

Iran, India committed to Chabahar project despite US threats: *Araghchi*

Economy Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran and India are committed to completing the development of the southern Iranian port city of Chabahar, despite threats of sanctions from the United States.

"Iran and India, as two major Asian civilizations, have always had close ties," Araghchi told India's WION News in Muscat on Sunday, where he attended a foreign ministerial meeting of Indian Ocean littoral countries. Although relations between the two nations have experienced ups and downs throughout history, both Iran and India are determined to continue their friendly ties, the foreign minister said.

He emphasized, however, that problems hindering the expansion of ties between Iran and India have always been caused by interventions from third parties. Araghchi criticized a decision by Washington to stop exempting India's involvement in the development of Chabahar Port from US sanctions.

"We are aware that the Indians are consulting with the US; therefore, we leave them free to make their own decisions."

In May 2024, Iran and India

signed a 10-year contract to develop Chabahar, Iran's only ocean port on the Sea of Oman.

On the sidelines of the event on Sunday and in a meeting with Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Araghchi reviewed various aspects of the relations between the two countries in various political, cultural, economic, and trade fields, and exchanged views on regional and international issues, especially the situation in Afghanistan.

Iran's 'lost paradise' of Makoran. Addressing the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in the Omani capital of Muscat on Sunday, Araghchi highlighted the significance of the Makoran coast along the Sea of Oman, saying the "lost paradise" must be transformed into the economic hub of Iran and the region.

"The Makoran coast holds a special place," said Araghchi during his speech. "These shores, whose natural and economic potential had been overlooked for centuries, have now become a national development priority."

"The lost paradise of Makoran must be transformed into the future economic hub of Iran and the region," he stressed.

The foreign minister further said



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (standing) delivers his speech at the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in the Omani capital of Muscat on February 16, 2025. [mfa.ir](#)

the Islamic Republic believes that its coasts are not merely natural borders but gateways connecting the country to the global economy.

Iran has placed a "maritime-oriented" policy at the forefront of its strategic development, he said, adding that the government has devised a plan for the devel-

opment of ports, maritime transportation, and the establishment of a regional supply chain.

"A country with over 5,800 kilometers of coastline — 4,900 kilometers of which stretches across its south along this vast ocean — cannot remain indifferent to its future. Developing a maritime-based economy is not just an option for Iran; it is an imperative," he maintained.

As a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Iran affirms its commitment to multilateralism, as well

as economic and security cooperation in the region.

"Maritime security should be ensured by regional countries' In his speech, Araghchi also underlined the importance of ensuring maritime security through cooperation between the countries in the region, saying the issue should not be used as leverage by outside powers.

"We believe that maritime security should not be used as a lever for pressure or influence by extra-regional powers; rather, it should be the outcome of cooperation among regional nations,"

he said.

He also noted that Iran's Navy, in cooperation with regional states, has consistently played a part in anti-piracy operations, combating drug trafficking and organized crime, and ensuring navigational security.

The top Iranian diplomat further warned that certain extra-regional powers seek to exploit political, economic, and security gaps in the region and undermine natural cooperation among regional countries.

"We cannot allow the geopolitical rivalries of global powers to determine the future of this region," he stated. "Decisions about the destiny of the Indian Ocean must be made by the countries of this region and shall serve the interests of their people."

Hosting participants from over 60 countries and international organizations, the two-day conference began on Sunday under the theme "Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership," aimed at highlighting the importance of inclusivity and building new partnerships in the maritime sector. Araghchi said that the theme of the conference is not a mere slogan and reflects a historical necessity for all countries in the region.

Aref urges delegation of tasks to skilled private sector

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In a meeting with Sattar Beheshti, Iran's minister of communications and information technology (CIT), along with senior officials from the ministry, the country's vice president emphasized the need to delegate responsibilities to the skilled private sector.

Mohammadreza Aref highlighted the importance of advancing Iran's position in emerging communication and information technology fields, stating, "Cybersecurity is a critical priority for us. We must invest seriously in this area and collaborate with elite academics and university experts." The meeting, held Saturday evening at the Ministry of CIT, focused on Iran's progress in the digital economy and the role of self-confidence in achieving success.

The VP recalled the early post-Islamic Revolution years

when foreign technicians left the country, leaving behind unused telephone systems.

He praised young, motivated Iranian technicians who stepped in to establish digital infrastructure at the time, laying the groundwork for the country's transition from analog to digital systems.

Key roles of CIT Ministry

Vice President Aref outlined two primary roles for the ministry: creating jobs and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP).

He noted that while the law mandates 20% of job creation to occur in this sector, there is potential for even greater employment opportunities in the digital economy through increased efforts.

He added that under the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28), the ministry is tasked with contributing 10% to the GDP, but

he believes the sector has the capacity to reach 15% if necessary conditions are met.

Emphasis on int'l cooperation

The vice president stressed the importance of international collaboration, particularly with neighboring countries.

He highlighted Iran's participation in regional agreements such as ECO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, and EAEU, noting that cultural similarities make these countries eager to cooperate with Iran. He also called for active engagement in international scientific forums and institutions.

He emphasized the role of specialized diplomacy in supporting political diplomacy, citing successful examples in Africa.

Cybersecurity a top priority

The vice president underscored the im-



portance of cybersecurity, urging continued collaboration with universities and relevant ministries.

He called for increased support for research and development in this field, particularly through partnerships with elite academics.

Aref also highlighted the need for cultural development in cybersecurity and encryption, praising the efforts of the Iranian Society of Cryptology in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.

Bridging digital divide

The VP emphasized the need

to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural areas, ensuring that high-speed internet access available in cities is extended to rural regions.

He also stressed the importance of prioritizing emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and quantum encryption. He also highlighted the significance of the National Information Network as a key national priority, calling for public awareness and engagement with experts and users.

Space activities, financial challenges

Following a recent announce-

ment by the Iranian Space Agency about the upcoming launch of a micro-class satellite, the vice president praised the agency's efforts, emphasizing the importance of boldness in space activities.

Aref reiterated the government's commitment to supporting this sector and advancing Iran's position in space technology.

He acknowledged financial challenges but assured that the government would support efforts to generate revenue through asset utilization.

Minister's remarks

The minister of CIT, for his part, welcomed the vice president, noting Aref's past leadership in the ministry.

Hashemi described the Vice President's presence as "hopeful and encouraging" for the ministry's staff, emphasizing that he was not a guest but a member of the family.

During the meeting, ministry officials provided detailed updates on various initiatives, including e-government and smart government projects, industrial automation, regulatory efforts, and advancements in space research and digital economy investments.

Hemmati says OPEC Fund to finance Iranian contractors

Economy Desk

Iran's minister of economic affairs and finance announced negotiations with the head of the OPEC Fund, along with an agreement to secure financing for Iranian contractors in international projects through the fund.

Abdolnaser Hemmati, the economy minister, who traveled to AlUla, Saudi Arabia, to attend an annual conference on challenges and opportunities facing emerg-

ing economies, met with Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, the head of the OPEC Fund, on the sidelines of the event, IRNA reported.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Hemmati stated, "We have reached good agreements with the OPEC Fund's president. Accordingly, the fund, which provides financial resources for our country, will enable Iranian techno-engineering service providers and contractors to access the OPEC Fund's

resources."

The minister added, "More importantly, as an active member of the OPEC Fund, we will increase our participation and presence in its meetings. Furthermore, representatives from the fund will visit Tehran and engage with members of the Chamber of Commerce and Iranian economic players to expand cooperation at the regional level."

Hemmati traveled to Saudi Ara-

bia at the shared invitation of his Saudi counterpart and the head of the International Monetary Fund.

The minister aims to promote inclusive progress and build economic resilience through international cooperation by participating in the conference on challenges and opportunities for emerging economies and meeting with finance ministers, central bank governors, and selected policymakers.

