Iran, Afghanistan Discuss Expanding Trade, Customs Operations



Iran's Minister of Agriculture Nouri Qezeljeh meets Afghanistan's Minister of Finance Mullah Mohammad Naser in Tehran for talks on expanding trade and agricultural cooperation.

TEHRAN - **Iran and Afghanistan have discussed expanding agricultural trade, operating customs facilities around the clock and resolving problems faced by Afghan merchants, in a meeting held to prepare for the next session of the two countries' joint economic commission.**

Iran's Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljeh met Afghanistan's Minister of Finance Mullah Mohammad Naser in Tehran, where the two sides reviewed border trade facilitation, customs operations and the volume of imports and exports between the neighbors.

"Important matters such as facilitating border exchanges, customs operations, speeding up border traffic and increasing the volume of import and export exchanges were examined in this meeting," Nouri Qezeljeh said, outlining the government's economic development plans.

The talks also covered exports of Afghan agricultural products to Iran, the removal of obstacles facing Afghan traders, and measures to prevent the smuggling of goods across the shared frontier. Both sides reviewed arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the joint economic commission.

Nouri Qezeljeh put current bilateral trade at approximately $2.7 billion and said he expected the figure to rise.

"We predict that with the current trend and reciprocal visits of officials, the volume of exchanges will increase soon," he said.

The minister went further than trade facilitation, proposing that Iranian firms move into production inside Afghanistan rather than simply exporting to it.

"Our proposal for utilizing Afghanistan's climate is the transfer of technology and technical and engineering services," he said. "That means Iranian companies should have a deeper presence in production chains inside Afghanistan, including poultry farming and agricultural industries."

The approach would shift the relationship from cross-border commodity sales toward joint value chains, with Iranian technical capacity applied to Afghan land, water and growing conditions.

Iran and Afghanistan share a border of roughly 900 kilometers, with the Dogharoun, Milak and Mahiroud crossings handling most commercial traffic.

Iranian officials have recently introduced a dedicated truck lane at Dogharoun for direct through-transport, part of a wider effort to cut waiting times at land borders.

For landlocked Afghanistan, Iranian territory offers access to open sea through Bandar Abbas and the southeastern port of Chabahar, which has been developed with Indian participation as a route bypassing Pakistan.

Iran has repeatedly identified Afghanistan as a market for technical and engineering services as well as a transit partner.

Oil Ministry: South Pars Rebuilding Accelerates



TEHRAN – **The caretaker oil minister has announced that executive work at some war-damaged South Pars gas refineries will run in three shifts, to speed up reconstruction and return gas production capacity to the production cycle as quickly as possible.**

Hamid Bovard spoke Saturday at a meeting of the Oil Ministry's council of deputies. Referring to the recent incident on the Phase 14 gas platform in South Pars, he said: "Unfortunately, a fire broke out on this platform. But thanks to the timely arrival of rescue and operational teams, there were fortunately no casualties, and the damage was not extensive."

He said he had inspected the site in person. Operational and specialist teams are now deployed there, carrying out the necessary repairs on the damaged equipment so that the platform can return to production as quickly as possible.

The caretaker oil minister praised the efforts of oil industry staff. "Our colleagues in the operational regions are on the job despite all the difficulties, and are carrying out major work," he said.

Speaking of his field visit yesterday to the gas refineries damaged in the imposed war in South Pars, Bovard said NIOC and NIGC are carrying out the reconstruction work well.

Noting that the lost gas capacity is gradually returning to the production cycle through his colleagues' efforts, he added: "We hope current production capacity will increase by the end of Azar" (22 December). He stressed the need for continuous follow-up of production and reconstruction plans and asked his colleagues to hold weekly meetings to track progress, so that the programs suffer no delays.

The caretaker oil minister said many efforts have been made to speed up reconstruction and the necessary funding is being secured. Approvals have been issued for financing from banks.

Stressing the need to accelerate reconstruction of the gas refineries, Bovard said executive work on some phases will proceed in three shifts so that operations finish sooner and the facilities can return to production as quickly as possible.

He noted that rebuilding in a few months refineries that took about four years to construct is an extremely heavy task. "For this reason, the efforts of oil industry staff in rebuilding these facilities are highly valuable," he said.

On the programs under way to manage diesel consumption, the caretaker oil minister said favorable results have been achieved. A plan has been prepared that his colleagues will present and send to the government for review and approval.

Bovard said implementing the plan could make a significant contribution to managing consumption and increasing refined-product export capacity. "We project that implementing this program will save about 20 million liters per day, equal to 20 percent of diesel consumption, and that this volume will be added to the country's export capacity," he said.

He stressed that revenues from consumption management measures should go back to the oil industry. "If these measures in gasoline and diesel succeed, we should work to ensure that the resulting revenues return to the oil industry itself. This would help cover the costs of development projects and provide the resources needed to develop and transport products and build other infrastructure," he said.

Report: Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan Defy U.S. Pressure, Refuse to Seal Borders With Iran



ANKARA (The Cradle) – **U.S. efforts to pressure Iran's neighboring states to close their land borders had failed, stalling Washington's campaign to cripple the Iranian economy, the New York Times (NYT) reported.**

According to three Iraqi officials and a U.S. official cited by the U.S. daily, Washington has spent weeks urging Turkiye, Iraq, and Pakistan to close their border crossings with Iran.

Several of Iran's neighbors have warned that cutting off trade routes vital to businesses and communities on both sides of the frontier could provoke "civil insurrection," according to the U.S. official.

He added that the pressure has stirred growing anger toward Washington among its allies and partners in the region.

Baghdad has rejected U.S. calls to keep only two Iranian crossings open. It briefly sealed one or two as a concession, angering Iraqis.

Pakistan has reportedly closed and reopened several crossings in recent weeks, citing security and administrative concerns.

Beyond the $3 billion in annual trade with Iran, Islamabad relies heavily on Iranian fuel shipments, especially liquefied petroleum gas, while Baghdad draws more than a third of the gas that powers its electricity network from the Islamic Republic.

Tehran has been taking its own measures, urging neighboring countries not to yield to U.S. demands.

Iran's deputy foreign minister met the Russian ambassador to discuss "how to counter unilateral U.S. actions, and the so-called Iron Gate plan."

On 5 November, Putin hosted Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary, Mohsen Rezaei, at the Kremlin. They agreed to build pipelines carrying Russian gas to Iran, enabling Tehran to meet domestic demand and resell gas to neighboring states.

Rezaei said Iran would not reopen the Strait of Hormuz or negotiate until Washington meets seven conditions, including ending hostilities across the region, lifting the naval blockade and sanctions, and releasing frozen Iranian assets.

Iran Signs Deal to Expand Magnesium Hydroxide Production



TEHRAN - **A three-party memorandum of understanding has been signed to expand the mass production of magnesium hydroxide, a compound used in the pharmaceutical and food industries.**

Yousef Kakavandi, CEO of an Iranian knowledge-based company, said the company was established in 2021 by researchers from Sharif University of Technology. He identified magnesium carbonate and magnesium hydroxide as the company's strategic products, which are now being manufactured.

The company's main products include magnesium oxide, magnesium hydroxide and high-purity magnesium carbonate. These compounds are used in the pharmaceutical and dietary supplement industries, as well as in certain advanced chemical applications, including catalyst and battery manufacturing.

Kakavandi emphasized that the investment initiative aims to produce high-quality raw materials and reduce the country's reliance on imports of these compounds.

He said the company has now reached a stage where it can manufacture products and meet the needs of certain industries. In this regard, it has signed a memorandum of understanding with another company active in the extraction, processing and production of organic, mineral and semi-finished materials, as well as pharmaceutical intermediates and active ingredients, cosmetics and personal care products, food additives, food products and supplements, and feed for livestock, poultry and aquaculture.

According to Kakavandi, the agreement was signed following the delivery and sale of several batches of products. It aims to establish long-term cooperation in supplying magnesium (Mg) compounds required by the pharmaceutical and dietary supplement industries, while also evaluating the technical, quality and production capabilities of Magnesium Sanat Sharif.

Referring to joint plans to expand production capacity, the company's CEO said the two parties had agreed to explore investment opportunities and cooperation in four key areas: improving product quality, increasing production capacity, establishing new production lines and developing new products.

"Our approach is to move toward strategic, long-term partnerships with an economic and technological perspective. We hope this memorandum of understanding, and the conversion of the proposed capacities into operational contracts, will help strengthen domestic manufacturing, particularly of magnesium compounds required by the country's pharmaceutical and dietary supplement industries," Kakavandi said.

Low-Cost Catalyst Removes Ammonia, Produces Hydrogen

TEHRAN – **Iranian Researchers have developed a low-cost electrochemical technology that removes ammonia from wastewater while producing hydrogen.**

In an international research collaboration, Marzieh Joda, a researcher at Amirkabir University of Technology, has developed graphite-based nanostructured manganese oxide electrodes (MnOx/Graphite). The electrodes have been used in an electrochemical system designed to directly oxidize dilute ammonia solutions while simultaneously producing nitrogen and hydrogen gases.

Thanks to their favorable structure, high active surface area, and promising electrochemical performance, these electrodes have potential applications beyond energy storage technologies, particularly supercapacitors and batteries. They could also be used to treat ammonia-containing wastewater, remove ammonia pollutants, and generate hydrogen in the same process.

The research was conducted under the supervision of Narges Fallah, a faculty member at Amirkabir University of Technology, with Chin-Pao Huang from the University of Delaware, USA, serving as an advisor.

One of the key achievements was demonstrating electrochemical performance at an operating voltage of approximately 0.6 volts, significantly reducing the energy required for ammonia oxidation. Under optimized laboratory conditions, the ammonia concentration was reduced to below 1 ppm. The study also examined and confirmed the feasibility of converting ammonia into nitrogen gas while producing hydrogen.

The electrodes were fabricated using an electrodeposition method. More than 300 samples with different compositions, fabrication conditions, and heat treatments were prepared and evaluated.

Several techniques, including field-emission scanning electron microscopy (FE-SEM), energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS), atomic force microscopy (AFM), and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), were used to investigate the electrodes' structures and surface properties.

Their electrochemical performance was also assessed through tests such as Tafel polarization, electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS), and durability and stability evaluations. These analyses helped identify the most suitable electrode configurations and optimize operating conditions to improve catalytic activity and service life.

Key innovations include the development of an integrated, durable, and low-cost electrocatalyst that does not require a binder; engineering different manganese oxide phases to improve performance and stability; increasing the electrochemical capacitance of the graphite substrate by up to 15 times; and using intelligent computational models to predict and optimize electrode performance.