

# Official: Iran Ready to Launch Major Petrochemical Projects



TEHRAN (Shana) - Iran is about to launch three major petrochemical projects which will add at least 146,000 tons to the country's annual production capacity.

The downstream projects will be launched in a ceremony slated for next week with Managing director of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Reza Norouzzadeh in attendance.

The facilities are constructed with an investment of IRR977b and \$15.1m and generate 152 jobs.

These units produce 146,000 met-

ric tons of, masterbatches and polymer and granule compounds from recycled shrink bags each year, and their products are used in construction, automotive, packaging, textile and home-hold industries.

The three facilities are built in 115,350 square meters of land belonging to Maroon Petrochemical Company.

Maroon Petrochemical Company is a supplier of various polymer products including HDPE, LDPE, LLDPE and PP with different grades.

## Iran to Promote Use of Locally-Developed Messaging Apps

TEHRAN (IFP) - Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi has stressed the necessity of using locally-developed messengers, setting rules for using the cyberspace and making operating systems for children's mobile phones.

Azari Jahromi recently underlined the need for using locally developed messengers in the domain of national security.

Iranian minister further said messengers constitute part of the country's economic infrastructure, and added the information circulating through them should remain within local messengers, Iran's domestic media said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister said the cyberspace should be ruled by laws and regula-

tions, adding any country abides by a certain framework and specific standards in that regard.

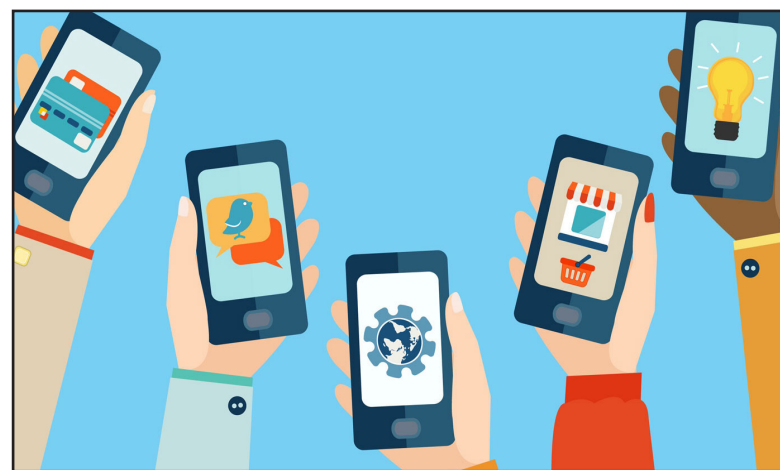
"We won't allow just any content to be published in this space (cyberspace)," the minister said.

He further said the cyberspace is transforming the future of governments across the globe.

"Now, we are speaking of digital economy as the fourth industrial revolution, so that society will learn what's going on, but that's no reason for us to give in to that and accept whatever they develop in this arena," he noted.

The minister said every effort will be made to adapt the whole infrastructure of the national information network to the decree of the Supreme Cyberspace Council in this regard.

He noted that Iran does not have



the software to develop a search engine which can rival the ones such as Google.

"Due to a lack of political relations, search engines such as Google wouldn't listen to us when it comes to the establishment of an

internet system for children," the minister noted.

He said it is necessary to have operating systems in the country to develop cell phones for children and control the phones imported into Iran.

## India & Iran Set to Make INSTC Bigger Economic Corridor

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India and Iran are moving slowly and steadily to overcome all hurdles to convert the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) into a bigger economic corridor.

President Rouhani, on his first state visit to New Delhi after assuming office in 2013, held talks with PM Modi, and the two sides moved forward on several contentious issues stuck for decades due to sanctions and now because of pressure from Washington.

Among the agreements signed, the most important was the lease contract for one berth, multipurpose and container terminal at Shahid Beheshti Port-Phase 1 of Chabahar for 18 months, between Port and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran and India Ports Global Limited (IPGL). IPGL will now begin full operations immediately, using one existing spare berth after installing additional equipment at terminal one, four more berths will be also constructed at terminal 1 and 2 in phases with an investment of US \$150 million after taking them on lease for ten years.

India has built the 215 km-long strategic Delaram-Zaranj highway at a cost of Rs 600- crore, completing the road link from Chabahar to Kabul. Strategists in New Delhi want Chabahar port to become the major point for an economic corridor from India-Oman sea-Iran-Afghanistan-Central Asia to Europe.

To clear the way for an economic corridor "two sides have agreed to hold a meeting in Tehran at the earliest to include Chabahar in the INSTC framework", an India official said on condition of anonymity.

He confirmed that "negotiations between the Indian and Iranian companies are on for financing the railways in Iran," to complete the missing rail link from Chabahar to Europe. A high-level delegation led by SK Choudhary, CMD of IRCON, an Indian government organization, is now in Iran to finalize various contracts worth U.S. \$1.6 billion, for a 663-km railway line from Chabahar to Zahedan. IRCON has signed a MOU with Construction, Development of Transport and Infrastructure Company of Iran (CDTIC), after doing a pre-feasibility study for this route.

IRCON is in the process of finalizing various funding options, including loans from EXIM Bank. India's recent accession to United Nations TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers) Convention on international customs and transports to facilitate smooth movement of goods across international borders, and the Ashgabat Agreement which envisages setting up of an international transport and transit corridor linking central Asia with the Persian Gulf, are additional steps at enhancing regional connectivity and linking regional centers of economic growth from India-Iran-Central Asia-Europe.

## EU Vows to Strike Back at Trump Trade Threat



BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The EU has warned it would take 'appropriate measures' to defend its interests if the U.S. imposes tough trade sanctions as Donald Trump delivers on his protectionist policies

The U.S. Commerce Department has recommended imposing heavy tariffs on China, Russia and European exporters to counter a global glut in steel and aluminium, laying out an array of possible options in a report to Trump.

The move hands Trump his first opportunity to deliver on the "America First" trade promise, but has stoked fears of retaliation and a global trade war.

European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said Brussels would be

"deeply concerned" by any sanctions hitting EU businesses. "We would be taking appropriate measures to defend EU industry, and we stand ready to react swiftly and appropriately in case our exports are affected by any restrictive trade measures from the United States," Schinas told a daily briefing.

But Schinas insisted that international trade would always remain "win-win" if partners played by the rules.

"We are not in a trade war," he said. Trump has until mid-April to decide whether he will move forward, with expectations high that any U.S. action is likely to be challenged by exporting nations in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The commission, which handles trade policy for the EU's 28 member states, however refused to comment on reports that officials had already drawn up specific measures to counter Trump.

Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper reported Tuesday that Brussels was mulling tariffs on Harley-Davidson motorcycle imports as well as bourbon from Tennessee and Kentucky.

Washington's recommended steel and aluminium sanctions address long-standing concerns about mainly Chinese overproduction, but take the extraordinary tack of framing them in terms of national security and defense.

The administration of former President Barack Obama also sought to tackle the subject but emphasized trade talks with China rather than punitive measures.

The U.S. proposals could hurt European countries as well as China, which is the world's largest steel producer but provides less than 1% of US imports and sells only 10% of its wrought aluminium abroad.

## Turkey Moves to Revive Iraq Oil Business as Iran Looms

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Turkey is to host Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi at the end of this week to discuss the resumption of oil exports through the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

The invitation comes just ahead of Iraq's planned start of oil exports from the northern Kirkuk fields to Iran and hence it is viewed with much interest in the Islamic Republic.

For years, Turkey used to reap the economic benefits of transporting and selling the Iraqi oil from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region but those exports have been halted since Iraqi forces took control of the Bai Hasan and Avana oilfields northwest of Kirkuk late last year.

Oil from the Kirkuk fields was chiefly transported to Israel, Greece, Croatia, Poland and Italy. While Turkey is pushing to put the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline back into operation, Iraq is most likely to call for a change in the arrangements.

First and foremost, Baghdad is expected to block shipments to Israel which the Arab country keeps away from. Iraq's Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said Luaibi will also target reaching an agreement to resume shipping crude "exclusively through Iraq's state oil marketer SOMO".

According to Iraqi officials,



The Iraqi Kurdish region operated a pipeline that connects to the twin Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline at Khabur on the border with Turkey.

Kurdish authorities are not responding to requests to use the pipeline to resume exports from Kirkuk.

Iraq plans to build a second export pipeline from the Kirkuk oilfields which will replace an old one severely damaged by Daesh terrorists. The country exported 250,000 to 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) through the pipeline before the start of Daesh terrorism halted the supplies.

According to Iraq's Oil Ministry figures, Kirkuk fields produced 407,000 barrels per day of oil in July. Luaibi has already indicated that Baghdad sought to raise production from the fields to 1 million bpd.

For the time being, the Iraqi government has made arrangements to sell oil from the Kirkuk

region to Iran.

Under the swap deal announced in December, Iraq is about to truck 60,000 bpd of oil from Kirkuk to Iran's Kermanshah refinery across the border and ship back refined Iranian oil for southern Iraq.

Luaibi said then Iran and Iraq also planned to build a pipeline to carry the oil from Kirkuk. While the plan is far-fetched, it holds the prospect of relieving the Iraqi government from the long-standing irritation of shady deals between the local Kurdish authorities and Ankara.

With that on the horizon, Turkey appears in a race to regain ground in the face of an emerging rival and its invitation to the Iraqi oil minister is set to have important implications.