

## Tehran, Seoul discuss cooperation in AI, smart governance

Iran's minister of communications and information technology emphasized the need to implement previous agreements between Tehran and Seoul, outlining potential areas of collaboration in Artificial Intelligence (AI), smart government initiatives and fiber optic technology. During a meeting on Monday with Kim Junpyo, South Korea's ambassador to Iran, Sattar Hashemi highlighted the importance of executing existing agreements. "If these agreements require further action, they should be prioritized," he said. Hashemi noted past cooperation between the two countries in smart government projects, which had stalled in recent years and expressed hope that the collaboration would resume with the necessary measures in place. The minister also identified the digital economy and optical fiber projects as additional areas for cooperation, saying, "Given South Korea's expertise in optical fiber projects, we are keen to leverage this experience for the development of Iran's optical fiber infrastructure." Hashemi raised the issue of 5G connectivity, pointing out that newer Samsung models now support 5G in Iran.

He also asked the South Korean ambassador to explore the possibility of enabling 5G support for older South Korean-made phone models.

The minister described AI as a promising field for bilateral cooperation, stressing the importance of acting during the current "golden window of opportunity." He added, "We can actively collaborate and make significant progress in this area."

Ambassador Kim Junpyo echoed the sentiment, describing the potential for cooperation between Tehran and Seoul as vast and expressed hope that the two countries could share their experiences, particularly in e-government and smart government initiatives.

Kim highlighted South Korea's advancements in AI, noting that the country currently ranks sixth or seventh globally and is aiming to reach third place, saying, "We can collaborate with Iran in this field as well." The ambassador also mentioned past efforts to train specialized ICT personnel and emphasized the potential to continue such cooperation.

The meeting was attended by Hamid Fattahi, deputy minister and head of the Communications Regulatory Authority, and Mohammad-Mohsen Sadr, head of the Information Technology Organization, who discussed potential areas of collaboration with the South Korean ambassador.

# €10b invested in Chabahar petchem projects to end unprocessed sales

The CEO of Negin Mokran Petrochemical Development Company (NMPC) of Chabahar announced that approximately €10 billion has been invested in the third petrochemical hub to build petrochemical complexes and complete the value chain for methane gas.

The investment aims to eliminate the sale of raw petrochemical products once the industrial park's phases are completed. Alireza Moniri-Abianeh told IRNA on Tuesday that the Makoran Petrochemical Industrial Park includes six mega-projects and 22 downstream petrochemical units.

He said that, according to the planned timeline, the necessary utilities—such as water, electricity, steam, and other support services—along with two petrochemical units, will be operational by summer 2025.

He emphasized that the knowledge generated in the country's third petrochemical hub is a valuable asset. "Iran's petrochemical industry, now 63 years old, previously established two hubs in Mahshahr and Assaluyeh under relevant governments." Moniri-Abianeh highlighted that one of the key initiatives of the Makoran Petrochemical Industrial Park is the employment of local workers. Over 5,000 people are currently employed at the site, with more than 50% being local hires.

He added that, in addition to employing local workers, the project has established technical and vocational training centers



and a petrochemical high school in Chabahar to empower the local community and provide skilled labor for the region's industries.

Moniri-Abianeh recounted the history of the Makoran Petrochemical Industrial Park, noting that its development began after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's directive to develop the Makoran coast.

In spring 2011 (Iranian calendar year of 1390), during a provincial cabinet visit to Sistan and Baluchestan,

the government approved the establishment of the country's third petrochemical hub in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone, a site previously designated by the Oil Ministry.

He explained that in the same year, following the government's approval, an agreement was reached between the then-ministers of oil and defense to assign the Ministry of Defense as the chief developer for the project. The Ministry of Defense utilized the capabilities of Shastan Company, owned by the Armed Forces

Pension Fund, and established NMPC to build the industrial park with private sector involvement.

Moniri-Abianeh noted that the Makoran Petrochemical Industrial Park in Chabahar, known as the country's third petrochemical hub, marks the first experience of private sector-led petrochemical development in a free trade zone.

Over the years, the project has also developed and formalized the rules governing such developments.

He added that the industrial park includes 18 investment and infrastructure projects, seven of which are petrochemical projects being implemented in partnership with companies and investment holdings. The park spans 1,260 hectares.

The CEO stated that the majority of products from the Negin Makoran Petrochemical Complex will be exported, while the remainder will serve as feedstock for downstream petrochemical complexes and industries in domestic markets.

## Iran-Europe flights to resume on January 31



Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Hossein Pourfarzaneh announced that the Islamic Republic would resume flights to Europe late this month. Pourfarzaneh made the announcement during a news conference in Tehran on Monday, saying that the first flight will be carried out from Tehran to Paris on January 31, IRNA reported. The Tehran-Paris flight is set to be carried out by Iranian private airline, Iran Airtour Airlines, the

official said. Another Iranian airline, Qeshm Air, will also carry out flights to "two European destinations," he said, adding that further details will be announced later. Flights between Iran and Europe were suspended in mid-October 2024 after the EU imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic over allegations that it had sent drones to Russia for use in the Ukraine war. Iran vehemently denied the allegations. Pourfarzaneh described

the embargo as unprofessional and cruel, saying that the resumption of flights is the result of a month of efforts made by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, CAO, and Iran Airtour. He said that the flights were required to be established again in order to assist people on health issues, and procurement of medicines. There are currently no flights between Tehran and London, but the Iranian authorities are making efforts to re-establish them, he added.

## Daily gasoline output up by 10m liters in four months: NIORDC



The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) announced that gasoline production increased daily by more than 10 million liters in the four months ending December 20, 2024 owing to technical measures. According to the company's report, the average daily production of motor gasoline in the first five months of the year (March 20 to Aug. 21, 2024) was 97.5 million liters. This figure rose to an average of 107 million liters per day by the ninth month of Iranian calendar year, IRNA reported. The increase in daily gasoline production

was distributed as follows: Isfahan Refinery (1.8 million liters), Imam Khomeini Shazand Refinery (3.3 million liters), Bandar Abbas Refinery (0.8 million liters), Tabriz Refinery (0.3 million liters), Tehran Refinery (0.5 million liters), Persian Gulf Star Refinery (3.2 million liters), Shiraz Refinery (0.1 million liters), and Lavan Oil Refinery (0.1 million liters). In a related development, Mohsen Paknejad, during a meeting of the Oil Ministry's deputies on Jan. 11, attended by First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref, stated that the increase in crude oil feedstock for refineries led to a daily production boost

of 10 million liters of gasoline and 11 million liters of diesel. Paknejad emphasized that the rise in petroleum product production has prevented significant foreign currency outflows for imports of these products. Mohammad-Sadeq Azimifar, CEO of the NIORDC, also noted during the meeting that the current administration's refining projects, such as the Shiraz Refinery's isomerization unit, the Abadan Refinery's hydrocracker unit, and process improvements in refineries, have added 10 million liters to gasoline production and 11 million liters to diesel production.