

Iran-Georgia trade hits record \$320m, poised for \$500m boost by 2030



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Iran’s trade with Georgia reached a record \$320 million in 2024, with prospects of hitting \$500 million over the next five years if current barriers are lifted and cooperation infrastructure is strengthened, said Arash Nikpey, head of the Trade and Tourism Commission at the Iran-Georgia Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Nikpey told Iran Daily that trade with Georgia holds strategic importance for Iran, shaped by a confluence of economic, geopolitical, and regional dynamics. Although Georgia, with a population of around 7.3 million, represents a relatively small consumer market, it serves as a strategic entry point for Iranian goods to regional and European markets. He noted that Iran can export industrial, agricultural, and food products to Georgia, leveraging it as a strategic transit corridor to access neighboring markets and Europe. With oil exports constrained

by sanctions, Georgia also presents a viable channel for expanding Tehran’s non-oil trade. Georgia is a key transit corridor between Iran and Europe. The Lapis Lazuli corridor, linking Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, offers Iran an opportunity to expand exports to European destinations, he explained. Launched in 2018, the corridor, comprising road and railway networks, serves as a vital trade-transit route spanning Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Central Europe.

Cooperation with Georgia could also reduce Iran’s dependence on specific border crossings and ports, cutting logistical and political risks, the businessman added.

Energy cooperation, investment
According to Nikpey, Iran can play a role in supplying electricity and renewable energy to Georgia while benefiting from joint investments in energy projects. Shared ventures in renewables and natural resource development



could deepen bilateral economic ties. He added that joint industrial and agricultural projects in Georgia would yield mutual benefits and strengthen trade relations. “Agriculture and food industries are promising areas of cooperation,” he said, adding that Georgia’s diverse agricultural output and Iran’s large consumer market make the two economies complementary.

Expanding cultural, tourism exchanges
Nikpey also underlined the potential for boosting tourism through shared cultural and historical ties. “Facilitating visa procedures, joint promotion campaigns, and investment in tourism infrastructure could increase tourist exchanges between the two nations.” “Cultural cooperation and joint marketing can raise awareness of Iranian products and services in Georgia—and vice versa,” he said.

Challenges
The presence of Turkey, China, and Russia as dominant players in Georgia’s market poses a competitive challenge that could restrict Iran’s trade prospects, Nikpey said. Besides, he said, Western sanctions on Tehran remain a significant impediment, particularly due to stringent banking and financial restrictions and the lack of direct banking ties between the two countries, which continues to complicate cross-border transactions.

President joins national ‘Build a School’ campaign



President Masoud Pezeshkian, joined by his executive deputy Mohammad Jafar Qaempanah, takes part symbolically in bricklaying work at a school construction site in Ahvaz, on January 23, 2025. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Thursday called on citizens and government officials to join the nationwide “Build a School” campaign, emphasizing collective participation in shaping the country’s future through education. Speaking at a ceremony honoring school benefactors in the central city of Isfahan, Pezeshkian said that national development hinges on raising a capable and committed generation, a goal that depends on the joint efforts of people and authorities, Tasnim reported. The president announced that he has personally joined the campaign and urged senior officials attending the event to do the same by contributing financially. “I ask all officials present to take part in this campaign and deposit 50 million rials (about \$45) each month from their personal income into this fund,” Pezeshkian said. Turning to his executive deputy, Mohammad Jafar Qaempanah, he added, “Transfer one month of my salary to this account.” Pezeshkian stressed that education is the foundation of national development and that investing in schools means investing in the country’s future. He called on both the public and private sectors, as well as philanthropists, to expand their participation in school construction projects across Iran. “The future of Iran belongs to the children we educate today,” he said, urging “everyone, from ordinary citizens to senior officials, to take part in building that future.”

Presidential adviser: Approving CFT would rebuild investor confidence amid snapback return

Economy Desk

Masoumeh Aqapour, the Iranian president’s adviser for economic cooperation, said that ratifying the CFT and progress to norms of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) would boost foreign investor confidence and reassure business leaders that the environment for investment remains stable and secure, especially in light of the reactivation of “snapback” sanctions. Speaking to ISNA, Aqapour said the adoption of these measures could “open even a small path for the inflow of capital” into the country and significantly assist Iran in international trade. “We hope that approving (the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism) CFT will help reduce export-related costs,” she said, noting that renewed sanctions have made economic conditions more difficult. Iran’s economy has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program. The UN also reinstated previously lifted sanctions on the country on September 29, following a “snapback” process triggered by European powers in response to concerns over Tehran’s nuclear activities. Aqapour added that endorsing the bills would serve as “a bridge of communication” with global financial institutions, minimizing excuses within the FATF framework for maintaining countermeasures



against Iran. She said the approval of the CFT and Iran’s entry onto FATF’s gray list could also strengthen domestic banking groups in the stock market. Iran had committed in 2016 to take a set of measures to meet FATF standards, following which the body suspended its countermeasures on Iran. Yet, the suspension was terminated in 2020, due to Iran’s failure to join the CFT as well as the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), known as the Palermo Convention. That led FATF to call on all countries again to impose restrictions on Iran until shortcomings were resolved. In August 2025, Iran’s top arbitration body the Expediency Council ratified the Palermo Convention

and forwarded its instrument of accession to the United Nations. Later, on October 1, the same body gave approval for joining the CFT. “Over the past decade, Iran has already implemented many FATF-related reforms in its own laws,” Aqapour told ISNA. “But pursuing this internationally would show the world that Iran does not oppose global financial regulations.” According to the presidential adviser, FATF compliance would help ease international security concerns about Iran and eventually lower the cost of financial transactions. “CFT approval is a gateway to full compliance with FATF norms,” Aqapour reiterated. “We will see the real results when the costs of money transfers are minimized and the groundwork for Iran’s foreign trade is firmly established.”

Iran expands nuclear, energy cooperation with Russia

Economy Desk

Iran and Russia are expanding cooperation in the nuclear energy sector, with plans to jointly develop small modular reactors (SMRs) in addition to their existing 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant, said Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, managing director of Iran’s Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (Tavanir). Speaking on the sidelines of the Russian Energy Week forum in Moscow, Rajabi-Mashhadi said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) is holding close negotiations with Russian companies, and several agreements are being finalized, ISNA reported. A delegation from Iran’s Oil Ministry was in Moscow to attend Russian Energy Week, held from October 15 to 17, which brought together around 5,000 representatives from 85 countries. “Our cooperation with Russian companies is expanding, particularly in



sharing experience and technical expertise in the nuclear sector,” he said, adding that Tavanir will establish optimal grid connection points for the new reactors to accelerate project implementation inside Iran. Rajabi-Mashhadi emphasized that Iran supports all regional policies that help strengthen ties with neighboring countries and promote mutual development.

Iran’s technical capabilities
Iran also has significant expertise in building hy-

droelectric power plants, he said, noting that large-scale hydro projects have been completed both domestically and in neighboring countries. “If requested, Iran is ready to continue such cooperation with other nations,” he added. Rajabi-Mashhadi said Iran ranks among the world’s top five builders of high-efficiency F-class combined-cycle power plants, with performance rates exceeding 55%. “We are ready to share our experience in this field with neighboring states,” he said.