing the country and expressed a bold vision: "Continued development under the current approach is not feasible. We cannot keep extracting resources from the south, transporting them to the center, processing them, and then exporting them back through the south. This has severely weakened our competitive edge. Our only option is to relocate the political and economic hub closer to the sea."

The president's remarks highlight his concern for Iran's future, particularly its economic and environmental sustainability. He stressed that Tehran's issues—such as water scarcity, subsidence, and air pollution—cannot be resolved under current policies. Instead, relocat-

ing the political and economic capital to the south is seen as the only viable solution. Importantly, he recognized that such a shift cannot be achieved by simply asking citizens to move; the government must lead the way, relocating first and setting an example for the nation to follow.

President Pezeshkian's analysis touches on several critical points. First, he critiques the inefficiencies of the current economic model, which involves transporting resources from the south to the center, only to export them back through the southern ports. He argues that relocating the economic hub would enhance Iran's competitiveness by bringing production closer to resources and easing exports, leading to economic growth

and greater public satisfaction. Secondly, the president made it clear that the government must spearhead this transition. His commitment to a leadership role in relocating the capital reflects a serious and practical approach to addressing the nation's major challenges. Collectively, his remarks indicate the 14th government's determination to implement structural changes in the country's political and economic landscape.

Challenges in relocating the capital

While the relocation plan offers potential benefits, it also faces significant challenges. One of the most pressing concerns is the enormous financial cost of moving government institutions and infrastructure. Social, cultural, and security

issues, as well as the impact on Iran's international relations, further complicate the project. Extensive research across multiple disciplines—economics, sociology, geography, politics, and security—is necessary to evaluate the feasibility and consequences of such a move. From an economic perspective, one of the main advantages of relocating the capital to the southern coasts is the development of these regions. The southern areas, with their access to open seas and international shipping routes, hold the potential to become economic hubs. This relocation could spur the growth of ports, transportation infrastructure, and free trade zones, contributing to Iran's overall economic and commercial progress.

Politically, relocating the cap-

ital closer to the southern coasts could also strengthen Iran's strategic position. Proximity to the Persian Gulf and open waters would enhance Iran's regional influence, allowing the country to better capitalize on its geopolitical advantages.

Infrastructure and execution challenges

The southern coastlines, despite their potential, face serious challenges in terms of infrastructure. The region lacks the major investments needed in transportation, energy, and technology. Under current sanctions, building the necessary infrastructure—such as energy facilities and advanced digital networks—will not be swift or easy.

Additionally, relocating govern-

ment bodies, academic institutions, and cultural centers from Tehran to the southern coasts may encounter social and cultural resistance. Cities like Tehran have deep historical roots and play a central role in Iran's cultural and political identity. Moving these institutions could disrupt people's lives and create social unrest. Furthermore, the country's outdated bureaucratic structures would require comprehensive reforms to ensure the efficient relocation of institutions and government bodies.

Security is another major consideration. The southern coasts, while strategically positioned, are vulnerable to new security threats due to their proximity to the Persian Gulf and open waters. Therefore, advanced defense infrastructure and non-military security measures must be integrated into the planning of the new capital.

Social and cultural shifts

Relocating Iran's political and economic heart would lead to profound changes in the country's social and cultural fabric. This shift, while creating new opportunities for national development, could also reduce regional disparities and promote greater national unity. Historically underdeveloped southern regions, when given more attention, could become centers of growth and prosperity, reversing the longstanding trend of centralization. Investment in these regions could unlock their human and natural resources, creating jobs and improving living standards. This could, in turn, lead to reverse migration from the overpopulated central cities back to the southern coasts. Moreover, relocating the cap-

