

# Iran's non-oil trade with neighbors up by 21% last year: IRICA

Tehran-Riyadh commerce registered historic 6,483% leap



## Economy Desk

Iran's non-oil trade with its 15 neighboring countries surged by 21% in the last Persian calendar year, 1403 (began on March 20, 2024), reaching \$74.317 billion. Among these nations, Saudi Arabia recorded the highest growth rate.

Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Foroud Asgari announced that the total weight of non-oil trade with these countries stood at 112.813 million tons during this period, marking a 16% year-on-year increase, Mehr reported.

"The UAE accounted for the largest share of Iran's non-oil trade with neighboring states at \$29.183 billion, followed by Turkey (\$19.363 billion), Iraq (\$12.508 billion), Pakistan (\$3.129 billion), and Afghanistan (\$2.479 billion)," he stated.

Regarding value-based growth, Asgari noted, "In 1403, Iran's non-oil trade with Saudi Arabia grew by 6,483%, Turkey by 63%, Qatar by 46%, and Afghanistan by 28% compared to the previous year, representing the highest increases among neighboring nations."

He added, "Trade with Saudi Arabia in 1403 totaled 61,000 tons, valued at \$25 million."

Breaking down the figures, Asgari highlighted that Iran's non-oil exports to the 15 neighbors amounted to 89.384 million tons worth \$36.012 billion, while imports totaled 23.429 million tons valued at \$38.305 billion.

"Non-oil exports to these countries rose by 22% in weight and 26% in value year-on-year," he explained. "Imports, meanwhile, remained stable in weight but increased by 17% in value during the same period."

## Communications Ministry, NDFI sign AI development agreement

### Economy Desk

The National Development Fund of Iran (NDFI) and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on smart governance and AI-driven economic initiatives.

The agreement was formalized on Saturday by Communications Minister Sattar Hashemi and Mehdi Ghazanfari, CEO of the National Development Fund, IRNA reported.

The MoU aims to synergize efforts by facilitating financing for high-speed processors, boosting ICT sector investments, and developing an inclusive digital economy and AI ecosystem. It further focuses on advancing the space industry, postal services, and logistics through digital transformation, smart technologies, and innovation, while expanding markets for knowledge-based, creative, and tech-driven products and services — all in compliance with NDFI regulations.

### Saving \$25b in energy

Prior to the signing, Hashemi emphasized the need



for nationwide tech modernization to enhance industrial productivity, saying, "By implementing smart technologies nationwide, we could boost productivity by 15% to 25%, equivalent to \$25 billion in savings."

Hashemi underscored technology's transformative role across sectors and said, "Innovation profoundly impacts education, healthcare, services, and the economy. However, Iran ranks 60th globally in AI readiness, trailing region-

al peers like Saudi Arabia (14th) and the UAE (20th)," highlighting stark investment disparities, he added, "Saudi Arabia has invested approximately \$20 billion in AI and smart technologies, while the UAE allocated \$1.4 billion. In contrast, Iran's investments total under \$50 million."

The minister stressed urgent action to close this gap, stressing, "Prioritizing ICT investments — led primarily by the private sector — will help achieve our ministry's goals within a



Communications Minister Sattar Hashemi (R) shakes hands with CEO of the National Development Fund Mehdi Ghazanfari after signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on smart governance and AI-driven economic initiatives in Tehran on April 12, 2025.  
● MOHSEN VANAIE/IRNA

reasonable timeframe and support this year's national development priorities." "These partnerships will amplify the ICT sector's critical role in driving economic growth and industrial production," he said.

## Oil minister to visit Iraq for deals as ties in energy remain 'strong'



### Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Oil Mohsen Paknejad announced plans to travel to Iraq in the coming days, stating his country has established "strong relations and cooperation with Iraq across various sectors, particularly in the oil industry and joint oil project implementation."

In an interview with SHANA, Paknejad said that he will visit the neighboring country at the invitation of its oil minister, Hayyan Abdul Ghani, adding, "Previous collaborative frameworks between the two countries have already been discussed."

The oil minister expressed hope "to finalize and sign memorandums of understanding in the energy sector during this trip."

Paknejad previously met with Ziad Ali Fadel, Iraq's minister of electricity, in March 2024 at Iran's Ministry of Oil. Both sides stressed the need to expand

cooperation in oil, gas, petrochemicals, and electricity.

Iraq relies on direct electricity imports from Iran for 4-10% of its domestic demand for power while natural gas imported from Iran is responsible for some 43% of the electricity generation in the Arab country's power plants.

The United States announced in early March that it had revoked a waiver from its Iran sanctions that allowed Iraq to pay for electricity imports from its eastern neighbor.

The move was in line with US President Donald Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which seeks to force the country into political and military concessions by piling pressure on its energy sales.

Paknejad has consistently advocated for strengthening Iran's international energy partnerships, particularly with neighboring nations, under a globally oriented strategy.

## Tayebnia tops list for Economy Ministry nomination

### Economy Desk

Ali Tayebnia was named as a proposed candidate by the government to Parliament for the Ministry of Economy and currently tops the list of nominees, as announced by the executive vice president.

"After expert evaluations and extensive consultations, we

have presented the president with a list of qualified candidates to lead the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, with Ali Tayebnia at the forefront," Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah said on Saturday. The announcement follows the impeachment of former Economy minister Abdolnasser Hemmati on March 2, 2024, which

passed with 182 votes in favor of removing and 89 against the motion. Rahmatollah Akrami was subsequently appointed as acting minister, ISNA reported. Iranian lawmakers voted to remove Hemmati from office over economic problems and the sharp devaluation of the national currency. On the free market at the time, rial was

trading at more than 920,000 against the US dollar, compared with approximately 580,000 in mid-2024.

Under parliamentary rules, the president has a three-month window from the impeachment date to submit a nominee for the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance to Parliament.

Tayebnia, 65, served as Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance from 2013 to 2017 under the 12th Iranian administration.

In the current (14th) administration, he was appointed as Senior Advisor to President Masoud Pezeshkian in August 2024 and remains active in this capacity.



Ali Tayebnia