

Iran Pushing to Attract Foreign Investment in Petrochemical Sector



TEHRAN – Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) managing director Morteza Shahmirzaei said the country's packages are ready for foreign investment.

Shahmirzaei made the offer in his meeting with Iranian ambassadors and consuls general, calling for the diplomatic apparatus to facilitate and accelerate the participation of foreign investors in Iran's petrochemical projects.

The NPC CEO and diplomats exchanged views on "strategies to promote international cooperation in Iran's petrochemical industry", with Shahmirzaei underlining that domestic industry needs to diversify its products and customers and get into new inter-

national markets.

Some \$90 billion have been invested in Iran's petrochemical sector and there are more than 100 development projects in the country, added Shahmirzaei.

He described the prospect of Iran's petrochemical industry as "positive" and said, "Policies on attracting foreign investment and supplying products and equipment will be operated quite quickly through cooperation with the country's diplomatic apparatus."

To that end, the National Petrochemical Company is ready to fully cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, holdings, and petrochemical companies, stated the NPC head.

Iran plans to capture the petrochemi-

cal markets in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shahmirzaei said and continued, "Iran's petrochemical industry is moving toward development with a 92-million-ton production capacity."

Around 70 percent of Iran's petrochemical products are exported, he said, explaining 550 grades of petrochemicals are produced in Iran and last year's exports fetched the country \$16 billion.

On May 18, the NPC investment manager invited domestic and foreign investors to fund 19 projects worth \$9 billion.

Reza Nekouei introduced the investment projects on the sidelines of the 27th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition in Tehran.

Despite the sanctions, countries with the same views had a strong presence in this year's exhibition, said the manager, expressing hope that such relations would lead to long-term investments in the petrochemical industry.

Pointing to the "stunning" expansion of relations between Iran and Russia over the past two years, he said: "We are determined to introduce new investment opportunities to Russia's petrochemical industrialists to pave the way for attracting foreign capital."

FTA to Triple Iran-EAEU Trade Exchange

TEHRAN – Iran's envoy at EAEU Omid Golzari has said that the launch of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is expected to triple the volume of bilateral trade exchanges.

Speaking to IRNA on the sidelines of the 2nd Eurasian Economic Forum in Moscow, Iran's envoy at EAEU Golzari put the value of trade exchanges between Iran and the EAEU at \$5.5 billion.

He said the volume of trade exchanges will be tripled upon signing a comprehensive free trade agreement.

Golzari put the value of trade exchanges between Iran and EAEU in 2022 at around \$3.3 billion.

The economic cooperation between Iran and EAEU has reached a very sensitive and important stage, he added, noting that 1.8 million tons of non-oil products were exchanged between Iran and the EAEU member states, including agricultural, indus-



trial, construction and petrochemical products.

He also pointed to the topics discussed at the forum in Moscow, saying suitable ways have been provided for Iran to play a constructive role at the union given the specific regional conditions.

Iran should use all its capacities

and potentials to expand ties with the EAEU optimally and increase the balance of trade with the union with a focus on exports, he stated.

The 2nd EAEU Economic Forum kicked off in Moscow on Wednesday with the participation of more than 500 representatives from 54 countries.

Investment in Solar Power to Outstrip Oil for First Time, Says IEA



Washington (CNN) - Investment in clean energy will extend its lead over spending on fossil fuels in 2023, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Thursday, with solar projects expected to outpace outlays on oil production for the first time.

Annual investment in renewable energy was up by nearly a quarter since 2021, compared with a 15% rise for fossil fuels, the Paris-based energy watchdog said in its World Energy Investment report.

However, fossil fuel investment is still double the level it needs to fall to if the world is to achieve net-zero emissions by mid-century.

"Clean energy is moving fast — faster than many people realize," said IEA executive director Fatih Birol.

"For every dollar invested in fossil fuels, about 1.7 dollars are now going into clean energy. Five years ago, this ratio was one-to-one."

Around \$2.8 trillion is set to be invested in energy worldwide in 2023, of which more

than \$1.7 trillion is expected to go to renewables, nuclear power, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency improvements. The rest will go to oil, gas and coal.

In 2023, solar power spending is due to hit more than \$1 billion a day or around \$380 billion on a yearly basis.

"This crowns solar as a true energy superpower. It is emerging as the biggest tool we have for rapid decarbonization of the entire economy," Dave Jones, head of data insights at energy think tank Ember, said in a statement.

Investment in new fossil fuel supply will rise by 6% in 2023 to \$950 billion, the IEA added.

The agency did not expressly reiterate its blockbuster projection from 2021 that investors should not fund new oil, gas and coal supply projects if the world wants to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century.

Producer group OPEC has said calls by the IEA to stop investing in oil undermine global energy security and economic growth. Scientists and international climate activists have warned that the fossil fuel industry exacerbates the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

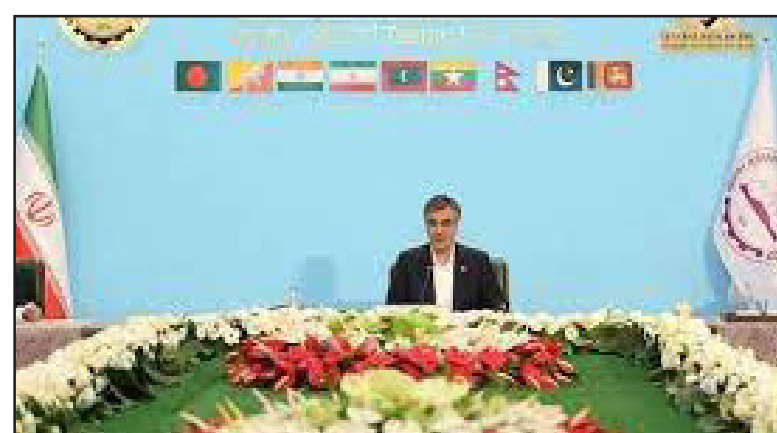
Top Banker: 8 Iranian Banks Operating Abroad

TEHRAN – Governor of the Central Bank of Iran Muhammad Reza Farzin has said that more than 8 Iranian banks operate abroad and 49 branches of Iranian banks are operating in different nations including England, Germany, Russia, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and France.

Referring to the financial and commercial characteristics of Iran's economy, Farzin said, "Although Iran's economy has been facing sanctions from Western countries for decades, these sanctions have intensified in the last decade and have targeted the monetary and financial sectors of the country."

"However, Iran's economy has been able to continue to have a wide and dynamic financial sector by relying on domestic capabilities and cooperation with regional countries," he added.

Referring to the capacities and capabilities of Iran's economy, Farzin said, "In the field of foreign trade, according to preliminary estimates, the total value of goods (customs) trade of Iran's economy with the outside world in 2022 will amount to 160 bil-



lion euros, which shows an increase of 18.1 billion compared to 2021. Also, the total value of services trade in 2022 is estimated at 25 billion euros, which indicates a 44.0% growth compared to 2021.

He also said that 150 countries in the world are export destinations for Iran's economy and from 121 countries the country's customs have imported goods. The high volume of trade in goods and services and the diversity of business parties have created a suitable field for the development of regional and international cooperation.

The CBI Governor further added, "In the field of tourism, due to Iran's vast historical, cultural,

natural and economic capacities, many people from different countries travel to Iran every year. Last year, more than 4.8 million people from different countries of the world entered Iran. Also, this year, about 9.8 million Iranians have also visited other countries, which shows the interest of Iranian people to learn about other cultures and nations."

Elsewhere Farzin further stated that "The conditions for the presence of foreign banks in Iran have been facilitated, and despite the economic and banking sanctions, we are currently witnessing the presence of some foreign banks or the establishment of joint banks in Iran."

New Airport Launched in Iran's Remote East

TEHRAN – A new airport has been launched in Iran's remote east amid efforts to expand transportation infrastructure in the region.

A Thursday flight carrying Iran's Parliament speaker Muhammad Baqer Ghalibaf and other senior government officials was the first to land in the airport in Gonabad, a city of nearly 50,000 people located some 230 kilometers from the Iranian border with Afghanistan.

The airport has been launched to boost economic activity in the region, according to a report by the official IRNA news agency

which said that businesspeople in Gonabad and other cities in the region had to travel some 300 kilometers to reach the nearest airports in Iran's east.

The project started some 30 years ago, said the report, adding that it accelerated in recent years amid Iran's plans to complete a north-south transit corridor that passes through its east.

Gonabad is one of the key cities in Khorasan Razavi, an Iranian province where Iran's second largest city of Mashhad is located.

Business activity in the region

is expected to grow with the construction of a key railway from Mashhad to Zahedan near the border with Pakistan that passes via Gonabad. The railway will continue from Zahedan to Iran's only ocean port of Chabahar on the Sea of Oman.

The government has spent some 35 trillion rials (\$75 million) on the construction of a first phase of the airport in Gonabad, said the report by the IRNA which added that investors had agreed to pay for charter flights to and from the airport in the next 10 months to help boost its traffic.

Fitch Puts U.S. Ratings on Negative Watch

LONDON (Reuters) - The United States was put on review for a downgrade by credit rating agency DBRS Morningstar on Thursday over Washington's debt ceiling haggling, shortly after a similar warning from Fitch.

"The Under Review with Negative Implications reflects the risk of Congress failing to increase or suspend the debt ceiling in a timely manner," DBRS said in a statement.

"If Congress does not act, the U.S. federal government will not be able to pay all of its obligations," it added.

The DBRS move follows a similar action by Fitch, which on Wednesday said its 'AAA' rating for the United States was on negative watch, a precursor to a possible downgrade should lawmakers fail to raise the government's borrowing cap before it runs out of money, which could happen as soon as next week.

Another agency, Scope Ratings, placed its United States 'AA' rating under review ear-



lier this month for a possible downgrade due to longer run risks associated with the debt ceiling.

Negotiators for Democratic President Joe Biden and top congressional Republican Kevin McCarthy held what both sides called productive talks on Wednesday to try to reach a deal to raise the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling.

But a June 1 deadline indicated by the Treasury means investor concerns are mounting that there may not be sufficient

time to finalise an agreement and avoid a catastrophic default.

DBRS, which has a triple A rating for the United States, said it still expected Congress to raise the debt limit in time but warned of the risk of "Congressional inaction" as the deadline approaches.

It also cautioned that even in the event of a resolution, the prospect of repeated legislative stand-offs in a "polarized political environment" could lead to a credit rating downgrade.