

Aref: Iran's ties with world countries based on national interests, priorities

African market could become promising export destination for Iran

Economy Desk

During the first meeting of the "Africa Task Force" on Monday, Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the importance of Africa in the ideology of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

He stated that the current administration, aligned with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's vision, values relations with countries within Iran's civilizational sphere and African nations.

The vice president, addressing the task force, composed of members from various ministries and organizations, said, "We believe in engaging with most countries worldwide based on our national interests and the interests of our counterparts."

Aref added that the foreign policy's priority for establishing relations includes Islamic countries, neighboring nations, regional



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organizations, and the African continent.

While economic benefits for both sides are crucial, the Revolution's cultural and value-based approach transcends mere economics, he stressed, noting

that Iran could achieve greater success in both cultural and economic spheres.

Th VP described Africa as a promising market with over 1.4 billion people, offering opportunities for

exports and meeting Iran's needs in essential goods and agricultural products. "Given Iran's climatic challenges and water scarcity, the continent is vital for sustainable agricultural supply chains," the top of

ficial stated.

A task force for all of Africa

Aref told the task force that despite past difficulties, Iran has now established the Africa Task

Force. He noted that while African countries are diverse, their challenges are similar, allowing for a unified strategy for cooperation.

He acknowledged that past efforts in Africa were inconsistent, with limited progress often halted by leadership changes. Aref emphasized the need for a stronger presence, leveraging Iran's cultural, economic, and technical expertise to achieve significant outcomes.

Time for action

Aref stated that the government supports robust engagement with Africa. While cultural and economic reports appear positive, practical efforts have been lacking. Competitors have strengthened their foothold during Iran's absence, but Africa still holds significant potential for Iran.

He urged the Africa Task Force to prioritize and advance initiatives, utilizing diplomatic, scientific, and technological capabilities.

Strengthening cultural and scientific diplomacy is essential, with Iranian universities playing a key role.

Aref underscored the high educational standards of Iranian universities, noting that African students could serve as cultural ambassadors.

Placing premium on techno-engineering services

Aref emphasized the global competitiveness of Iran's technical and engineering services, noting their quality and affordability.

While opportunities in Africa were missed in the past, it is now time to make up for lost ground, he stressed.

The Africa Task Force was established during the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, former president of Iran, following his visit to Africa and the creation of the Supreme Council for Africa in the early 1990s.

Non-oil exports register 18% rise in 10 months: TPO

Economy Desk

Non-oil exports from Iran reached approximately \$48 billion in the first 10 months of the current year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025), marking an 18% increase compared to the same period last year, according to figures by the Trade Promotion Organization.

During this period, Iran's total foreign trade amounted to 158.18 million tons, valued at \$103.846 billion. Of this, more than 127.396 million tons, worth \$47.755 billion, were attributed to exports, reflecting a 12% increase in volume and an 18% rise in value, IRNA wrote.

China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey were the primary destinations for Iran's non-oil exports, with China importing \$12.3 billion worth of goods, followed by Iraq at \$10 billion, the UAE at \$5.9 billion, and Turkey at \$5.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Iran imported 30.783 million tons of goods valued at \$56 billion during the same period, representing a 3% decrease in volume but a 3% increase in value compared to the previous year.

Major exported goods included natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and bitumen.

Key imports during this period included \$6.3 billion worth of gold bullion, \$2.3 billion in animal feed corn, \$1.8 billion in smartphones, and \$1.6 billion in soybean meal.

The UAE was the largest source of imports at \$17 billion, followed by China (\$14.4 billion), Turkey (\$9.9 billion), and Germany (\$1.9 billion).

Additionally, 41,297 vehicles valued at \$877 million were imported into Iran by the end of the 10th month of the year (January 19), reflecting a 709% increase in quantity and a 744% rise in value compared to the same period last year.

ICT minister in Dubai:

Iran as major AI player in Persian Gulf, ready for regional cooperation

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Information and Communication Technology Seyed Sattar Hashemi said on Monday Tehran is a key player in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Persian Gulf region and is firm in launching cooperation with the regional countries in the emerging field.

He made the remarks at the Iran Corridor 2025 conference held in Dubai that showcased the rapidly growing areas of telecommunication technology, innovation, and connectivity in Iran, wrote ict.gov.ir. In his inaugural speech, the minister stated that the Persian Gulf region has a pivotal role in the evolving AI ecosystem.

"AI is reshaping how we approach challenges and seize opportunities. It is not only a technological revolution rather a catalyst for economic growth and social transformation. This region possesses unique strengths that causes us to harness AI's potential and become a global digital leader."

Hashemi went on to say that as regional countries increasingly invest in AI infrastructure, they lay the cornerstone for innovation-driven economies that shape the future.

"The Persian Gulf region offers an unparalleled opportunity to foster AI initiatives that cater to our collective



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aspirations. By cultivating environments that encourage collaboration and investment, we can transform our region into a powerhouse of AI excellence, attracting global tech giants while strengthening intraregional partnership for shared prosperity," he noted. As a major stakeholder in the regional digital landscape, Iran brings invaluable assets to the table, the minister said, adding, "Our domestic mobile phone operator, with over 50 million users as well as thriving digital service platforms such as Snapp! and digikala, each serving more than 30 million users, provide an abundance of multifaceted data -- an essential ingredient for AI development."

"Despite facing economic sanctions, Iran has successfully developed a resilient fintech ecosystem that continues to thrive and innovate. Moreover, our country's academic

and research capabilities have propelled us to the forefront of AI advancements," Hashemi stated.

"In 2023, Iran ranked second in the region in terms of the number and quality of scientific papers in AI, demonstrating our commitment to cutting-edge research and development. Moreover, Iran holds the second position in the region for AI developers, highlighting the depth of our skilled workforce and stands fourth in the region in terms of the number of AI firms, showcasing our dynamic and rapidly growing ecosystem."

The minister said our human capital, available at competitive costs is a strategic advantage that positions Iran as a valuable partner in regional AI initiatives.

"This combination of talent, data, and innovation makes Iran a key player in the regional AI value chain, capable

of driving meaningful cooperation and development. Looking ahead, Iran is committed to fostering regional cooperation and building a future where AI promotes prosperity and unity."

He went on to say, "We propose a strategic framework for collaboration that leverages our collective strengths, combining Iran's skilled human capital and its infrastructure with the investment capabilities and infrastructure of our neighboring countries. By establishing AI acceleration hubs, facilitating joint investment in free zones, and enhancing academic collaboration and elite exchange programs, we can unlock new opportunities for innovation and economic growth."

The usability of regional processing capacity by Iranian companies, along with the creation of shared ecosystems, will enhance our collective competitiveness on the global stage, Hashemi noted, adding that, "We envision a future where the Persian Gulf region emerges as a leading force in AI development, driving solutions that address our shared challenges and propel us toward a prosperous future."

He concluded his speech by saying, "Together, let us act boldly, invest wisely, and transform our shared vision into a reality because the future of AI belongs to us. The time to act is now."

Hemmati stresses significance of Iran's oil sanctions removal



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The Iranian economy minister wrote on the X social media platform that lifting Iran's oil sanctions at present holds greater economic importance than ever before.

"The share of the US dollar in global reserves has decreased from 65% in 2016 to 58%. Even before his election, Trump attributed the dollar's weakness to flawed US policies in sanctioning countries," Abdolnaser Hemmati said in a Persian-language post. "The US government's focus on trade tariffs is another indication of the failure of its sanction policies and the futility of maintaining maximum pressure against Iran," he added.

Hemmati argued that, "With Canada threatening to halt oil sales to the US due to a 25% tariff imposed on Canadian goods, lifting Iran's oil sanctions now carries more economic significance than ever."