

# Tehran boosts diplomacy with Russia, Serbia, Spain at Expo 2025

**Economy Desk**

The head of the Iran International Exhibitions Company met with officials from Russia, Serbia, and Spain specializing in trade fairs during the 7th Exhibition of Iran's Export Capabilities, Iran Expo 2025. Discussions focused on expanding bilateral collaboration in organizing such events. Sodaif Beykzadeh held talks with exhibition officials from the three European countries to discuss expanding bilateral exhibition cooperation. In a meeting with Sergei Selivanov, the deputy director-general of the Moscow Expo Center, the two sides reviewed actionable steps to implement recent exhibition agreements and negotiations. The

discussions focused on facilitating broader participation of Iranian and Russian companies in mutually agreed exhibitions and advancing joint international cooperation in the exhibition sector. During a session with Milan Čukić, the deputy mayor of Belgrade — attended by Iran's Commercial Attaché in Serbia — Beykzadeh highlighted his company's strategy to strengthen international partnerships. He expressed hope that continued follow-up on negotiations and mutual commitment to expanding exhibition collaboration would further elevate bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries. In a separate meeting with Gonzalez Bar-

ragan, the Middle East representative of the Barcelona International Fair, the two sides acknowledged Spain's historical participation in Iranian industrial exhibitions and emphasized the potential for Iranian firms to showcase their production and export capabilities in Spanish exhibitions. Both sides called for diversifying bilateral trade, enhancing exhibition ties between Tehran and Barcelona, and facilitating reciprocal trade delegations. The 7th Exhibition of Iran's Export Capabilities, Iran Expo 2025, officially kicked off on Monday at the Tehran International Fairgrounds, drawing 190 official delegates and over 3,100 foreign business leaders and stakeholders from 111 countries.



## Top Russian carmaker eyes localization project in Iran



**Economy Desk**

Russia's largest car manufacturer AvtoVAZ eyes to launch a localization project in Iran where it can assemble the latest version of its popular Lada model. AvtoVAZ CEO Maxim Sokolov said that launching assembly lines and dealerships in Iran will give the company a "certain competitive advantage." Sokolov told the official news agency Tass that, "... we are betting heavily on the Iranian direction and expect that our dealership will open there soon." He said that a business partner from Iran, which he did not identify, has asked for the entire product line of AvtoVAZ's Lada model, including its new Iskra model. The CEO said that Iskra would be "one step ahead" of the majority of cars currently assembled and manufactured in Iran. AvtoVAZ seeks to expand its exports of Lada in 2025 with a special focus on markets of Iran, Kazakhstan and Vietnam, according to

statements from the company. Iranians have a good memory of old Lada models, which were famous for their safety and reliability when they hit the roads in the 1970s, Press TV reported. AvtoVAZ's plans to break into the Iranian market have faced difficulties in recent years, mainly because of US sanctions on Iran. However, growing cooperation between the automotive companies of Iran and Russia in recent years seems to have made it easier for Russian cars to enter the Iranian market. The cooperation deepened since early 2022, when major international automotive companies, including Renault, which owned shares in AvtoVAZ, left Russia because of Western sanctions imposed over the war in Ukraine. Iran's two largest carmakers, IKCO and SAIPA, have signed contracts for exports of cars and parts to Russia. Reports have also shown that carmakers from the two countries seek to launch joint manufacturing projects in the future.

## Exports from Aras Free Trade Zone hit \$200m last year: CEO

**Economy Desk**

Head of Aras Free Trade Zone Hadi Moqaddamzadeh announced \$200 million in exports from the zone last year, saying, "Exports to Azerbaijan last year amounted to \$11 million, while imports from Azerbaijan stood at \$12,000." Speaking to reporters at the Iran Expo 2025 regarding Iran-Azerbaijan cooperation, Moqaddamzadeh said, "The joint conference between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran underscores the need to expand these interactions and exchanges across various fields, particularly in trade," ISNA reported. When asked whether there is a shared zone with Azerbaijan, he replied, "Given our geographical position and shared borders with Caucasus and Eurasian countries, as well as existing agreements — such as the transit routes connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan, the railway line, and other provisions in the overarching agreement — we have a foundation to leverage these frameworks across multiple sectors." "Shared economic processes and mechanisms could be structured within a joint free zone framework, enabling Iranian and Azerbaijani investors to capitalize on opportunities aligned with both nations' capacities," he said. Moqaddamzadeh added that Aras Free Trade Zone boasts unique industrial and agricul-



tural capacities driven by sustainable water resources, as well as significant tourism potential. Highlighting the \$200 million in exports from Aras, he noted, "Exports to Azerbaijan last year (began on March 20, 2024 - 1403) totaled \$11 million, with imports at \$12,000. While trade with Azerbaijan exists at this scale, it remains insufficient given that Aras is one of the most industrialized free trade zones. We must adopt a more investment-focused approach to meet the target markets and needs of our neighboring country." He also addressed infrastructure development, saying, "Road infrastructure is fully operational. The free zone has contributed to completing the highway, and the Kalaleh-Jolfa route is a critical

asset. Furthermore, connecting the Siyahrood Zone to Kalaleh would integrate east-west and north-south corridors, positioning Aras as the region's logistics hub." Moqaddamzadeh underlined that Aras Free Trade Zone holds unparalleled tourism potential, noting, "In 1404 (began on March 20, 2025), Aras ranked first among free zones based on criteria set by the secretariat of the country's Organization of Free Trade-Industrial Zones." Concluding the press gaggle, he stressed, "We must prioritize infrastructure development. Greater attention should be given to tourism infrastructure, lodging facilities, and streamlining transit by completing road and railway projects."

## Expo, int'l confabs ...



It is therefore fair to say that the current landscape is highly conducive to renewed international interest in engaging with Iran. The presence of 39 countries at the

Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference, and participation of over 100 nations in Expo 2025 — both held in Tehran this week — sends a clear message that the tide has turned. The pressure campaign of previous years has lost steam, mainly due to the diminished clout of US political tools and the eroding credibility of Western media. Western powers are still intent on keeping Iran in the cold, but the broad international turnout at these two economic gatherings underscores a key shift: the West's political and media toolkit is not packing the same punch it once did. And that, indeed, is a development of real significance. One of the key pillars of Iran's strategy for achieving 8% economic growth is the expansion of effective, mutually beneficial, and well-structured relations with other countries. This comes at a time when certain Iranian industries—as well as parts of the private sector—have developed a strong po-

tential to break into global markets. Some Iranian products have now reached a level of quality that makes them highly attractive to international buyers. Moreover, many domestic industries currently depend heavily on exports not only to survive but also to move up the value chain and enter more advanced stages of production. Meanwhile, a number of African nations are themselves coming into their own economically and are well-positioned to take in Iranian exports, technology, and technical engineering services. Iran's private sector is also well-equipped to get involved in infrastructure projects abroad—such as the construction of silos, bridges, and power transmission lines, as well as gas pipelines and refineries. The country possesses strong technological capabilities and, by taking part in such ventures, stands to bring in substantial revenue. In light of this, Iran currently enjoys very favorable

conditions for sustainable economic growth. Some African nations, in particular, are ideal partners for buying up Iran's electrical and construction products. Others offer excellent conditions for overseas farming initiatives, which could help Iran boost its food security. There are also resource-rich countries with mineral reserves that Iran—despite its own wealth of mines—still has a need for. In addition, some African nations produce high-demand agricultural goods such as coffee, bananas, and coconuts—items that are widely consumed in Iran but are not easily grown domestically. This type of categorization clearly demonstrates that, with careful planning, Iran can tap into each of these areas to fuel its own economic growth while returning the favor by offering valuable cooperation to African countries—many of which are already looking on Iran with optimism and goodwill.