

Minister reports 500% rise in fiber connections, prioritizes smart government



Communications and Information Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi (c) presents a report on the ministry's performance and future plans at a meeting with members of Parliament's Planning and Budget Committee on October 6, 2026.

Economy Desk

Iran's communications minister reported a 500% increase in fiber-optic connections, while saying the National Information Network and smart government were strategic priorities for President Masoud Pezeshkian's government.

Communications and Information Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi made the remarks on Tuesday at a meeting with members of Parliament's Planning and Budget Committee, where he presented a report on the ministry's performance and future plans, IRNA reported.

Hashemi said the government had adopted a program-based approach despite resource constraints, identifying strategic priorities in line with the country's needs and allocating resources accordingly. The government took office in August 2024. He said the ministry's action plan had been developed based on the country's actual needs, with smart government, the National Information Network, digital economy infrastructure, artificial intelligence and the development of satellite-based services among its strategic priorities. Under these priorities, the ministry has defined key projects, including the "government cloud" and the creation of centralized communications ecosystems, which are being pursued under

Article 107 of the Seventh Development Plan, Hashemi said. On smart government, he said the ministry was focused on integrating government systems to prevent people from becoming lost in a "jungle of systems." In the 5G sector, the ministry has also worked to free up unused frequencies, while the city of Babol in northern Mazandaran Province became the first city to receive full 5G coverage, Hashemi said. The country's critical infrastructure centers were also brought out of a critical situation after a decade through special measures, he added.

Fiber-optic connections rise 500%

Hashemi said changing the pattern of traffic consumption from mobile to fixed networks was necessary. While global standards show that 75% of traffic runs over fixed networks, the ratio in Iran is exactly the opposite, with most traffic carried over mobile networks, he said.

To address this, the current government has stepped up a major national project to shift from copper cables to fiber optics. Although many leading countries began the process years ago and are now nearing its completion, Iran has recorded growth of about 500% in connecting households and businesses to fiber-optic networks in a relatively short period, Hashemi said. On artificial intelligence, Hashemi said the Communications and Information Technology Ministry was responsible for developing computing and storage infrastructure. Given constraints on government resources, the ministry issued a call for the private sector to establish "artificial intelligence operators" after an expert assessment, he said. Several companies expressed interest, and three have reached the final stage of the process, Hashemi said, adding that the ministry hoped to see a major improvement in the country's computing infrastructure within the next month.

TPO plans new transport links to ease impact of sanctions, trade restrictions

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Iran's Trade Promotion Organization is planning a series of measures to strengthen transport and logistics links and mitigate the impact of sanctions and trade restrictions, including agreements on transport and trade, a meeting of the heads of free zones in Iran and Pakistan, electronic customs documents and a joint session with railway officials from Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and China. Amir Roshanbakhsh Qanbari, deputy head of international business development at the Trade Promotion Organization, outlined the plans at a news conference on the sidelines of the seventh Transport, Logistics and Related Industries Exhibition, ILNA reported. Iran's southern ports remain under a US naval blockade imposed by President Donald Trump in mid-April, aimed at pressuring Tehran into an agreement after a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. Already under decades of Western sanctions over its nuclear programs, the

country also faces a new wave of US sanctions targeting its aviation sector. Qanbari said transport had become increasingly important to foreign trade as restrictions, war and sanctions had forced Iran to alter some trade routes and transport corridors and turn to alternative routes. "Since last year, with the emergence of restrictions, war and sanctions, we have been forced to change some of our trade routes and transport corridors and move toward alternative routes," he said, adding that existing capacity on other routes had so far failed to meet the country's needs. He said greater use should also be made of capacity in the Caspian Sea and other maritime routes. Qanbari also stressed the need to involve all parts of the transport and logistics chain, including customs and standards authorities. Standards and customs are among the factors affecting trade and form part of non-tariff requirements, he said, adding that they could not be separated from the logistics chain.

Transport and trade agreements

The TPO is also planning to sign cooperation agreements on transport and trade during the exhibition, Qanbari said. He said the organization had pursued plans to hold a meeting of the heads of Iran and Pakistan's free zones during the exhibition, with a joint session involving free zones located in Pakistan also planned. In customs, cooperation on customs documents and records is on the agenda, with the electronic processing of customs documents among the issues under review. Qanbari said this could have a significant impact on facilitating logistics processes.

Iran-China rail route

Qanbari also announced a meeting to examine opportunities and challenges along the rail route between Iran and China, to be attended by senior railway officials from Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and China, with the Iranian railway company also taking part. He said one of the problems

facing exporters and traders using rail transport was the increase in cargo transit times. Shipments from China to Tehran or other destinations that previously could take about 15 to 20 days now take around two and a half to three months, he said.

Cooperation with Belarus

During a visit by an Iranian delegation to Belarus last week, it was agreed that a delegation from Belarus's multimodal logistics sector would visit Iran, Qanbari said. The aim is to make use of Belarus's capacity within Eurasia and bring the country into the network of trade and logistics routes used by Iran, he said. "If there is export capacity but no means of connection and no stable route for transporting goods, trade effectively loses its meaning," Qanbari said.

Herat-Mazar-e Sharif rail project talks

Separately, Iran and Afghanistan discussed expanding economic and trade cooperation, particularly the development



of infrastructure including construction of the Herat-Mazar-e Sharif railway, IRNA reported. The talks were held Tuesday between Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy, Hamid Qanbari, and Mohammad Naeem, deputy minister for financial and administrative affairs at Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry. Iran approved the general framework of an East-West transport corridor anchored by the railway project in August, aiming to increase its share of the international

transit market and expand regional economic cooperation. Iranian companies have begun construction of an 800-kilometer railway linking Herat and Mazar-e Sharif, according to Iran's state railway chief, Jabbar Ali Zakari, who said the project aimed to complete a transport corridor linking Iran, Afghanistan and China. The project is being financed by the Afghan government under a "railway-for-minerals" arrangement, under which Iran will build the railway in return for investment in Afghanistan's mining sector.

ISA plans satellite constellations for imaging, remote sensing applications

Economy Desk

Iran plans to develop constellations of remote-sensing and imaging satellites with different resolutions over the coming years to cover a range of applications, the head of the Iranian Space Agency said on Tuesday. Hossein Salarieh made the remarks at a specialized meeting on the role of domestic satellites and satellite imagery in producing, monitoring and processing geospatial information, ISNA reported. "We are seeking in the coming years to create constellations of remote-sensing and imaging satellites with different resolutions, from better than one meter to several tens of meters,

so that we can cover a range of different applications through various methods of data integration," Salarieh said. He said the plan reflected the capabilities available in Iran's space sector, adding that knowledge-based companies, private firms, specialized centers, researchers, the Iranian Space Research Center and similar organizations had valuable capabilities in the field. Salarieh also pointed to cooperation between the Iranian Space Agency and the National Cartographic Center, saying the agency planned to make its satellites available to the center, including the Paya and Khayyam satellites and several others being prepared for launch, such



as Pars-2. The imagery would be made available to specialized institutions working in mapping, agriculture, water resources and

other fields and turned into value-added products, he said. The data should help meet domestic needs, support economic development and increase pro-

ductivity across different sectors, Salarieh added. "Economics does not always mean producing something and selling it at a higher price; being able to prevent a major loss from occurring or expanding at a certain cost also means creating economic value," he said. Iran, like many parts of the world, faces various crises including floods, earthquakes and other disasters, while the improper use of resources and unauthorized construction can also cause losses, Salarieh said. If such losses can be identified and managed using the "single-window land" system, mapping tools and imaging technologies, this could help increase productivity and improve eco-

nomic conditions and quality of life, Salarieh said. Iran's space industry is growing but needs advice, consultation and support from specialized institutions that use satellite imagery, he added. Salarieh said obtaining feedback from specialized users was important in designing future satellites and would be taken into account in satellites currently being designed and built. The expertise, advice and views of colleagues at the National Cartographic Center could help guide the process, he said, adding that such input would help ensure satellites are built to meet the country's needs with greater quality and effectiveness.