

NIGC: Gas-Saving Projects Gain Momentum With Operator Firms

TEHRAN — The head of energy and carbon management at the National Iranian Gas Co. said a newly issued by-law governing gas operator firms has accelerated the rollout of gas-saving projects, while creating a framework to reduce waste and improve consumption management. Ali-Asghar Rajabi said the regulation paves the way for implementing approved initiatives under the Energy and Environment Optimization Market.

Citing international experience, Rajabi said the entry of operator firms into energy markets has been shown to boost competition, diversify supply and lower prices for consumers. He said such companies play an effective role in improving energy efficiency by offering innovative services and using modern technologies.

Rajabi pointed to the United Kingdom, where a gas market was formed in the late 1980s. In that model, operator firms play a key role in gas imports and distribution, and targeted liberalization has led to greater competitiveness and lower prices, he said.



Rajabi also cited Germany's experience with delegating gas distribution to private companies, saying strict oversight ensures fair service delivery and quality standards. Financial support for operator firms has also contributed to infrastructure development, he said.

He noted that despite the issuance of the Energy and Environment Optimization Market bylaw in 2017, the pace of efficiency projects and contracts with investors acting as "savings agents" had fallen short of expectations.

However, Rajabi said follow-up actions by NIGC and the ac-

ceptance of natural gas savings certificates on the Iran Energy Exchange in 2024 effectively launched the optimization market.

He said multiple projects had been approved by the market's savings commission, particularly in high-waste sectors such as brick production, but contracts had not been signed for various reasons. The new operator firm bylaw has streamlined and accelerated implementation by facilitating agreements with investors serving as gas operators, he said.

Rajabi said the impact could be significant in sectors in-

cluding brick manufacturing, poultry farming, bakeries and greenhouses.

Rajabi emphasized transparency, saying NIGC has published calls for participation, legal texts, step-by-step implementation flowcharts and contract templates on its official website.

He added that baselines and methods for calculating verified savings are clearly defined in the Oil Ministry's Measurement and Verification (M&V) guidelines.

Operator firms are contractually obligated to achieve specified annual savings targets, with savings certificates issued only after verification of results, Rajabi said. Enforcement mechanisms and penalties for noncompliance are explicitly outlined in Oil Ministry contract models, providing assurance for accurate project execution.

Rajabi said expanding the role of operator firms is a strategic step toward reducing energy intensity, improving efficiency and advancing modern energy governance.

Oil on Edge: Iran-U.S. Talks Expose Power of Strait of Hormuz



TEHRAN — Iran's strategic position in the Strait of Hormuz — and its direct impact on global energy prices — has once again been underscored by sharp volatility in oil markets during the latest round of negotiations between Tehran and Washington.

Global oil markets experienced a turbulent trading session as investors closely monitored developments in negotiations between Iran and the United States. At the start of the talks, oil prices dropped sharply, with Brent Crude falling by more than \$1 and slipping into the \$69-per-barrel range.

While the largest weekly increase in U.S. crude inventories in three years contributed to downward pressure, several media outlets reported that traders were primarily assessing the potential supply implications of renewed diplomacy between Washington and Tehran.

Giovanni Staunovo, a senior oil market analyst, noted at the time: "Markets are focused on the outcome of the third round of U.S.-Iran negotiations on Thursday."

Analysts at ING also emphasized in a note that the outcome of nuclear talks between the two countries would be decisive for the direction of oil prices.

Hours later, negotiations were temporarily paused for consultations with respective capitals. The interruption fueled speculation in the markets, and oil prices surged past \$72 per barrel.

With the resumption of talks, prices eased again toward the \$70 mark. Following the conclusion of discussions — and positive remarks from both sides — oil traded slightly higher but remained relatively stable, with Brent at \$70.93 and U.S. crude at \$65.43 per barrel.

Market analysts say investors are closely watching whether negotiations lead to de-escalation or renewed tensions. Any prolonged confrontation could disrupt oil supplies from Iran — OPEC's fourth-largest producer — as well as from other Middle Eastern exporters.

One analysis suggested that a constructive agreement could gradually remove an estimated \$10 per barrel in geopolitical risk premium currently embedded in prices.

Oil market sensitivity to Iran-U.S. negotiations stems largely from Iran's geopolitical leverage. Beyond being a major OPEC producer, Iran controls access to the Strait of Hormuz — a strategic chokepoint through which approximately 20 million barrels per day of crude oil and petroleum products pass, accounting for nearly one-fifth of global oil exports.

Any escalation between Tehran and Washington could, at best, disrupt regional supply flows — and in a worst-case scenario, result in the closure of the Persian Gulf's main oil artery or even attacks on energy infrastructure in major producing states.

Iran has long highlighted its capacity to block the Strait if necessary. Last Wednesday, the world witnessed a brief demonstration of Tehran's operational capability in controlling the passage, leading to long queues of vessels awaiting transit. The incident helped push oil prices to their highest levels in seven months, while daily charter rates for supertankers climbed above \$200,000.

Energy journalist Ron Bousso recently wrote that Iran has multiple escalation options — ranging from targeting Israel and U.S. allies to striking oil and gas fields, and ultimately closing the Strait of Hormuz — a move he described as an "apocalyptic scenario" capable of igniting West Asia.

Senior energy analyst Phil Flynn similarly warned that shutting the Strait would have a "major impact on prices," while analysts at Axios described the potential spike as a "historic surge" in oil prices — one that would extend beyond energy markets and ripple across global financial systems.

The stakes are particularly high for the United States. Domestic gasoline prices are closely tied to global oil benchmarks and represent a significant share of household expenses. A sustained increase in oil prices could trigger broad inflationary pressures across the U.S. economy.

For this reason, Washington consistently seeks to prevent sharp price spikes. Although the United States is one of the world's largest oil producers, the oil market operates globally, with prices determined by international supply and demand dynamics. U.S.-produced crude is sold at global prices, and the government cannot isolate domestic pricing from world market mechanisms.

Political and economic analyst Ata Bahrami explained: "We cannot say that because the U.S. has vast oil reserves, the global oil market does not matter to it. Oil is priced globally. When prices rise internationally, even major companies sell at global rates. The U.S. government does not subsidize these firms to offset global pricing mechanisms — market balances ultimately prevail."

Against this backdrop, Iran's geopolitical position in the Persian Gulf plays a decisive role in shaping market expectations. The unprecedented sensitivity of oil markets to Tehran-Washington negotiations highlights how political dynamics between the two nations are now directly intertwined with global energy equations.

Given the U.S. economy's dependence on global oil prices, any sharp increase becomes a domestic political and economic challenge for Washington — effectively amplifying Iran's leverage in determining the direction of oil prices during periods of crisis.

Iran's Exports to Qatar Grow 34% in 10 Months



TEHRAN — Iran's exports of non-oil products to neighboring Qatar in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2025) registered a 34 percent growth.

Iran exported \$122 million worth of non-oil goods to Qatar between March 21, 2025 and January 22, 2026.

The latest trade statistics indicate that Iran-Qatar exchanges of non-oil goods have been on an upward trend in a way that Iran's exports to this neighboring country have witnessed a

significant growth.

About 580,000 tons of goods, valued at more than \$122 million, were exported from Iran to neighboring Qatar from March 21, 2025 and January 22, 2026, showing a 34 percent growth in volume and 8 percent increase in value compared to the same period last year.

This is while Iran had exported 432,000 tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$113 million, to Qatar in the first 10 months of the previous year (between March 21, 2024 and January 22, 2025).

Over \$1 Billion in Non-Oil Goods Exported Through Mehran Border

TEHRAN — An official at the Customs Office of Ilam province has said \$1.267 billion worth of non-oil goods was exported from the customs office of Mehran Border Crossing in 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (Mar. 21).

Director General of Customs Office of Ilam province Sohrab Kamari stated that more than 281.65 tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$1.267 billion, were exported from the customs office of Mehran Border Crossing between March 21, 2025 and February 22, 2026.

These products have been exported from the customs office of Ilam province to neighboring Iraq and other countries, he emphasized.

Various types of petrochemicals, agricultural products, power plant equipment, construction materials, tiles, ceramics, metallic and plastic products were of the main goods exported from Mehran Border overseas in this period, he maintained.

The director general put the total volume of goods transited via Mehran Border at 125,720 tons.

About 400 trucks have daily exported goods from the Customs Office of Mehran Border Crossing to the neighboring Iraq, he added.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad Exports \$21mn in Goods

An official at the Industry, Mine and Trade Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad province has said that over \$21 million worth of non-oil goods was exported from the customs offices of this province in 11 months period.

The non-oil goods, valued at more than \$21.836 million, were exported from the customs offices of this province in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2025 to February 22, 2026), Director General of Industry, Mine and Trade Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad province Amir Teymour Mousavian stated.

Cosmetics, cement clinker, wall-to-wall (moquette) carpet, herbal essences and medicinal herbs were of the products exported from this province overseas between March 21, 2025 and February 22, 2026, he stated.

In this period, the aforementioned products were exported to the countries including Germany, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), South Africa, Iraq, China, Kuwait, Switzerland and Armenia, Mousavian noted.

Trade Exchange From Iran to Afghanistan Surges Via Rail

TEHRAN — General of Foreign Trade Affairs at the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways Shahriar Naghizadeh has said that trade exchanges between Iran and Afghanistan via rail registered a 17-fold growth in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (Mar. 21).

Iran and Afghanistan's exchanges of trade via rail witnessed a sharp rise in cross-border trade and transit activity compared to the same period last year, Naghizadeh stated.

Some 650,000 tons of goods were transported from Iran to

neighboring Afghanistan via rail between March 21, 2025 and February 22, 2026, expandable to 750,000 tons by the yearend, he emphasized.

Rail links between the two neighbors have become increasingly important as Afghanistan seeks alternative trade routes and more cost-effective import channels, Naghizadeh underlined.

Earlier, CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways has said that 70,000 tons of cargo has been transported from Iran to Afghanistan via rail between December 21, 2025 and



January 22, 2026, the volume of which reached more than

100,000 tons between January 22 and February 22, 2026.