

President unveils economic drive in South Khorasan, touts national strength

From Page 1 ▶ The financial scale of the government's commitment was made clear with the announcement of a staggering 190 trillion rials (about \$190 million) in credit allocated for the province's development, stemming from this provincial trip.

Beyond traditional industry, President Pezeshkian outlined an ambitious vision for renewable energy. He announced plans for the significant development of solar power, targeting a national production goal of 40,000 megawatts of electricity.

In a statement resonating with both domestic and international audiences, the president underscored a major infrastructure milestone: the imminent completion of the Chabahar-Zahedan railway, which he insisted would be operational by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2026). He struck a confident tone on the national stage, asserting, "Contrary to the analysis of enemies, Iran is in its strongest position, and the country's issues can be resolved with the opinion of experts."

The itinerary blended economic diplomacy with broader civic engagement. The president held consultations with local intellectuals, cultural and artistic figures, and political and social activists.

He reviewed a showcase of the province's



capabilities and presided over the Provincial Planning and Development Council. A dedicated session was also held where Dr. Pezeshkian listened to the concerns and proposals of local investors and business leaders before addressing them.

This comprehensive visit to South Khorasan appears to be a deliberate demonstration of the administration's dual focus: accelerating tangible economic projects and infrastructure while fostering a narrative of internal resilience and expert-driven problem-solving in the face of external pressures. The success of the announced projects, particularly the strategic railway link, will be closely watched as a measure of this agenda's effectiveness.

Tehran, Minsk explore co-op opportunities in oil, petchem sectors

TEHRAN- Opportunities and capacities for cooperation between Iran and Belarus were discussed in the third session of the two countries' oil industry working group, which was held virtually, with the aim of following up and implementing the bilateral oil memorandum of understanding signed between Iran's Oil Ministry and Belarus' Belneftekhim (an association of petrochemical companies in Belarus, subordinated to the Council of Ministers).

Referring to the recent meeting between Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and Belarusian Industry Minister Andrei Kuznetsov on the sidelines of the 18th meeting of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee (on December 9) and the emphasis of both sides on expanding cooperation, especially in the energy sector, the session explored opportunities and capacities for cooperation between the two countries.

Areas of cooperation in the trade of petrochemical and oil products, the export of catalysts to Belarus, cooperation in technical and engineering services, and the supply of oil industry equipment were the main topics of discussion in this session.

Both sides emphasized the high level of political relations between Iran and Belarus and stressed the need to expand cooperation, particularly with the participation of private companies—a move that could lead to an increase in the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries.

Representatives from the National Petrochemical Company, the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, Persian Gulf Holding, Ghadir Investment Holding,

Sanat Trade Company, the Commodity Management Department of the National Iranian Oil Company, Tabriz, Karun, and Takht-e Jamshid Petrochemical Companies, as well as the Iranian Association of Oil Industry Equipment Manufacturers, along with representatives from relevant Belarusian sectors and Alireza Sanei, Ambassador of Iran in Minsk, attended the session and exchanged views.

The Iranian delegation was headed by Mostafa Barzegar, Director General of Europe, America, and Commonwealth of Independent States at the International Affairs and Commerce Deputy of the Oil Ministry, while the Belarusian delegation was headed by Igor Fomin, Head of the Foreign Trade Department of Belneftekhim.

On December 10, Iran's agriculture minister and Belarus' industry minister agreed to expand cooperation across farming, forestry, veterinary services, and plant and animal quarantine, with commitments to jointly produce agricultural machinery and potash fertilizer.

The two sides reached an understanding for Iran to supply part of Belarus' food needs, while Minsk will export agricultural raw materials required by Tehran.

Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezeljeh and Belarusian Industry Minister Andrei Kuznetsov described the agreements as a practical step toward deeper economic cooperation, citing complementary strengths in both countries.

Iran also signaled its readiness to facilitate the transit of Belarusian agricultural products to other markets.

Iran to hold its 1st specialized exhibition of accounting, financial management, software

TEHRAN- The first specialized exhibition of accounting, financial management, software, and related services of Iran, titled "Hesab Expo," will be held from January 21 to 24, 2026, at Rose Mall Expo Center, in Tehran.

Holding this exhibition for the first time in the country is considered a response to a long-standing need in Iran's economy—a need that had been addressed for years through limited conferences and events but has now been implemented with a comprehensive, specialized, and structured approach. "Hesab Expo" is an effort to systematically link professional accounting services, financial management, and business support technologies.

Amir Ebrahimzadeh, Secretary of the Policy Council of the Accounting, Financial Manage-

ment, Software, and Related Services Exhibition, referring to the background of this event's formation, stated: "The idea of holding this exhibition took shape about two to three years ago, following an assessment of the existing gap in the country's professional accounting environment."

According to the exhibition secretariat, participants will include accounting software companies, auditing firms, financial consulting and training centers, banks, FinTech startups, and providers of financial and management services.

Visitors will encompass a wide range of financial managers and deputies, accountants, accounting professors and students, entrepreneurs, and business owners.

Beyond the Strait: Hormozgan charts course from transit hub to economic powerhouse

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Strategically positioned at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz—the world's most critical energy chokepoint—Iran's Hormozgan province serves as the nation's indispensable commercial gateway. Home to major ports like Shahid Rajaei, the country's largest container port, it is the primary hub for Iran's import, export, and transit trade, connecting global markets from the Persian Gulf to Africa and India.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Mohammad Reza Safa, the head of Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, outlines a vision to leverage this geographic advantage, moving beyond transit to build a diversified, resilient, and value-creating economic powerhouse for Iran, despite the challenges of sanctions and climate.

Given Hormozgan's control over the Strait of Hormuz and its vital ports, what is the Chamber's initial strategic vision for transforming the province from a transit corridor into a comprehensive economic power within the next five years?

The Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce, understanding the province's exceptional geo-economic position, has defined its five-year vision as moving beyond a "solely transit role" toward becoming a "center for economic value creation." This strategy is based on three pillars: First, completing value chains in maritime-based industries, energy, and mining. Second, developing advanced logistics, financial, and technical services related to international trade. Third, transforming the province's ports from cargo transit points into hubs for production, processing, and export. The ultimate goal is to increase the share of the province's real and productive economy in the country's GDP and enhance Hormozgan's economic resilience.

Sanctions remain a major external pressure. Beyond state diplomacy, what specific,



practical actions is the Chamber taking with its members to facilitate cross-border trade, ensure shipping insurance, and attract foreign investment despite these constraints?

In a context where sanctions remain a structural reality, the Hormozgan Chamber has focused on "private sector operational solutions." These include developing regional trade networks with neighboring countries and the Indian Ocean region, facilitating the use of non-dollar financial mechanisms, cooperating with regional insurance companies, and establishing export consortia. The Chamber also plays an active role in identifying secure shipping routes, negotiating with foreign brokers, and providing legal and commercial advisory services to its members to mitigate sanctions-related risks.

A major criticism is the province's excessive reliance on transit. Which specific sectors—such as downstream petrochemical industries, agricultural processing, or maritime services—is the Chamber actively promoting for diversification, and have there been any notable success cases so far?

The Hormozgan Chamber is specifically pursuing three areas as drivers of economic diversification: downstream petrochemical and mineral industries, processing and exporting agricultural and fishery products, and developing specialized maritime services including repairs, advanced logistics, and technical services. On this path, the establishment of fishery product pro-

cessing units with an export-oriented approach and the growth of indigenous maritime service companies are examples of the tangible results of this diversification policy, leading to sustainable job creation and increased value-added within the province.

Businesses often cite bureaucracy and complex regulations as obstacles. Can you share an example of a specific administrative or regulatory process that the Chamber has successfully streamlined for businesses in the past year?

One of the Chamber's serious priorities is reforming costly administrative processes for economic actors. Over the past year, through persistent follow-up in the provincial Public-Private Dialogue Council, the Chamber has succeeded in facilitating and shortening processes related to cargo clearance, renewal of business cards, and some port permits. These reforms, though gradual, have specifically reduced the time and capital costs for enterprises and created a more predictable environment for businesses.

Given severe climatic conditions and water scarcity, what green initiatives or sustainable business models does the Chamber advocate to ensure the long-term sustainability of the province's industry and agriculture?

Considering climatic limitations and the water crisis, the Hormozgan Chamber supports environmentally compatible business models. The focus is

on using low-water technology in industry, developing renewable energy (especially solar), optimizing energy consumption in ports, and promoting smart agriculture. The Chamber strives to institutionalize the concept of "sustainable economic growth" as a necessity, not a choice, in provincial policymaking.

There is a noticeable gap between the skills of the local workforce and the needs of modern trade and logistics. What targeted training programs or partnerships with universities has the Chamber launched to build a future-ready workforce within the province?

The Hormozgan Chamber considers the workforce skills gap a key development challenge. Therefore, cooperation with universities, technical and vocational centers, and the private sector to design specialized courses in logistics, international trade, maritime industries, and port management has been put on the agenda. The goal of these programs is to train skilled, future-ready local human resources so that the needs of the province's industries are met internally and dependence on non-native labor is reduced.

Economic growth must benefit the local population. How is the Chamber working to ensure that local SMEs and entrepreneurs can benefit from the opportunities created by the province's large commercial and infrastructure projects?

The Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce firmly believes that real development cannot be achieved without the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, by creating networks between large projects and SMEs, promoting industrial clusters, providing management training, and facilitating market access, the Chamber strives to increase the share of local businesses in the province's economic opportunities. This approach not only contributes to a fairer distribution of development benefits but also strengthens the social and economic foundations of the province.

Iran, Turkey examine co-op in pharmaceutical, medical equipment industries

TEHRAN- At the webinar examining commercial cooperation in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries between Iran and Turkey, organized by the International Affairs and Trade Development Department of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and in cooperation and coordination with the Economic Section of the Turkish Embassy in Tehran, economic officials from the most important pharmaceutical and medical equipment associations of the two countries, while reviewing and analyzing cooperation opportunities for private sector companies from both sides, emphasized joint production and exports.

Those active in the Iranian and Turkish pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries, in a joint webinar by detailing the capacities and capabilities of both countries, identified the health industry as one of the strategic axes of future commercial cooperation and discussed the details of this cooperation.

According to the Public Relations report of the Tehran Chamber, at this meeting, Mo-

hammad Abdozadeh, Chairman of the Tehran Chamber's Health Economy Commission, introducing Iran as the first founder of the pharmaceutical industry in the MENA region, announced that currently 98 percent of the country's pharmaceutical needs are supplied by 250 domestic companies. Referring to the \$5 billion value of the drug market in 2023, he emphasized Iran's capability in producing "high-tech," nano, and biotechnology drugs.

Abdozadeh stated that the quality of Iranian products is guaranteed by membership in the international PIC/S convention, and reported successful exports of these items to countries such as Turkey and Russia.

He mentioned Iran's imports of nearly \$1 billion worth of finished drugs and pharmaceutical raw materials, and a slightly lower figure for medical equipment imports, and stressed that if the Turkish Ministry of Health cooperates in registering Iranian drug brands in Turkey, the ground for developing cooperation between pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies from the two countries

will be more prepared than ever.

The Chairman of the Iranian Human Medicine Manufacturers Syndicate, stating that over 500 drug and medical equipment manufacturing companies are active in Iran and nearly 17,000 pharmacies are licensed to operate in the country, emphasized that through close cooperation and coordinated planning by the chambers and associations of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment from both countries, in addition to meeting domestic needs, more export markets will open up for both countries.

Hessameddin Hallaj, Deputy of International Affairs and Trade Development at the Tehran Chamber, also said at this specialized webinar: "The health, pharmaceutical, and chemical products value chain is one of the strategic priorities of the Tehran Chamber in developing international trade, and in this regard, Turkey, as one of the key trade partners, holds a special place in our cooperation roadmap."

Transit of goods via Iran reaches 13.5m tons in 8 months

TEHRAN- As reported by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), 13.5 million tons of commodities was transited through Iran during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-Novembre 21).

The IRICA report said that transit of good via the country fell 9.25 percent in the eight-month period of this year as compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

Iran plans to double its annual transit volume to 40 million tons by the end of its Seventh Development Plan in 2028, a senior Transport and Urban Development Ministry official said in late August, highlighting the country's ambitions to become a regional transit hub.

Jafar Jamili, acting head of the ministry's Office for Commercialization and Trade Associations, said nearly 20 million tons of cargo transited through Iran in the

past year, with about 88 percent moved by road and 12 percent by rail.

Most of the traffic consisted of petroleum products shipped from Iraq's Kurdistan region through southern Iranian ports to Persian Gulf Arab states. Other transit flows passed through Bandar Abbas toward Afghanistan and from northwestern to northeastern borders.

Under the new plan, 70 percent of transit is expected to move by

road and 30 percent by rail. Jamili said meeting the 40-million-ton target requires expanded road and rail infrastructure, upgraded border terminals, and streamlined customs and trade processes.

He noted that geopolitical tensions in maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal have increased global interest in overland routes, particularly since the Russia-Ukraine war disrupted supply chains.