

# CBI Governor: Foreign Investors on the Way

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The governor of Iran's Central Bank says a huge number of foreign investors are on their way to Iran due to the consistent policies adopted by the Iranian government to achieve its main economic goals.

Central Bank Governor Valiollah Seif said the government of Iran is set to sign a number of agreements with foreign investors in the next couple of weeks.

"I hope with the attraction of new foreign investments, we would be able to create more jobs in our country," he noted in an address to a ceremony marking the beginning of two national plans for job creation in Iran.

He added new financial deals with foreign investors are being signed, saying, "Today we are witnessing a growing demand for signing agreements from foreign companies."

"Given economic experiences of the Islamic Republic over the past decades as well as vulnerability of Iran's economy against domestic and foreign shocks, the Iranian officials have adopted certain economic measures to cope with the economic problems under the guidelines of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution," he added, according to a Farsi report by Al-Alam News Network.

## Khark NGL Awarded to Iranian Consortium

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The managing director of Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) says an Iranian consortium has been awarded the development of Khark Island's natural gas liquids (NGL) project.

Hamid Bovard said Ghadir Investment Company and the SAFF Group have formed a consortium for development of the project.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the 37th anniversary of IOOC's establishment, Bovard said IOOC will sign a build-operate-transfer (BOT) deal with the consortium for developing the project in a period of 3 years.

He further said that the ceiling of investment for IOOC projects has been designated at \$1.8 billion by the government, adding the company is seeking mechanisms to raise the ceiling to \$5 billion.

According to the law, IOOC can allow attraction of investments of up to \$1.8 billion to be returned



*An aerial view of Khark Island in the Persian Gulf*

from sale of crude oil and gas.

Meanwhile, the value of natural gas and condensate output of phase 19 of the supergiant South Pars Gas field has crossed \$3 billion after 16 months of operation.

The phase, which came online in April 2016, has so far yielded 13.54 million barrels of gas condensate since its inauguration.

Moreover, the project has produced some 11 billion cubic meters of sweet gas and has offered it to the national gas distribution network.

Phase 19 is considered to be equal to 2 conventional phases of the offshore gas field which is shared with Qatar in Persian Gulf waters.

## Poll: JCPOA Has Not Led to More Jobs

TEHRAN (Bloomberg) -- Iran's nuclear deal with world powers and subsequent sanction relief have provided better access to foreign goods, but few locals believe it has led to more jobs, a new poll shows.

Seventy percent of 700 Iranians surveyed nationwide by phone said multinationals had been slow to commit to trading with or investing in Iran, and most respondents cited concern about U.S. pressure as the reason, according to a survey by Toronto-based IranPoll in partnership with Bourse & Bazaar, an online business publication focused on the country.

While 43% of respondents found goods manufactured by multinationals have become more accessible, some 57% said the firms haven't created more jobs for locals and 43% perceived their level of investment as unchanged, according to the report, provided to Bloomberg ahead of its release.

The findings suggest President Hassan Rouhani, who started his second term last month, may struggle to deliver on campaign promises. Rouhani won a second term by pledging to build on the accord, which only came into effect last year, by attracting more foreign investment and helping boost employment.

Instead, the poll suggests Iranians



*Iranians drive on a street in the capital Tehran on Nov. 25, 2014.*

aren't seeing tangible change, and the fate of the accord is now in question as the U.S. applies additional sanction and lobbies European signatories to add restrictions on Iran's nuclear program. Even so, some 62% of respondents said they still approved of the agreement.

While Iran has struck major deals in energy and transportation, many companies and major banks have been hesitant to explore business opportunities, citing political uncertainty stemming from Donald Trump's U.S. presidency and the risk of running into other sanctions.

Foreign ministers of the seven nations

that signed the deal including the U.S., Iran, the UK and France are to meet Sept. 20 on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly debate in New York. The meeting would serve to discuss the deal's flaws as seen by the U.S. and will have Iran emphasize what it considers U.S. violations of the agreement, American and Iranian officials have said.

Details of the survey, which was conducted in August in cities across Iran's 31 provinces, will be presented at next month's Europe-Iran Forum, which brings together businesses working in or with an interest in Iran.

## Iran's Caviar Business Eyes Resurrection

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Nasser Meshkin Azarian took a careful nibble, letting the salty, grainy texture roll across his tongue. He smiled and washed it down with a sip of cool water. "I give it an 82 or 83" out of 100, Azarian told the Los Angeles Times in Tehran. At the retail price of \$80 an ounce in Iran, it was an expensive bite. But beluga caviar is for discerning palates.

"Iranian caviar has a fantastic reputation all around the world," said Azarian, the chairman of Bahoo Caviar, a distributor in Tehran. "It is only going to grow."

As Iran's economy tries to rebound from years of sanctions, producers of black caviar — that salt-cured delicacy associated with the rich and famous, with a price tag to match — are also eyeing a comeback.

Once among Iran's most famous exports, the industry nearly collapsed because of trade restrictions and an international clampdown on the capture of sturgeon from the Caspian Sea. The long, prehistoric fish, whose glittery, bead-like eggs make the choicest caviar, had been driven nearly to extinction by overfishing.

Now, dozens of Iranian producers are raising sturgeon legally on fish farms, just as the 2015 nuclear agreement Iran signed with six world powers has slowly reopened foreign markets to Iranian products.

After the United States lifted an embargo on Iranian goods in January 2016, the first shipment of Iranian caviar in nearly a decade reached the U.S. last year: a modest 18 pounds of the prized beluga variety, some of which ended up for sale at stores frequented by Iranian expatriates in Los Angeles and other cities.

The shipment was worth about \$16,000 before retail markup, or about as much as Iran's \$41 billion oil and gas industry generates in 12 seconds. Caviar alone, no matter how costly, is not going to resuscitate Iran's moribund economy.

But the shipment was one signal of a new page in Iran's relations with the West, and a sign that the Islamic Republic was ready to do business with the world again. In two or three years, industry officials said, Iran could export as much as 200 pounds annually to the United States as production increases and Iran finds new customers for the luxury food.

"The United States is an uncharted but potentially big market for us," said Ali Akbar Khodaei, secretary-



*A traveler browses duty-free caviar at the Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran.*

general of Iran's Fisheries Production and Trading Union, an industry group.

With the economy still floundering nearly two years after the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions, many economists say Iran's officials need to find ways to produce more exports to create jobs and bring in foreign currency.

There is potential in Iran's fisheries industry, whose exports rose 80% in the most recent quarter, compared with the same period a year ago, said Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, an economics professor at Virginia Tech University.

The lifting of sanctions is happening at a potentially lucrative time for Iran's caviar industry, which is finally rebounding after decades of struggles.

The mostly state-controlled industry nearly collapsed during the 1990s and 2000s as the breakup of the Soviet Union — with which Iran shared the Caspian Sea — triggered a torrent of unregulated fishing in one of the world's main habitats for several sturgeon species including the beluga, which produces the most expensive caviar.

In 2005, with data showing the sea's sturgeon population had declined by 90%, the United States, then the world's No. 1 buyer of beluga caviar, banned the import of beluga products from the Caspian. A few years later, all U.S. trade with Iran ceased as sanctions were tightened.

Then, in 2010, sturgeon farming got a boost after Iran signed a ban on sturgeon fishing with Russia and the three other former Soviet republics that are part of the Caspian Sea basin. Iran supplied several fish farms with sturgeon from government stocks, allowing the beluga to grow in concrete pools, some with salt water piped in from the Caspian.

The beluga, with a lifespan of 100 years, typically takes about a decade

to begin producing eggs. Within two or three years, industry officials say, Iranian farmed caviar production will rise exponentially.

"We are free from sanctions at the same time as Iranian caviar is ready to be reintroduced to the world market," Khodaei said. "It is a great opportunity."

But challenges remain. U.S. financial sanctions against Iran still bar Iranian companies from doing business in dollars, meaning sales to the United States must be done through informal money transfer systems. That is manageable for relatively small shipments such as caviar, but potentially problematic if volumes rise substantially.

And many producers worry that the Trump administration's hostility toward Iran will result in the United States withdrawing from the nuclear deal and leveling fresh sanctions that could again isolate Iranian companies from world markets.

"We don't like this rhetoric from Mr. Trump — it's worrisome to us," Khodaei said. "Before the nuclear-related sanctions were imposed, we had relations with buyers around the world. We have lost ground because of collective punishment inflicted on the Iranian people, for a crime we have nothing to do with."

In recent years, China has accounted for much of the world's caviar production, although its product is widely seen as inferior to Iranian and Russian eggs. Farms in California also have begun to produce black caviar.

But Iranian producers are confident that their caviar will regain customers in the United States — and not just among Iranian expatriates nostalgic for a taste of home.

"Iranians around the world have memories of eating caviar, but in the long term we need to find new clients as well," Azarian said.

## Deputy Minister: Power Exports to Iraq Steady



*A view of Iran's night lights from a satellite in space*

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran says it has been producing enough electricity throughout summer to be able to satisfy a significant portion of Iraq's power needs without causing shortages at home.

Hooshang Falahatian, deputy energy minister for electricity affairs, was quoted by domestic media as saying that Iran's power consumption hit a record high in summer. "Nevertheless, Iran was still able

to maintain its commitments in supplying Iraq's power needs," Falahatian emphasized.

Also, Adel Kazim Jarayan, the visiting undersecretary of Iraq's Ministry of Production and Projects, said the country could have faced "harsh conditions" in summer had it not been for Iranian electricity supplies.

Jarayan stressed in a meeting with Falahatian that Baghdad

hoped Iran would make a stronger contribution to the reconstruction of the Iraqi power grid.

The Iranian official emphasized that the country was ready to help with the reconstruction of Iraq's power grid.

Falahatian said this could be carried out within two years as soon as Baghdad presented an official demand.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said Iran would synchronize its power grid with Iraq before December.

Falahatian said this would be carried out on a trial basis, adding that it was meant to prepare the grounds for increasing the volume of power supplies to Iraq.

Iraq is the biggest importer of electricity from Iran. It imports about 5,751 MW of electricity per year from its eastern neighbor based on an agreement signed between the two countries in 2005.

The second largest buyer of Iran's electricity is Turkey with a maximum import of 2,395 MW annually.

## China Petrochem Payment Issue Being Sorted Out

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- An Iranian deputy oil minister said on Monday minor issues impeding the payments Iran receives from China for the export of petrochemicals have been resolved.

There has never been any obstacle to the Iranian export of petrochemical products, CEO of National Petrochemical Company Marziyeh Shahedaei said.

As regards the delays in the Chinese payment, she said, the problem has been settled following negotiations conducted by the Central Bank of Iran and the country's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

Iran exports almost half of its annual petrochemical output to China. In terms of products, polyolefins and methanol top the list of Iran's exports to China.

There have been concerns in recent months that China's imports of Iranian petrochemicals may slow down as foreign trades in China became subject to stricter scrutiny as part of an anti-money laundering drive.