

Iran, China step up cooperation in renewables, power storage tech

Economy Desk

A senior Iranian energy official said on Thursday that the Islamic Republic has launched close cooperation with Chinese companies in the fields of smart grid technologies, gas-insulated switchgear, energy storage systems and other related technologies, with some production lines already operating inside the country. Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, CEO of Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir), told a joint meeting with Chinese state and private firms that, "It is necessary to use modern technologies in renewable energy, electric storage systems and pumped-storage power plants," calling for the expansion of technical cooperation and transfer of up-to-date know-how to Iran, IRNA reported.

Rajabi Mashhadi said Iran was taking serious steps to expand solar energy, adding that the use of storage systems was essential for renewable growth. Pumped-storage plants would also help



stabilize Iran's vast and diverse electricity grid, he said, noting that the Energy Ministry was explicitly pursuing such projects to ensure renewable development did not cause disruptions.

Technical knowledge transfer

Tavanir has sought in past projects not only to import equipment but also to bring technical expertise into the country. Cooperation with China was expect-

ed to go beyond supplying equipment and accelerate localization of technologies, the Tavanir head said.

Reciprocal visits of expert teams and sharing operational experiences would be "an important step in deepening cooperation," he added.

During the meeting, the Chinese side cited two active contracts with Iran – a 1,500-megawatt project and a \$600 million package – and voiced interest in financing and developing new joint projects in the energy sector.

Several Iranian power equipment and battery manufacturers also attended the session to discuss technical knowledge transfer and plan future collaboration.

In January, Tehran and Beijing reached an initial agreement on Chinese investment in Iran's renewable energy sector, with a Chinese company set to cover 70 percent of the investment.

Last week, China invested \$70 million in a 200 MW solar power plant in Iran's Bushehr Province in south of the country.

Oil tanker vehicles to be equipped with monitoring systems within two years: NIORDC



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Iran's National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) has launched a major "smart supply chain" project as part of its digital transformation, with plans to install real-time monitoring systems on all of the country's oil tanker vehicles within two years, a company official said on Friday.

Farzad Barzegar, adviser to the NIORDC managing director, said the initiative prioritizes close monitoring of pipelines, tankers and refineries to boost efficiency and curb risks, including fuel smuggling. "All of the country's oil tankers will be equipped with real-time monitoring systems within two years," he said, ILNA reported.

Until the 1990s, oil transfers to refineries, refining operations, nationwide fuel distribution, and construction of refineries, pipelines and telecom networks were handled separately. But in 1991, the NIORDC was created to integrate those activities, Barzegar said. The NIORDC official said that after 35 years, the company had reached a point where, given the scale of its fuel supply and distribution operations, digitalization and smart management of Iran's petroleum supply chain had become a top priority.

Agriculture minister refutes 90% water consumption claims \$3b trade balance improvement reported

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Iran's agriculture minister said the sector consumes far less water than widely claimed and has managed to boost output and exports despite persistent drought and resource shortages.

Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah told state TV on Thursday that actual water consumption in agriculture is about 45 billion cubic meters, not the 80% to 90% of national water resources often cited, ISNA reported. "The claim that 80 to 90 percent of water resources are used in agriculture does not match reality," he said, adding that with industrial growth, rising population and greater demand for drinking and industrial water, agriculture's share had dropped significantly.

Under the Seventh Development Plan, the Energy Ministry is required to allocate about 77 billion cubic meters of water annually to agriculture, but this year's supply has not even reached 42-43 bcm, he said. Many regions have faced water shortages and a 60% cut in irrigation, one of the main reasons for lower wheat production.

Persistent drought over the past five years has drastically reduced surface and groundwater levels, putting Iran in an extremely critical water situation. According to studies and official statistics spanning six decades, this is the worst water year on record due to the absence of effective rainfall.

\$3b trade balance improvement

The minister also said that de-

spite challenges, agriculture shifted from a 2.4% contraction to 3.2% growth last year, equal to a 5-6 percentage point swing, according to the Statistical Center of Iran. Exports rose about 32% in value while imports dropped 6%, improving the agricultural trade balance by some \$3 billion to minus \$8 billion, from minus \$11 billion, he said. In the first four months of the calendar year (began on March 20, 2025), exports grew a further 11%, keeping agriculture a leading non-oil export sector.

Production gains

According to the minister, sugar output rose 28% last year, while tropical fruit production jumped 54%, results the ministry said showed self-sufficiency targets in these products were achieved.



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Nouri-Qezeljah put the agriculture sector's share of GDP at about 6 percent, but said the real figure was above 15% when related upstream and downstream activities were included, contributing to a one-percentage-point boost

to the overall economy.

He said that despite shortages of water, energy and electricity, Iranian farmers and producers had managed to maintain growth in production and exports by relying on efficiency, modern knowledge and indigenous expertise.

Chamber member urges lifting barriers to exports of engineering services



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A senior Iranian business leader called for removing obstacles hindering the export of technical and engineering services by "capable Iranian companies," saying sanctions and Iran's blacklisting by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

have sharply limited their global reach despite strong technical capacity.

Ali Nabavi, head of the Construction and Engineering Services Commission of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, told IRNA that Iranian firms were competitive

in transmission lines, oil, water, electricity and gas projects. But unlike goods exports, engineering services cannot bypass sanctions through indirect routes, he said, since in most countries governments act as employers and require costly bank guarantees. For example, he said, a Turkish firm pays about 0.5% to issue a guarantee, while an Iranian company faces costs of 3% to 4%. "Iranian engineers are technically competent and have successfully completed overseas infrastructure projects without reports of failure or abandonment," he said.

Chamber ready to establish int'l framework for exports

Nabavi stressed that engineering services require strong diplomacy, as projects are long-term and vulnerable to political or international disputes. He added that the sector needs a dedicated private-sector body, arguing the Trade Promotion Organization is

too overstretched. The chamber, he said, is ready to establish and oversee an international framework for such exports.

Engineering services, he noted, can generate more foreign currency revenue than oil exports. "If 10 Iranian companies at standard level manage to export services and each implements just two projects abroad, the foreign exchange revenue will exceed the country's total oil exports," he said.

The chamber member voiced hope that expanding banking channels and easing sanctions could help Iran tap into markets in Eurasia and the BRICS group for engineering service exports. Iran has no formal role in FATF regional groups and was placed on the watchdog's blacklist after failing to complete its corrective plan. That led FATF to call on all countries to impose restrictions on Iran and its nationals until shortcomings were resolved.



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