

# Iran could play key transit role as junction of three continents: VP

## Aref set to meet UN chief in Turkmenistan

### Economy Desk

Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref declared Iran possesses an "exceptional position in the transit sector," citing its role as "the central hub connecting the three major continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa." On Monday, prior to his departure for Turkmenistan to participate in the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Awaza, Aref outlined the objectives of this trip, IRNA reported.

He stated the Iranian government's strategy is "the extensive and wide-ranging development of cooperation with neighboring and regional countries."

"32 developing countries in the world are landlocked, meaning they lack access to open waters, and eight of these countries are located in our region," Aref said.

The vice president said, "With the strategy we have in the government for extensive and wide-ranging development in all sectors, we enjoy good relations with these countries," adding, "The goal is to review the cooperation we can have with all landlocked developing countries, particularly these eight (neighboring) countries. We have good interactions with these countries."

Referring to Masoud Pezeshkian's recent visit to Pakistan, Aref emphasized, "As we predicted, the president's visit to Pakistan was beneficial for developing regional relations and beneficial for the Islamic world."

He expressed hope that this trip will also lead to strengthened relations in all sectors, especially the transit sector. As part of the programs during Pezeshkian's official visit to the neighboring country, 12 cooperation agreements were signed on Sunday, aimed at fa-



Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref outlines the objectives of his trip prior to departure for Turkmenistan on August 4, 2025.  
● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

cilitating and paving the way for the development of mutual cooperation across various sectors. The main areas covered by the signed agreements include tourism, agriculture, judicial and legal cooperation, industry, science and technology, transportation and transit, cultural heritage, and commercial and economic cooperation.

The first vice president underscored that the country has declared its readiness "to connect the landlocked countries to open waters."

He announced his sideline programs include a meeting with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, along with planned talks with senior



Turkmen officials. He will also hold meetings with several other heads of state on bilateral, multilateral, and international issues."

## Power generation capacity increases by 5,000 MW, minister says



### Economy Desk

The Iranian Minister of Energy announced that over 5,000 megawatts have been added to the country's power generation capacity within the past year (began on March 20, 2024), "encompassing thermal, solar, and small-scale power plants."

During an unannounced visit by

President Masoud Pezeshkian to the Ministry of Energy and Iran's National Electricity Grid Dispatching Center, Abbas Aliabadi also stated that the country's solar power generation capacity has grown by 71% compared to last year, ISNA reported.

Aliabadi presented a report on the latest status of the national power

and water networks, emphasizing that, in total, considering thermal, solar, and small-scale power plants, over 5,000 megawatts have been added to the country's power generation capacity over the past year. According to official figures published on June 1, Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity reached 94,649 megawatts by the end of the first months of the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2025), nearing the 95,000-megawatt threshold.

Aliabadi reported an unprecedented increase in electricity consumption, the implementation of emergency blackouts, and a significant decrease in Tehran's water resources, stressing the necessity of public cooperation in managing water and electricity consumption.

He stated that the country's electricity consumption in recent days has exceeded 77,000 megawatts, with rising temperatures being the primary cause of this consumption surge." The energy minister added that each degree Celsius increase in temperature imposes hundreds of megawatts of additional load on the

grid, placing substantial pressure on the power industry.

According to Aliabadi, the ministry is striving "to increase generation capacity by commissioning new projects and minimize the implementation of emergency blackouts. However, the cooperation of consumers across various sectors and energy conservation remain unavoidable necessities."

"As part of this program, over 87,000 LED lights have been installed in public streets nationwide, resulting in savings of 57.9 million kilowatt-hours of electricity."

Aliabadi also pointed to the unbalanced growth between power production and consumption over the past decade, stating, "In the last 10 years, electricity production has increased 13-fold while consumption has risen 23-fold, leading to a grid imbalance." Regarding power generation status, he reported, "Over 102,000 megawatts of power plant maintenance has been successfully completed, and power plants are operational with 98% readiness. This year, the capacity of thermal power plants has also increased by 4,000

megawatts compared to last year." Noting a 71% increase in solar power capacity and a 5% increase in wind power capacity compared to the previous year, Aliabadi described the future of the renewable power industry as promising.

### 4,000-MW rise in thermal capacity

Additionally, Naser Eskandari, Deputy of Production Operations at the Thermal Power Plant Company, stated that the capacity of the country's thermal power plants has increased by 4,000 megawatts compared to last year, adding, "During the current hot season, thermal power plants are operating with 98% readiness." Eskandari expressed his satisfaction with the overall status of the power plants, saying, "This year's power plant maintenance has been completed with appropriate quality, and their general condition is assessed favorably."

According to the official, "Approximately 102,000 megawatts of scheduled maintenance has been fully executed, and power plants are now operating with 98% readiness."

## China not to bend to US tariff threats over Iranian oil imports

### Economy Desk

China is unlikely to back down in the face of fresh US threats to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese exports over continued purchases of Iranian oil, AP reported on Monday, citing market analysts.

It came after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in Stockholm last week that China would have to "pay a 100% tariff" on exports to the US if it persisted in importing oil under sanctions from Iran and Russia.

"It's no secret the Chinese are buying 90% of the Iranian oil," Bessent told reporters, expressing concerns about China's disregard for US sanctions.

China swiftly rejected the threat. "China will always ensure its energy supply in ways that serve our national interests," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a post on X, dismissing Washington's pressure campaign as "coercion." The ministry also vowed that China would "firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests."

Tu Xinquan, the head of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, echoed the government's stance.

"If the US is bent on imposing tariffs, China will fight to the end, and this is China's consistent official stance," he said.

China has already resisted US tariff threats. When US President Donald Trump imposed sweeping duties on dozens of countries in April, China was the only nation to strike back in kind.

Zong Peiwu, China's ambassador to Tehran, also dismissed Washington's threat, insisting that trade between China and Iran was "normal and should not be subject to unilateral sanctions imposed by a third party."

He told ISNA last week that "normal trade" between the two countries would not be negatively affected.

According to analysts, Beijing is unlikely to abandon Iranian crude due to its competitive prices. "Beijing simply can't afford to walk away from the oil from Russia and Iran," said Danny Russel, a distinguished fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, based in Washington, D.C. "It's too important a strategic energy supply, and Beijing is buying it at fire sale prices."

China reportedly purchases Iranian crude at good discounts compared to global benchmarks.



An aerial view shows a crude oil tanker at an oil terminal off Waidiao island in Zhoushan, Zhejiang Province, China, on January 4, 2023.  
● REUTERS

Despite increased US efforts to tighten the screws on Iran, latest tanker-tracking data shows Iranian oil exports have risen steadily in recent months, reaching an estimated 1.8 million barrels per day, with most of them ending up at independent refineries in eastern China, known as "teapots."

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad recently said that the country would continue to sell its oil regardless of external pressure.

## Menara initiative could ...

Given the destabilizing role of the Israeli regime, the Middle East has long needed such frameworks. While similar ideas have circulated for decades, this latest proposal of Menara envisions cooperative civilian nuclear research as a step toward a nuclear weapons-free Middle East.

The foundation of this proposal dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, but what is new is a pragmatic roadmap aimed at joint use of peaceful nuclear technology across the region. This includes collaboration in medical research, energy production, and scientific advancement. If regional countries examine this plan seriously, it could evolve into a practical formula for sustainable and shared development.

On the question of how the US and Europe might respond if the plan gains traction, two angles must be considered. Regarding Israel, as mentioned earlier, opposition will be fierce from day one. Thus, the proposal must build in mechanisms to anticipate and counteract Israeli

sabotage. Clear coordination among regional actors will be needed to prevent Tel Aviv from undermining the initiative.

As for powers like the US and Europe, current US policy places a premium on regional stability—particularly the security of allies such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Persian Gulf states. Ironically, Washington may act as a restraining force on Israel's efforts to destabilize the region entirely. The US administration is currently invested in maintaining a degree of calm, and from this standpoint, Menara could offer high value. Given its long-term nature, the plan will take time to mature. Much depends on how the region evolves. But fundamentally, any initiative that contributes to stability and order in the Middle East aligns with the interests of global powers like the United States, which is keen to contain regional costs and avoid escalation. Developmental frameworks that foster lasting peace and security are also cost-saving mechanisms for global powers.