

Tehran hosts Caspian Governors’ Forum to enhance regional cooperation

Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea hold equal strategic significance: *Araghchi*

Economy Desk

Iran convened the first forum of governors from Caspian littoral provinces on Tuesday in the northern city of Rasht, signaling a strategic push to deepen regional collaboration on energy, transit corridors, environmental protection, and economic development around the world’s largest enclosed inland sea. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the two-day meeting — held under the slogan “The Caspian: A Bridge of Friendship and Regional Development” — Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized Tehran’s commitment to what he described as “provincial diplomacy,” an initiative aimed at cementing ties between subnational authorities across the Caspian region. “Just as the Persian Gulf and its surrounding areas are important to us, the Caspian Sea holds equal strategic significance,” Araghchi said. “The littoral states have long recognized the shared interests and, at times, common concerns in this region, leading us to initiate cooperative frameworks years ago.” Araghchi highlighted that Iran’s foreign policy prioritizes its neighbors, with a focus on leveraging political, economic, social, cultural, and security capacities for mutual benefit. He added that the Caspian region is “crucial not only in energy but also in transit corridors,” and that economic and trade cooperation among Caspian states via the sea route carries “extraordinary importance” for all involved. The forum, organized at Iran’s initiative, brought together delegations from nine foreign regions and five Iranian provinces. It follows a recent Caspian heads-of-state summit and precedes an upcoming meeting of foreign ministers

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses the opening ceremony of the first forum of governors from Caspian littoral provinces in Rasht, Gilan Province, on November 18, 2025. [mfa.gov.ir](#)

from the five Caspian littoral countries — Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. “This gathering today represents a form of ‘provincial diplomacy’ that Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched some time ago,” Araghchi told reporters in a press briefing on the sidelines of the meeting. Officials stressed that the forum aims to familiarize Caspian coastal provinces with each other’s capabilities and challenges, and to create joint mechanisms for problem-solving. “There are excellent opportunities for collaboration — in transit corridors, energy, tourism, and trade,” Araghchi noted. “Having governors engage directly will help them better understand and utilize each other’s potential.” A joint communiqué is currently being drafted and is expected to be issued following approval by all participating governors, he said.

‘Unified zone’

Kazem Gharibabadi, the deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, underscored the interconnected fate of Caspian coastal communities, calling the sea “a unified civilizational, economic, environmental, and security zone.” “The coastal provinces of all five littoral states bear significant responsibility in managing the Caspian’s rich resources — from its valuable fisheries and



vital energy reserves to commercial ports and international transit routes,” Gharibabadi said. The deputy foreign minister added that the Caspian Sea is the world’s largest source of sturgeon and caviar-producing fish, making its fisheries “fundamental to regional food security.” He stressed that sustainable management, combating illegal fishing, and joint stock-rebuilding programs are only possible through coordinated action among provinces.

40% of Dagestan’s trade is with Iran

Russian officials echoed Iran’s emphasis on regional synergy, with Abdulmuslim Abdulmuslimov, the prime minister of the Republic of Dagestan, noting that 40% of his region’s foreign trade is with Iran and identifying the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) as a top priority for Moscow. Igor Babushkin, the governor of Russia’s Astrakhan Region, called the forum “a sign of growing cooperation at

the highest levels,” adding, “We live in a unique region endowed with vast resources and potential for collaboration. Given these assets, we must reinforce our partnerships — especially as our national leaders attach special importance to our dialogue.” Also present was the deputy prime minister of the Republic of Kalmykia, who described the inaugural governors’ forum as “a positive step toward strengthening ties and communication among Caspian coastal regions.”

Caviar exports surge in H1 calendar year as Qatar tops buyers list



Economy Desk

Iran exported 3.5 metric tons of caviar worth \$2.314 million in the first half of the Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), with Qatar emerging as the top buyer, according to customs data released

Tuesday. Qatar accounted for the largest share of sales, purchasing 1,280 kilograms of Iranian caviar for \$763,000 — making it the first and most significant customer of Iran’s prized black gold. The United Arab Emirates followed closely in

second place, importing 1,000 kilograms valued at \$732,000. Germany rounded out the top three with 442 kilograms purchased for \$323,000, ISNA reported. Other key buyers included the Netherlands (150 kg, \$110,000), Hong Kong (90 kg, \$57,000), Canada (80 kg, \$54,000), Australia (75 kg, \$49,000), Brazil (50 kg, \$30,000), Switzerland (45 kg, \$27,000), and Japan (40 kg, \$30,000). In total, caviar was shipped to 30 countries across five continents, including Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxem-

bourg, Malaysia, Oman, Portugal, Romania, Seychelles, Sweden, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, and South Africa. The caviar industry had increasingly relied on passenger travel to move product abroad — a practice that has drawn scrutiny from global regulators. As previously disclosed by Iran’s Fisheries Organization, at least 50% of all caviar exports leave the country via passenger luggage — a method that bypasses formal customs declarations and raises concerns over tax evasion and illicit trade.

Iranian aviation chief visits UAE to explore avenues of cooperation

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Chief of Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Hossein Pourfarzaneh arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday to meet his UAE counterparts, following a formal invitation from Saif Mohammed al-Suwaidi, the head of the country’s General Civil Aviation Authority. Pourfarzaneh, who also serves as deputy minister of roads and urban development, is expected to hold talks with UAE authorities for bolstering aviation cooperation, ILNA reported. Key areas of collaboration under consideration include enhancing flight safety, exchanging techni-



cal expertise, expanding direct air services between the two countries, and co-operating in aviation personnel training. A preliminary agreement on air navigation, safety, and joint research and development is expected to

be signed during the visit — a step officials say could pave the way for the establishment of regular flights and the development of regional air services. The visit is part of Iran’s effort to develop its international air connectivity.

Iran, Armenia agree on customs pact to boost trade, expand Meghri border

Economy Desk

The heads of customs authorities from Iran and Armenia met in Yerevan on Tuesday to review measures aimed at facilitating trade and expanding transit between the two countries, according to Tasnim News Agency. Iran’s Deputy Minister of Economy and Head of Customs Administration, Faroud Asgari, and Armenia’s

Head of Customs Administration, Edward Hakobyan, discussed in detail the upcoming customs programs designed to remove customs barriers and increase bilateral trade volumes. Key actions under review included the implementation of electronic information exchange between customs agencies, the establishment of continuous border meetings to assess on-the-ground cooperation, the mutual recognition of authorized

economic operators, and finalizing the customs “green corridor” to expedite trade flows. Armenian officials also presented a plan to expand the Meghri customs facility in the southern Armenia through joint public-private sector investment — a project expected to significantly increase the capacity of the Armenia-Iran border crossing. In recent weeks, such facilitative measures have already yielded re-

sults as daily truck traffic at the Norduz- Meghri border crossing — Iran’s only land border with Armenia and the primary gateway to Eurasian Economic Union countries — has risen from 450 to 550 trucks per day. The meeting underscored a coordinated push to transform the Norduz-Meghri corridor into a more efficient trade artery between Iran and the broader Eurasian region.

