

Iran’s saffron exports up 76% in H1 calendar year despite hurdles: *Union chief*

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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran’s saffron exports climbed to 76% in the first half of the calendar year (began on March 21) compared with the same period last year, reaching 97 tons, a senior industry official said. “Saffron exports in the first six months of last year were approximately 54 tons, a figure that has reached about 97 tons this year,” said Gholamreza Miri, head of the Khorasan Razavi Saffron Exporters Union, in comments to Iran Daily. Referring to the total amount of Iranian saffron exports last year, Miri said, “Based on Iran Customs statistics, over 214 tons of saffron worth approximately 190 million dollars were exported from the country last year, and naturally, if the upward trend of saffron exports continues this year, the total

saffron exports of the country will see significant growth compared to last year.” The union chief stressed that, “There are obstacles to exports, if removed, the amount of saffron exports from the country would exceed current predictions.” Pointing to the obstacles to saffron exports, Miri said one of the obstacles is that Iranian exporters are unable to open LCs or obtain guarantees, and are forced to export saffron with high risk because if the saffron does not reach the buyer, the exporter has no guarantee beyond the borders. The official ascribed the growth in exports to the export of saffron at low prices to secure the foreign currency needed for imports. “Some countries are direct consumers of our exported saffron, while others purchase saffron from us in bulk (e.g., 500-gram packages), perform retail packaging in their own country, and then re-export it to other countries.”

Touching on Iran’s share of the global saffron market, Miri said, “A common mistake is that some statistics are misinterpreted; for example, it is said that saffron is used in cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries, and thus the total sales of those products are registered under saffron. Based on this, the financial turnover of saffron worldwide has been estimated at 8 billion dollars, which is not a logical figure.” The union chief referred to Iran’s competitors in the global market and said, “Currently, 90% of the world’s saffron production is in Iran’s hands; therefore, we do not have serious foreign competitors in this field. Our competition is actually with ourselves and within the country, and we do not have any competitors abroad; if I want to put it more clearly, our competitors within the country are those who create obstacles for exports.” Highlighting the capacity to buy Iranian saffron in the global



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market, Miri said, “Assuming we produce even a thousand tons of saffron per year, if export barriers are removed, there is global demand for Ira-

nian saffron, and we are able to sell all the saffron produced in the country in the global market. Then, considering the price of each kilogram of saffron be-

tween 1200 and 1500 dollars, a very high figure in terms of foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and added value will be generated for the country.”

Iran picked as intermediary trade route to connect China to Europe: *Minister*



Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd
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Economy Desk

Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd announced on Sunday that Iran has been chosen as an intermediary to connect trade route from China to Europe. Sadeq Malvajerd made the statement as she was referring to the incumbent administration’s active diplomacy with neighboring countries and the key role of transportation in regional interactions. Pointing to Regional Transport Ministers’ Conference 2025 in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad on Thursday, the Iranian minister said, “In this meeting, three main axes were reviewed, the most important topics of which were the selection of Iran as an intermediary between Pakistan and the Eurasian and Caucasus countries, the selection of Pa-

kistan as China’s connection to Iran, and the transfer of Chinese cargo from Pakistan and Iran to Europe.” Sadeq Malvajerd underscored the role of transportation infrastructure in developing regional relations, saying, “The development of highways and railway infrastructure plays an effective role in facilitating Iran’s communication with neighboring countries.” She also referred to the signing of the Rasht-Astara railway contract as part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) between Iran and Russia by next month, adding, “The results of the Baku trip negotiations, focusing on guaranteeing cargo and goods transportation in the missing link of the North-South corridor, especially on the Rasht-Astara railway route, exceeded initial analyses.” The INSTC is an emerging cargo transit route connecting Indian Ocean countries to Central Asia, Russia, and Europe, which is becoming increasingly popular due to its economic and geopolitical benefits. Iran has introduced major plans to increase activity on the INSTC, including massive development projects in its only ocean port of Chabahar, located on the Sea of Oman coast in the southeast of the country, as well as in roads connecting the port to other trade hubs.

National steel production capacity soars to 33m tons

Economy Desk

The head of the Mining and Mineral Industries Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce on Sunday said the country’s steel production capacity had increased from 10 to 33 million tons, and that iron ore exports had been halted to meet domestic needs. Bahram Shakouri was cited by Mehr News Agency as saying that Iran’s annual steel production is more than 32 to 33 million tons, stressing, “Currently, the established capacity for steel production in the country is over 40 million tons per year.” Referring to the growing trend of steel production, Shakouri added, “In the past, between 45 and 50 million tons of iron ore were exported from the country, but now the export has stopped, and all extracted iron ore is absorbed and processed domestically.”

Shakouri underlined that Iran was once an importer of steel, but it has now become one of the exporters of this material. The head of the Mining and Mineral Industries Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, stating that the country’s steel production has increased from about 10 to 12 million tons to over 32 to 33 million tons, said, “This figure indicates successful investments in the steel and iron ore chain.” Shakouri stressed that the steel and iron ore industry is considered as one of the important pillars of the national economy, and due to its effective role in generating foreign exchange, industrial development, and job creation, it has always received special attention from countries. Placing a premium on the necessity of a long-term focus on the mining sector, Shakouri said



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mines, as the initial link in the chain of many industrial productions, have a close connection with industries such as steel, transportation, machinery manufacturing, petrochemicals, and construction projects. “In addition to the extraction and export of mineral raw materials, the development of the value-added chain within the country should be seriously considered to make the best use of rich mineral capacities for economic growth and job creation,” he added. Shakouri touted production and creation of added value as the keys

to sustainable economic development and increasing job opportunities in the country. In the 2000s, Iran was one of the main importers of steel and exported millions of tons of raw iron ore annually. However, with continuous investment in the steel value chain and the development of reduction and rolling units, it has transformed from an importer to an exporter over the past decade. The current goal of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade is to achieve a crude steel production capacity of 55 million tons by 2031.

South Pars pressure-boosting plan to raise Iran’s gas recovery by 20%

Economy Desk

Iran’s project to boost pressure at the South Pars gas field is expected to push up the field’s gas recovery rate by around 20%, an energy official said in remarks carried by IRNA on Monday. Mohammad-Mehdi Tavassolipour, project manager for South Pars pressure-boosting development, said the plan would make an additional 2.38 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas and 2 billion barrels of gas condensate recoverable from the field. In March, the National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC) signed a \$17-billion contract with four local firms —

Petropars, OIEC Group, MAPNA, and the Khatam al-Anbia Construction Headquarters — to carry out the pressure-boosting project at South Pars, the world’s largest gas field that Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf. Under the agreement, the field was divided into seven operational hubs, each equipped with six offshore platforms — two for power generation, two for accommodation, and two compressor platforms for gas pressurization. The hubs were assigned to the companies for pressure enhancement in their designated sections.

Tavassolipour, who represents the state-owned Pars Oil and Gas Co., responsible for coordinating the four contractors involved, said the scheme was designed to maintain production at the field, prevent gas migration towards Qatar, balance domestic supply, and ensure Iran’s energy security. He said a total of 2,820 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas, worth \$520 billion, had been extracted from South Pars by March 2025, which began pumping in 2002. “This is while the total development cost has been estimated at \$84 billion.” The official noted that the field had now entered a natural pres-

sure decline phase, which, without intervention, would lead to a gradual drop in output. Iran’s current daily gas extraction — 1.1 bcm — from South Pars exceeds that of Qatar, according to Tavassolipour. However, the Oil Ministry estimates that South Pars could see a daily production drop of 28 million cubic meters in two years, which would surge to 42 mcm per day in five years without the pressure-boosting project. The South Pars field is estimated to contain 51 tcm of natural gas and over 50 billion barrels of condensate. Iran’s share covers about 37%



Phase 13 platform of the South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf

of the total reservoir, containing 14 tcm of gas in place, of which 10 tcm are considered recoverable.