

Development Potential Of Hormozgan Province

The Governor General of the Iranian Province of Hormozgan, Ibrahim Azizi, was interviewed by Hussein Askary of the Schiller Institute and EIR on March 6 in Bandar Abbas, at the conclusion of the 21st International Conference on the Persian Gulf. The interview was translated from Arabic by Askary.



Askary: I would like ask some questions that were also raised at the Institute for Political and International Studies conference here in Hormozgan Province. The city of Bandar Abbas, since the building of the Bandar Abbas-Bafq-Mashhad Railway, has become a connecting point between Central Asia and the Gulf. How do you see the role of Bandar Abbas in economic cooperation extending from Asia to the Arab countries and Europe?

Azizi: Because Bandar Abbas has all four transport capacities—rail, road, air, and sea connections—it is known as the transportation capital of Iran. At the beginning of this rail corridor is the southern port of Shahid Rajai, with a 6.5-million-ton capacity, constituting a great and important base for future economic development at the southern end of this corridor. Under good and normal economic conditions, and if we could coordinate this optimal terminal capacity with our overall good relationships with the Central Asian nations, then this corridor and Shahid Rajai would serve as an important base for the economic development of Bandar Abbas, Iran, and those nations. It is true that capacity is very important, but even more important is the ability to use this capacity. There is a long way to go in this respect, and we all have to have a national will and a political will to use this capacity to its maximum.

Askary: When I came here from the airport, I saw there were areas where there was infrastructure, electric-

ity lines, and roads but there were no houses. I guess that you are planning to expand the city. What has been the impact of this development on the living conditions, the economic situations, of the people here in the region?

Azizi: The province of Hormozgan and particularly Bandar Abbas are now in a process of implementing a sustainable economic development plan. One of the aspects of this is the transportation system which I explained earlier, including the Shahid Rajai terminal itself; we are going to increase its capacity to 10 million tons in the mid-term, and up to 20 million tons in the long run.

Bandar Abbas is in fact a commercial city. In order to fully use these commercial capacities, construction of more residential areas is an important basis of the project. And if you had enough time here, you could see the plan of our residential areas under construction in the western part of the city. Right now, 56,000 urban residential units are being built in Hormozgan, of which 36,000 are planned for Bandar Abbas itself, of course, with all the standard urban development considerations as to per-capita educational, health, recreation, cultural centers, ports, and other facilities which provide good infrastructure for economic development.

Askary: If you look at this map of the World Land-Bridge [see previous article], it shows our plan for expanding the economic networks. Bandar Abbas in the future will be connected to Africa. Now some people say you should build a land connection, a bridge or a tunnel, to the U.A.E. and Oman; so in the future maybe you will expand even more.

Azizi: We have good relations with Oman and other neighboring states. We had a number of meetings and discussions in the past month, and as a result of these we are going to expand our trade and economic relationships with them. At present the longest bridge in the Middle East is under construction connecting the western part of Bandar Abbas, that is continental Iran, to our Qeshm Island, southwest of Bandar Abbas.

With the construction of this bridge, all will be able to use the terminal capacities of the Shahid Rajai port in Bandar Abbas as well as the Kaveh port in Qeshm, for the future economic well-being of the region. I should emphasize that the Shahid Rajai port is currently able to receive container ships with a capacity of 14,000 containers.

Askary: How long is the bridge going to be?

Azizi: Approximately 1 kilometer.

Askary: Are there plans to build more rail lines on

the line to Bafq and Mashhad, to increase the capacity?

Azizi: Yes, there are already plans to expand the rail tracks along the Bandar Abbas-Bafq-Mashhad line. [See next article.]

Askary: In Europe and the United States, the Hormuz Strait has become very well known. Everybody, even children, know about it, because people say if Iran is attacked, the Iranians will block their Hormuz Strait and world trade will stop. How do you respond to that?

Azizi: Look, in my opening address to the conference yesterday and also in the concluding address today, I pointed to certain issues, and the same issues were also addressed by [First Vice President Mohammad-Reza] Rahimi, who pointed to all the security matters concerning the Gulf. But just to reiterate, we believe that the Persian Gulf is a gulf of brotherhood, peace, reconciliation, and a good place for all nations to cooperate in this strategically significant area, and to conduct commerce, and to benefit from it. And we, in Islamic Iran, are working for that end. We don't have the habit of saying the first and last words. We believe that there should be an agreement to ensure that all the nations of the area are able to benefit from this waterway, in a way that ensures everyone's rights. And we believe that if there is unity, there will be security.

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