

Iran posts 150% surge in trade with D-8 in five years: *TPO* chief



Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi (front), the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), is seen at the D-8 Ministerial Meeting in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on December 2, 2025. ● IRNA

years and reached \$22 billion, even as he said the trade volume is still far from the desired level. Speaking at the D-8 Ministerial Meeting in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi said the organization, with its rich resources, young population, and strategic location, possesses unparalleled potential to become an influential economic hub in the international arena. "Iran's trade relations with D-8 members have grown by over 150% in the past five years, reaching 22 billion dollars. Although this figure indicates the significant potential for trade among the group's members, it

is still far from the desired level," Dehqan Dehnavi said. "Therefore, we urge all member countries to seriously commit to the full implementation and operationalization of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)." While welcoming the formation of an expert working group to examine tools for developing the PTA, which gives preferential access to certain products from the participating countries, Dehqan Dehnavi emphasized, "This working group, with the help of all members and the support of relevant international organizations, should conduct comprehensive technical evaluations and provide recommendations that guarantee the interests of all members. We expect the tangible results of this review to be presented at the upcoming ministerial meeting." The TPO chief underlined that, "Beyond the issue of tariff liberalization, it is essential that we

seriously pursue cooperation in other key areas, including customs cooperation and facilitation, logistics, transportation and transit, settlement mechanisms with national currencies, and private sector interaction through the cooperation of the member countries' chambers of commerce. Stressing that the Islamic Republic, despite facing unilateral and oppressive sanctions, remains committed to constructive cooperation within the framework of the D-8, Dehqan Dehnavi said, "We hope that member countries will consider our special circumstances and ensure that external restrictive measures do not hinder regional economic cooperation and integration." The TPO chief also expressed hope that the Cairo meeting would be a significant step towards achieving broader economic cooperation within the D-8 group.

Economy Desk The head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Tuesday that Iran's trade relations with members of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation have grown by more than 150% over the past five

ICT minister: \$20b investment required to enhance digital economy share

Economy Desk

Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Sattar Hashemi, called on Tuesday for a 20-billion-dollar investment aimed at increasing the share of the digital economy in GDP to 10% as per the Seventh Development Plan (SDP). "Technology flows through all areas and aspects of our lives, and it's impossible to imagine living an hour without using communication capabilities," Hashemi said at a meeting in Kerman Province. Pointing to the fact that one of the most important duties emphasized by the SDP is economic growth, specifically the digital economy, the ICT minister said, "The plan's duty is to in-

crease the share of the digital economy in GDP to 10%, which is currently below 5%, and to achieve this goal, we need a 20 billion dollar investment." Stressing that digital economy means how much we have been able to utilize technology's capacity to make services and products more productive, Hashemi said, "To achieve the 10% share, we inevitably must move towards the smartification of industries and mines, and Kerman can certainly be a trailblazer and helper in this path." The ICT minister also underscored the need for "communication infrastructure of appropriate quality" for digital transformation. "One of the issues



Sattar Hashemi ● IRNA

on the agenda of the current government, after a century, is the migration from copper wire to fiber optic, and this large and lasting project will pave the way for digital transformation and the formation of a new economy in this field," he said. "The smartification of industries helps sustainable employment, and the content production ecosystem, which is extremely important, and data flows into the infrastructure, and all these events are possible with the private sector at the core. The important issue in this regard is that we can keep the province's elites in Kerman and make them a driving force for transformation and the digital economy," he added. Hashemi concluded that as we move towards a digital economy, cybersecurity becomes more important, and we are ready to advance work through interaction.

Iran proposed to revive Cuba's sugar industry for products marketing: *Chamber*

Economy Desk

Head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh, announced on Tuesday the offering of a proposal by the Cuban government for establishing a sugarcane agro-industrial complex in the Latin American country and a mechanism for marketing Iranian products, while detailing the achievements of an Iranian trade delegation's recent visit to Havana. "Cuban authorities expressed interest in accepting and facilitating the presence of reputable Iranian companies in their country, and it was decided that an Iranian company would directly and immediately market Iranian products in the Cuban market," Hassanzadeh said. "Cuba's Minister of Trade emphasized that the country's doors are wide open, and Iranian merchants and economic actors can count on the support of the Cuban government," he added. Pointing to the Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade's proposal to establish an agro-industrial complex in Cuba with the participation of Iranian investors,



Head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh (L), signs a cooperation agreement with his Cuban counterpart, Antonio Carricarte Corona, during the Iranian business delegation's visit to Cuba for the 2025 Havana International Fair (FINAV) on November 25, 2025. ● otaghiranonline.ir

Hassanzadeh said, "Given the proposal, the Cuban government is ready to define a sugarcane agro-industrial project with Iranian investors in the first step; in such a way that a sugar production factory is established and sugarcane is cultivated in the lands around the factory. This project can either be in the form of an economic partnership or direct investment by Iranian companies." Hassanzadeh said the Cuban president had emphasized that the list of his country's needs and the areas of interest of the Cuban government for utilizing Iran's economic and production capacities would be announced

to the Iranian Chamber of Commerce through the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Cuba. "With this positive approach from Cuban officials, the development of Iran's exports to Cuba is very achievable and attainable, even in the short term," he added.

Netanyahu weighs Iran ...

Israel did inflict serious damage on Hezbollah's military infrastructure, command structure, and senior leadership, but in terms of changing Lebanon's political order to Hezbollah's detriment, which is Israel's strategic objective, very little progress has been made over the past year. Efforts to disarm Hezbollah or place all weapons solely under the control of the Lebanese army have been minimal. The process Israel hoped to see simply has not materialized. As a result, Israel now considers the Lebanon file an urgent priority. Without a more forceful push toward disarmament, Hezbollah could eventually make up for the previous losses through reconstruction. Lebanon also carries another layer of strategic significance. A confrontation there could ignite regional conflict.

Escalation in Lebanon could spill over into neighboring states. Should Hezbollah find itself on the brink of disarmament, and Israel insist on imposing it militarily, potentially by sending its own forces and triggering another war, Iran might feel compelled to defend Hezbollah decisively. On the rhetorical front, with elections six to ten months away, Israeli politicians, especially a prime minister seeking re-election, have every incentive to crank up their political messaging. Netanyahu recently claimed in an interview that Israel "achieved its objectives" during the 12-day war with Iran, even though some of those goals included political change in Tehran, which Israel clearly did not achieve, or shifts in the military balance that ultimately were not realized despite the damage inflicted on Iran's defense

systems. So, although there is a degree of seriousness in his remarks, they also serve a political and promotional purpose and both aspects should be considered.

Given the recent military activity near Iran's western borders, is there a direct connection between these developments and Netanyahu's statements?

It appears the answer is yes. There is likely a direct link between incidents such as fighter jets reportedly entering Iraqi airspace, flying close to Iran's border, and Netanyahu's recent statements. Israel seems intent on provoking Iran into a reaction, gradually creating the pretext needed for a new confrontation. This suggests the region may be entering a ladder of escalation, moving steadily toward heightened tension.

What scenarios could lead to a renewed confrontation between Iran and Israel, and how likely are they in the short term?

The first point is that if Netanyahu's domestic situation remains precarious, and if other agendas that could help him regain popularity fail to yield results, he may attempt to offset his legitimacy deficit through renewed military action against Iran. Several major issues could influence Israel's next elections and Netanyahu's potential political recovery. One is, of course, the Iran file. Another concerns formal annexation of the West Bank, or parts of it. A third relates to the future of Hamas; removing Hamas entirely from power in the Gaza Strip and allowing Netanyahu to present a political victory domestically. Another important one is the disarmament of

Hezbollah. Finally, normalization with Saudi Arabia is also on his agenda, and time is running short before elections. If Netanyahu fails to make progress on these fronts, he could be pushed toward renewed confrontation with Iran. Iran's internal political and social conditions will also be crucial. Should domestic dissatisfaction rise, widening the gap between the public and the state, and should new waves of protest emerge, the chances of confrontation would sharply increase, with Israel, and potentially the United States, almost certainly taking advantage of such conditions. Negotiations between Iran and Western parties are another factor. If diplomatic talks advance seriously, tensions could ease. But for now, tensions remain relatively high.