

Iran discovers new gas field

Iran has discovered a gas field in the Gulf with an estimated 11 trillion cubic feet in reserves, oil minister Gholam Hossein Nozari said on Saturday.

"A gas field with an estimated reserve of 11 trillion cubic feet (311 billion cubic metres) was found by an Indian company in the Persian Gulf," Nozari told a news conference, adding there was a "low possibility" that it was a joint field with a neighbouring country.

Nozari declined to reveal the name of the company but said "there will be talks with the discovering company for (the field's) development if they are interested."

Iran has the world's second-largest proven gas reserves after Russia, but has been slow to develop the sector due to a lack of foreign investment, sanctions and construction delays.

The country has ambitions to export gas to a host of countries including Armenia, Pakistan and Syria, however, it was recently forced to import gas from neighbouring Turkmenistan to cover high domestic consumption.

The imports were stopped at the end of December due to what Turkmenistan called technical hitches. They have yet to be resumed.

Iran normally imports 20 to 23 million cubic metres (700 million to 810 million cubic feet) of gas daily from Turkmenistan - amounting to around five percent of its total consumption.

Iran's only gas exports are to Turkey which usually receives around 20 million cubic metres (700 million cubic feet) each day.

Iran had to cut the exports to Turkey for three weeks earlier this year due to the combination of the lack of Turkmenistan gas and severe cold weather.