

Pezeshkian underscores domestic potential for smart urban management

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that the necessary potential for smart urban management exists today, and Tehran must not be allowed to face further problems due to poor decision-making.

He emphasized that the resources, expertise, and skilled workforce are available, and these capacities should be utilized to transform Tehran into a modern and sustainable city.

Speaking at the meeting of the Planning and Development Council of Tehran Province on Saturday, Pezeshkian noted that while Tehran faces numerous threats, it also holds significant opportunities.

He highlighted the city's role as the nation's capital, home to major universities, experienced industrialists, and key governmental institutions, including the Parliament, government, and Judiciary.

The president stressed that with serious determination, the country could face fewer challenges, but current management issues in Tehran are unacceptable.

Pezeshkian pointed out the lack of educational facilities in some areas of Tehran, citing reports that indicate a need for 105 schools in the city of Shahr-e Qods, while only 35 are planned. This significant gap, he said, reflects a serious shortage of educational infrastructure, emphasizing that education is a fundamental need and must be prioritized, with new housing developments required to provide adequate educational spaces.

He warned against repurposing

these spaces and expecting educational problems to resolve themselves.

The president underscored the importance of adhering to urban development principles, noting that every city allocates space for education, health, and medical services in its development plans.

Repurposing these spaces, he said, would have irreversible consequences. He warned that the future of the country depends on the younger generation, and insufficient educational spaces today would lead to social repercussions tomorrow.

Empowering education via investment

Pezeshkian emphasized the need for investment in education, stating that many social problems could be resolved through education and creating a suitable environment for nurturing the next generation. If this path is followed correctly today, he said, there would be no need for late interventions in the future.

He called for community involvement in addressing educational shortages, urging residents, officials, and relevant institutions to come together and advocate for solutions. He noted that many factories and industries in Tehran have social responsibilities and can play a role in addressing these challenges.

The president expressed concern that 90% of the country's elites consider leaving Iran, attributing this to flaws in the educational system. He stressed the need to foster a sense of belonging to the country, culture, and society among students.

Pezeshkian highlighted the role of universities in solving the country's problems, noting that Tehran's major universities in economics, engineering, social sciences, and other fields can provide practical solutions.

He criticized the underutilization of academic expertise in addressing challenges, emphasizing that shortages and issues can be resolved with the help of experts. He rejected a directive approach to solving national problems, urging universities to take responsibility and step forward. He also called for greater coordination between scientific and executive institutions to address challenges.

On transportation, Pezeshkian emphasized the need to optimize infrastructure and improve inter-city coordination. He noted that Tehran's rail network connects to various parts of the country, and this capacity should be utilized effectively.

He stressed that creating a cohesive transportation network between Tehran and other cities is not a complex task and requires coordination between municipal and provincial management.

The president highlighted Tehran's economic and human resources, stating that the city has sufficient financial resources, skilled manpower, and extensive economic opportunities. He saw no reason for significant obstacles in addressing infrastructure issues in the capital.

Pezeshkian reiterated the importance of leveraging academic capacities, not just in Tehran but nationwide, to solve challenges in other cities as well.

He emphasized the need for collaboration among officials

and executive bodies to address transportation and other urban challenges.

Pezeshkian noted that Tehran occupies less than 1% of the country's area but houses over 20% of Iran's population. If resources and consumption are not managed properly, significant urban management issues will arise. He emphasized that the main issue is not relocating the capital but managing resources correctly. He warned that the imbalance between resources and consumption is a form of divine punishment, as resources have not been utilized properly and have often been overused.

The president called on elites and managers to address Tehran's crises, stating that all the country's experts, specialists, and senior managers are concentrated in Tehran. He emphasized that understanding the problems is not enough; planning and determination to implement solutions are essential.

Curbing migration to capital

Pezeshkian stressed the need to control migration to Tehran, as the city can no longer accommodate large-scale migration. Uncontrolled construction has led to the need for demolition orders, which could have been prevented. He reiterated that with the potential for smart city management, Tehran must not be allowed to face greater problems due to poor decisions. The resources, expertise, and skilled workforce are available and must be used to transform Tehran into a modern, sustainable city.

The president emphasized the importance of recognizing prob-



The meeting of the Planning and Development Council of Tehran Province convenes under the chairmanship of President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) with the presence of provincial officials at the Tehran Governor General's Office on March 15, 2025.

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lems and planning scientifically to solve them. He noted that the best managers, specialists, and resources are concentrated in Tehran, but other cities have not provided growth opportunities for elites nurtured by the country. He stressed that these elites and managers must solve their own problems before addressing national issues.

He emphasized the need for practical solutions to education and health issues, calling for cooperation among provincial governments, municipalities, and city councils. He stressed that if the future of the country's children is a priority, land for school construction must be allocated, and municipalities must play a key role in this process.

The president called for advocacy in education, urging education managers in each province to form advocacy teams and clearly state their needs. He emphasized that councils, the government, provincial administrations, and Parliament must work together to address these issues, ensur-

ing that education quality is not compromised by a lack of space and resources.

Pezeshkian addressed imbalances in water, energy, and gas, stating that solving these problems requires scientific solutions, national unity, and determination. He emphasized that once a path is chosen, there should be no hesitation in its implementation. The president highlighted the energy crisis, noting that imbalances in water, electricity, and gas are among the country's most pressing challenges. Reports indicate that power shortages have temporarily shut down some industrial units, and without precise management, gas cuts would have been necessary in some regions during winter. Recent shutdowns were primarily due to air pollution, but energy shortages also played a role.

In conclusion, Pezeshkian outlined the government's plan to increase the authority of governor generals, enabling them to address regional problems more effectively.

Iran, Turkey to establish joint border special zone: Minister



Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd speaks during the inauguration of a 61-kilometer road and highway project in West Azarbaijan Province on March 15, 2025.

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Economy Desk

West Azarbaijan Province, with six active border crossings shared with three neighboring countries, holds a unique strategic position, and Iran is moving forward with plans to establish a joint border special zone with Turkey, said Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd on Saturday.

Sadeq-Malvajerd made the remarks during the inauguration of a 61-kilometer road and highway project in West Azarbaijan Province. The project includes the 31-kilometer Khoy-Qotur-Razi route and 30 kilometers of road construction valued at 16.5 trillion rials.

She emphasized that the newly opened section is part of the East-West Corridor, a critical transit route connecting Iran

to international markets. Another segment of the corridor was inaugurated in East Azarbaijan Province three days earlier, extending toward the Tamarchin border. West Azarbaijan Province, located in northwestern Iran, shares borders with Turkey, Iraq, and Azerbaijan. Its strategic location makes it a vital hub for regional trade and transit. The province's six active border crossings facilitate the movement of goods, tourists, and travelers, contributing significantly to Iran's economy. The proposed joint border zone with Turkey aims to enhance cross-border trade and strengthen economic ties between the two nations.

The minister highlighted the broader impact of transit corridors, noting that they not only improve livelihoods in cit-

ies along the routes but also influence economic activity across the region and the country.

"The volume of goods, tourists, and passengers moving through these corridors leads to sustainable economic growth," Sadeq-Malvajerd said.

She added that Iran's unique geopolitical position and frequent sanctions make the development of transit routes crucial for building resilience against external pressures.

Sadeq-Malvajerd also addressed road safety ahead of the upcoming Nowruz (Persian New Year) travel season, urging drivers to exercise caution and enjoy their journeys responsibly. She pledged that the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development is fully prepared to enhance travel services and reduce accidents by addressing high-risk areas.

"Our goal is to reduce traffic fatalities and protect the lives of our citizens, especially the younger generation who will shape the future of this country," she said.

Steel production declines by 6.7% due to energy shortages: ISPA

Economy Desk

The Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) released data showing a 6.7% decline in Iran's steel production over the first 11 months of the Persian calendar year 1403 (March 20, 2024 to February 18, 2025). The drop is attributed to imbalances in the industry, including severe electricity and gas shortages.

According to ISPA figures, the decline in steel production has intensified due to energy constraints, wrote IRNA.

The production drop, which stood at 4.8% in the first nine months of the year, rose to 5.5% by the 10-month mark and reached 6.7% in the latest 11-month report. Energy limitations have reduced the country's semi-finished steel production by approximately 2 million metric tons, valued at around \$1 billion. About 75% of this decline occurred in steel billet production, highlighting the disproportionate impact of electricity and gas shortages on small and

medium-sized private sector units.

Iran's steel industry, a key pillar of its economy, has faced some challenges in recent years. The sector, which contributes significantly to the country's non-oil exports, has been hit by international sanctions, fluctuating global demand, and domestic energy shortages.

Iran holds some of the world's largest iron ore reserves, but its steel production capacity has been constrained by outdated infrastructure and insufficient investment in modernization. Additionally, the government's focus on increasing self-sufficiency in steel production has often clashed with the realities of energy supply limitations, particularly in natural gas and electricity, which are critical for steel manufacturing. Severe gas restrictions have also hampered the production of newly operational direct-reduced iron (DRI) plants. While iron ore concentrate production has increased, pellet production has de-



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clined. After billets, rebar experienced the steepest drop in production within the steel supply chain, primarily due to a sharp downturn in the domestic market and reduced exports.

Steel exports decline by 13%

Export data for the first 11 months of the year shows a 13% decline in the value of Iran's steel chain exports, equivalent to \$892 million. This marks a significant increase from the \$792 million drop reported in the first nine months. Billets and slabs, Iran's primary steel export products, saw the largest volume declines at 17% and 29%,

respectively. On a positive note, exports of raw materials in the steel chain, including iron ore concentrate and pellets, have continued to grow. Sponge iron (and briquette) exports also rose by 14%, with most of the growth occurring in the first half of the year.

The decline in steel production and exports underscores some challenges facing Iran's industrial sector. As the government seeks to boost non-oil exports and reduce reliance on crude oil revenues, addressing energy shortages and modernizing infrastructure will be critical to reviving the steel industry and sustaining economic growth.