

Pezeshkian calls for private sector involvement to promote blue economy

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, speaking at a session on the development of the blue economy on Sunday, emphasized the critical importance of maritime industries, particularly shipbuilding.

He noted that the current administration is highly focused on addressing challenges, opportunities and potentials in the sector, according to president.ir.

The president urged the formulation of a clear, up-to-date strategy tailored to current conditions and stressed that an effective plan requires a comprehensive understanding of the current state of maritime industries, with detailed development goals and achievements outlined for the next five years.

Pezeshkian highlighted the necessity of involving the private sector in maritime industries and emphasized the need to establish economic frameworks and commercial guidelines to support maritime-focused economic development plans.

Commenting on a report presented by relevant officials on the state of the country's commercial ships and

shipbuilding industries, the president tasked the ministers with overseeing shipbuilding and the head of the Plan and Budget Organization with examining the challenges in the sector.

He instructed them to develop a government framework for uplifting the industry and present it to the cabinet for approval in the coming days.

During the session, Ali Abdolizadeh, the president's representative for coordinating the implementation of maritime development policies and other officials delivered reports on the state of shipbuilding industries, its outlook, and the associated challenges.

The president directed related ministers to prepare a more detailed report for discussion in an upcoming meeting. Additionally, Head of the Plan and Budget Organization Hamid Pourmohammadi presented a report on the development of Chabahar and Makoran, highlighting opportunities for agricultural, road, and railroad expansion in the region.

Pourmohammadi, speaking at the session, pointed to Chabahar's capacities, stating that if the necessary resources and development plans are effectively implemented, the country could be-



come self-sufficient in banana imports. He added that fodder and dates produced in the region could significantly

transform the national economy. The president instructed that the report be thoroughly reviewed and submitted

to the presidential office to facilitate decisions during his next visit to Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

ASEAN bent on meaningful engagement with Iran, all partners: Envoy

Economy Desk

Malaysia's ambassador to Iran highlighted the unwavering commitment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to constructive engagement with all partners, including Iran. The conference explored opportunities for engagement between Iran and the ASEAN, a 10-member organization established in 1967 by Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, later joined by Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei, IRNA reported.

Speakers also included Iranian Ambassador to ASEAN Mohammad Boroujerdi and Khalil Shirgholami, deputy director of the Foreign Ministry's Department for International Studies; and Khairi Bin Omar, Malaysia's Ambassador to Iran.

Speaking during a conference in Tehran on ASEAN-Iran cooperation, Khairi Bin Omar outlined his country's priorities as it prepares to chair ASEAN in 2025. He emphasized that Malaysia is dedicated to advancing ASEAN's centrality and fostering cooperation within the region and beyond.

"We are deeply aware of the responsibilities entrusted to us," he said. "The theme of our chairmanship, 'Inclusivity and Sustainability,' introduced by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, is a vision that Malaysia is proud to support."

He also acknowledged the challenges in trade between ASEAN and Iran but noted the significant rise in Iranian tourist arrivals to ASEAN countries as an indicator of untapped potential. This underscores opportunities for collaboration in various sectors, he added.

"Malaysia will ensure ASEAN remains steadfast in its commitment to meaningful engagement with all partners, in-

cluding Iran," the ambassador concluded.

Iran-ASEAN significant partnership potential

Speaking at the conference, Boroujerdi emphasized Iran's significant potential for collaboration with ASEAN and highlighted the mutual benefits that such partnerships could bring. In his address, the Iranian ambassador to ASEAN stated that Southeast Asia holds a pivotal place in Iran's "Look East" policy. "The region's significance has driven Iran to expand its relations with ASEAN across political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. These ties extend beyond bilateral relations to cooperation within regional and international organizations," he said.

Iran has shown a strong interest in ASEAN over the past three decades, Boroujerdi explained.

In May 1999, Iran formally requested "sectoral dialogue partnership" with ASEAN.

However, in June 2000, ASEAN decided to defer all new partnership applications. Despite this, Iran appointed its first ambassador to ASEAN in 2011, formed a contact group of ambassadors from Economic Cooperation Organization countries in Jakarta in 2013, and joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2018.

Last year, Iran submitted a proposal signed by the late Iranian foreign minister requesting an upgrade in relations to "development partnership" with ASEAN.

Strengthening Iran-ASEAN ties

Boroujerdi noted ongoing efforts to showcase Iran's capacities to ASEAN members, citing discussions with ASEAN's secretary, member state ambas-



sadors in Jakarta, and officials in ASEAN capitals.

"We welcome initiatives to enhance Iran-ASEAN interaction and have proposed several ideas, some of which are under active consideration," he said. Boroujerdi expressed optimism about further developments under Malaysia's chairmanship of ASEAN, stating, "I am confident that Iran-ASEAN relations will flourish and deepen during Malaysia's presidency."

ASEAN's broader role

Shirgholami, for his part, addressed the conference and expressed hope for strengthening Iran-ASEAN cooperation.

He emphasized the transformative nature of the 21st century, which he described as the "Asian Century," marked by dynamic global shifts and a rising emphasis on Asian and Southern countries identities.

Shirgholami highlighted the shared traditions and interests of West Asia and Southeast Asia, underscoring their potential to foster empathy, synergy, and efforts for a more effective, inclusive, and equitable global order.

He praised ASEAN as a successful model of regionalism, suggesting it could serve as a blueprint for integration and collaboration in other regions, including West Asia.

"ASEAN's influence extends beyond its members, offering valuable insights for regional and global partnerships," Shirgholami concluded.

Minister: Tariffs on 78% of Iran-Eurasian trade reduced to zero

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The Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced significant developments in Iran's free trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), highlighting that 87% of goods traded between Iran and EAEU members currently benefit from zero tariffs.

Speaking on Sunday, Seyed Mohammad Atabak discussed the outcomes of his recent trip to Russia and participation in the EAEU summit in St. Petersburg, IRNA reported.

He emphasized that Iran's observer membership in the EAEU was a key item on the meeting's agenda, adding, "This membership is significant due to the large-scale economies of the member states and their collective \$900 billion trade volume globally."

Atabak noted that during the meeting, discussions were held with senior officials, including an Armenian deputy prime minister.

The minister also pointed out that the Iranian Parliament has ratified the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EAEU, and it has been approved by the parliaments of the five EAEU member states, including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia.

On Iran's acceptance into the EAEU, Atabak stated, "Iran's inclusion in this union means our formal participation in all its sessions, enabling us to exchange trade information and discuss economic issues with other members."

Highlighting the role of the private sector in Eurasian countries, Atabak stressed the need to facilitate the private sector's involvement in these markets.

He noted a significant increase in Iranian exports to EAEU



countries in recent months, although he described the current level as insufficient.

The free trade agreement, the minister said, has the potential to multiply trade exchanges and commercial interactions.

"Eurasia offers a strong market for Iranian goods," Atabak added. "Additionally, Iranian technical and engineering services have considerable potential for expansion in these countries."

The minister further underlined the role of the Trade Promotion Organization in supporting the private sector by establishing marketplaces, fairs, and exhibitions.

"This effort should simplify consular procedures to enable private sector participation in exhibitions," he said.

Atabak announced that an upcoming exhibition in Tehran will feature participation from EAEU member states, with countries like Armenia and Uzbekistan already expressing interest in attending. Regarding the activities of Iranian techno-engineering firms abroad, Atabak stated that many of these companies have a proven track record in Iran and are well-positioned to expand into neighboring countries.

"However, the main challenge for these firms is obtaining guarantees for international

tenders, he said. "President Massoud Pezeshkian is personally pursuing legislation to facilitate the issuance of guarantees needed for Iranian techno-engineering services to participate in international projects," he noted.

Iran-EAEU trade

Head of Iran Export Confederation Mohammad Lahouti announced that Iran's trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) increased by 20% in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (late March to late December 2024) compared to the same period last year.

Lahouti said in an interview with the IRNA on Saturday that the value of Iran's exports to EAEU member countries had reached \$1.5 billion in April-December.

Iran's imports from the bloc also rose to \$1.6 billion, he added.

Previous reports had suggested that imports of goods and commodities from the EAEU to Iran had increased by 16% year on year in the first 10 months of 2024 while exports from Iran to the bloc had risen by 8% over the same period. The figures showed that trade had nearly doubled since the implementation of a preferential trade agreement between the EAEU and Iran in 2018.