

MP: Iran plans settlement expansion on Persian Gulf islands



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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

An Iranian parliamentarian announced the government's plans for housing construction and improving residential settlements on the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf. In an interview with Iran Daily, Abdulkarim Hashemi, the representative of the southern province of Hormozgan and member of the parliament's Plan, Budget and Accounting Committee, said the government had plans for enhancing residential facilities on the three islands.

Hashemi addressed unfounded claims against Iran's territorial integrity, emphasizing, "The three islands are inseparable parts of the Islamic Republic; these islands have been Iranian for many long years and will remain Iranian forever."

Referring to Iran's historical sovereignty over the three islands, he stated, "These islands have been part of Iran's governance during eras when many of the

current Persian Gulf states had not yet been formed."

The islands have historically been part of Iran for many centuries, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless legal, historical and geographical documents in Iran and other countries. But the UAE has questioned Iran's sovereignty over the islands over the past decades.

Iran has time and again stressed that the three islands are an "integral part of Iran's territory," and advised the Arab country not to take positions undermining bilateral friendship.

The member of the parliament's Plan, Budget and Accounting Committee added, "In this context, the Islamic Republic and its governing institutions, including the government and Parliament, are pursuing programs to develop the Iranian islands of the Persian Gulf. This includes implementing plans and activities to revitalize the islands and attract populations from various regions of the country."

"Job creation on the islands is also a priority to eliminate concerns about employment for those residing there. Additionally, enhanced services for families living on these islands and for employees of executive agencies sta-

tioned there have been planned." "To increase the population of the three islands, recent measures include allocating land to applicants for housing construction and providing incentives in this regard," the parliamentarian stressed.

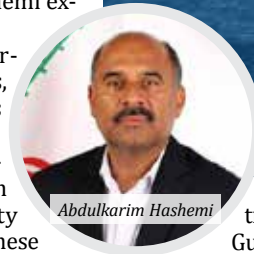
"Developmental initiatives on the three islands began during the previous administration but have intensified under the current government. Prioritizing the three islands does not imply neglect of Iran's other Persian Gulf islands. Hormozgan Province has 14 islands in the Persian Gulf, and provincial authorities are advancing development plans across all of them," Hashemi explained.

On the strategic importance of the three islands, he elaborated, "Iran's three islands hold a strategic position in the Persian Gulf and are of high significance in security and economic matters. These islands possess substantial untapped potential for development in economic sectors, agriculture, and tourism."

"Located near the Strait of Hormuz and along key shipping routes, they serve as critical hubs for maritime navigation and



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Abdulkarim Hashemi

trade in the Persian Gulf," he stated.

Regarding tourism potential, he noted, "Due to their unique geographical location and warm, humid climate — particularly during colder seasons — these islands can provide travelers with a warm and temperate environment."

Acknowledging existing challenges, Hashemi said, "The primary obstacle hindering the three islands from achieving adequate development has been their considerable distance from the mainland. Additionally, the islands have lacked proper passenger transportation infrastructure. To address this, im-

proving freight and passenger transport infrastructure as well as service facilities for the three islands must be prioritized. This will encourage more people to settle there. Simultaneously, developing recreational and tourism amenities will attract visitors to choose these islands as destinations."

Exports to Americas grow 4.5-fold amid expanding trade with Europe: TPO



Economy Desk

Iran's exports to the Americas in the past Iranian calendar year — 1403 — (began on March 20, 2024) increased 4.5-fold compared to the previous year — 1402 — (began on March 20, 2023), according to the head of Europe and America Office at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

"Iran's exports to the Americas in 1403 grew 4.5-fold compared to 1402, and only one step remains to implement a free trade agreement between Iran and Venezuela after 20 years," IRNA quoted Ahmad Firoozi as saying.

On Sunday, Director-General of the TPO's Europe and America Office announced the growth in Iran's exports to the Americas, saying, "Iran's imports from the Americas in 1403 saw a slight decrease compared to 1402. However, exports to this region experienced a 4.5-fold rise in the same period. For example, Iran's official exports to Brazil in 1403

grew 8.5-fold compared to 1402."

Addressing Iran-Europe trade in 1403, he said, "Trade between Iran and Europe witnessed a minor decline this year, occurring under circumstances where Iran faces restrictions in accessing European markets. It should be noted, however, that this assessment is based on official statistics. Unofficial data indicates that Iranian traders maintain their presence in European markets by collaborating with third countries, utilizing alternative routes to supply Iranian goods to Europe." Firoozi highlighted the increase in Iran's trade centers in Europe, "In 1403, the [Trade Promotion] organization issued permits to establish trade centers in Serbia, Oman, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These centers will significantly contribute to expanding Iran's private sector trade with Europe. Additionally, Iran's second commercial attaché in Europe was stationed in Hun-

gary during 1403."

He also emphasized efforts to access new markets, "Specialized meetings were held in 1403 to facilitate Iranian traders' access to new markets, with Canada and Mexico among the targeted countries in the Americas. Concurrently, the Trade Development Organization has intensified efforts to finalize trade agreements in line with the government policies. In this regard, substantial progress has been made toward establishing free trade with Venezuela. Only one step remains to implement the Iran-Venezuela free trade agreement in 1404 (began on March 20, 2025), after two decades of preparations."

Regarding other trade agreements, Firoozi added, "Negotiations to conclude a free trade agreement with Serbia commenced in 1403. Preferential trade agreements with Cuba and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also revised during this period. Furthermore, efforts to finalize a barter trade agreement with Cuba are currently underway."

Firoozi expressed hope that this year, despite the increasing speed of developments in global trade and the challenges posed by tariffs, we will see the fruits of the foundational achievements made in recent years, including the implementation of free trade, preferential, and barter agreements, and benefit from the results of efforts made to access new markets.

Iran-Eurasia free trade to take effect in mid-May Rial-based SWIFT system operational

Economy Desk

Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states are about to launch a landmark zero-tariff free trade agreement next month, marking a historic leap in regional economic integration after seven years of negotiations.

"Under the finalized agreement, the implementation of a zero-tariff free trade regime between Iran and member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will commence simultaneously in Iran and EAEU countries on May 15, 2024," Mirhadi Seyedi, an advisor for international affairs and trade agreements at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

In an interview with Tasnim, Seyedi stated that the free trade agreement between Iran and the five-member Eurasian Economic Union — comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Armenia — was ratified by

the parliaments of all six countries after nearly seven years of negotiations and was officially notified on March 16.

"Per the agreement, implementation begins 60 days after the final ratification by all parties. Following coordinated efforts, the agreement will take effect simultaneously in Iran and EAEU countries on May 15," he added.

Regarding expectations for the agreement, Seyedi said, "Over half of global trade currently occurs under similar agreements, which eliminate or reduce tariffs between nations. This framework provides a more secure and cost-effective pathway for commercial goods."

Emphasizing the agreement's significance for Iran, he explained, "This marks the first time Iran has implemented such a comprehensive agreement, reducing customs tariffs to zero. The deal effectively comprises five distinct agreements between Iran and each of the five Eurasian states."

"Once implemented, 87% of Iran's exported goods to these five countries will benefit from zero customs tariffs. This will substantially facilitate and accelerate trade between Iran and the EAEU member states," Seyedi continued.

Rial-based SWIFT system

Seyedi also highlighted financial advancements, stating, "In the realm of financial facilitation, a Rial- and Ruble-based SWIFT system has been established, enabling financial transfers between Iran and other countries, particularly Russia. Additionally, Iran's National Bank has revolutionized financial transactions by founding the Mir Business Bank in Russia." Concluding his remarks, Seyedi noted, "This agreement, which builds on interim accords dating back to October–November 2019, has already driven significant improvements in transportation and financial exchanges between Iran and Eurasian nations."

Iran's first coal-fired power plant to be operational in four years

Economy Desk

Iran's first coal-fired power plant in Tabas, located in South Khorasan Province, will be operational in at least four years, according to an official with the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH).

"The construction period for the first steam power plant unit typically requires 4 to 5 years under normal circumstances. However, given the partial existing infrastructure in Tabas, the operationalization of this plant could be achieved in the best-case scenario within three and a half years," Director of TPPH Steam Power Plant Projects

Behnam Khaefi-Nejad was reported as saying by Mehr news agency.

"Coal-fired power plant construction has been prioritized for years, with the National Energy Document outlining plans for 5,000 megawatts (MW) of such capacity," Khaefi-Nejad said, adding, "The Supreme Energy Council also passed a resolution on this matter in the early 2010s."

According to the official, comprehensive studies for coal-fired power plant construction in Iran have been completed, including site selection and capacity determination, with a focus on the southern coastal regions —

particularly the Makoran coast — to identify suitable locations. Khaefi-Nejad underlined that the Tabas project includes two steam units, each with a capacity of 325 MW.

"The existing strategy for coal-fired power plant development requires revision. Globally, these plants are built near open waters due to their higher water consumption, especially coal-fired steam plants compared to similar-capacity alternatives. Given the severe water crisis in Iran's central regions, decision-makers are now approaching coal-fired power plant expansion with greater caution," he further elaborated.