

# Iran: Time to promote peace, cooperation in Caucasus



baijan, although it is mostly populated by ethnic Armenians. Azerbaijan won the 2020 war, regaining much of Nagorno-Karabakh. Another battle in September left the entire territory under the control of the Baku government, after months of blockade. Over 100,000 ethnic Armenians were forced to flee, and Armenia has accused Azerbaijan of carrying out ethnic cleansing – a claim Azerbaijan denies, saying people were free to stay and be integrated into Azerbaijan. Before the meeting, the foreign ministers

Foreign ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia and Turkey pose for a photo before a meeting of the so-called 3+3 cooperation format in Tehran on October 23, 2023. **PAYAM SANI/IRNA**

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said today is a historic opportunity for all countries of the region as the “war in the Caucasus region is now over and the time has come for peace, cooperation and progress”.

Addressing a meeting of the 3+3 cooperation format on

Monday, the Iranian foreign minister said the meeting aims to use the capacities of the region to resolve issues, establish peace and expand cooperation with the aim of promoting the region’s economy and people’s welfare. The meeting, dubbed “Time for Peace, Cooperation, and Progress in the South Caucasus,” was attended by the foreign ministers of Ar-

menia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey and Iran. The 3+3 consultative platform, which first held talks in 2021 in Moscow, was established in an attempt to resolve regional problems through the inclusion of regional countries and the exclusion of extra-regional countries. The platform was to include Georgia, but Georgia has stated previously it did not

plan to participate in the initiative and said on Sunday it would not participate in the meeting in Tehran. The Iranian foreign minister expressed hope for the “constructive and effective presence of the friendly country of Georgia” in future meetings. Monday’s meeting was overshadowed with the dispute between Azerbaijan

and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The two countries have fought two wars in the past three decades over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and have so far failed to reach a peace deal despite long-running efforts by the United States, EU and Russia. The land-locked region has always been internationally recognized as part of Azer-

of Azerbaijan and Armenia held separate meetings with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. During the meetings, Raisi said that Iran is ready to help resolve the disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Raisi told the Armenian foreign minister that Iran considers extra-regional interference detrimental to regional peace and stability.

## Raisi: We can resolve ‘severe energy shortage’



### Economy Desk

Noting that the incumbent government has inherited a country with a severe shortage in the field of energy, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi considered it possible to resolve this shortage in light of Iran’s capacities.

He expressed his appreciation for the significant measures that were taken so far, but said that to resolve it as soon as possible and prevent its repercussions from damaging other sectors including industries, agriculture, and domestic consumption, no effort must be spared, president.ir reported. Highlighting the importance of optimizing energy consumption during a meeting of the country’s Supreme Council of Energy, Raisi obliged the council to carefully examine the current trend of consumption and quickly provide optimization solutions. Iran has the largest known reserves of natural gas in the world after Russia, but Tehran was at times unable to supply enough energy for domestic consumption. An international sanctions regime has prevented the Ministry of Oil from producing enough gas to reliably maintain Iran’s own power grid, let alone export at scale. As a result, one of its strategies to deal with chronic energy shortages during the cold seasons was to cut gas supplies to leading industries including steel and petrochemicals.

Iran is a country that still burns its natural gas produced from oil wells and is unable to collect it due to its outdated technology and machinery, AFP reported. In the weeks ahead of predicted power cuts, Iran regularly begins to burn alternatives to natural gas, usually diesel and heavy fuel oil, in order to ease supply issues.

According to a World Bank ranking, Iran ranks third in the world in burning natural gas, wasting more than \$5 billion worth of gas every year in the exploitation of oil wells.

While in the short-term, some of its needs have been met by striking gas swap deals with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Iran is looking to solve what it calls “energy imbalance” for the long term by boosting renewable energy production. Under a major Energy Ministry plan, 20,000 megawatts of renewable electricity would be generated by 2027.

## Armenia, Iran to construct roads for INSTC

### Economy Desk

Armenia and Iran signed a contract on Monday to construct a part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in southern Armenia during a visit by Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash to Yerevan.

Under the contract, the two countries will reconstruct the Agarak-Vardandizor Road (about 21km long), and construct a road that will stretch about 11km from Vardandizor to the tunnel exit within the framework of the INSTC Investment Program - Tranche 4, Armenia’s Ministry of Territorial Admin-

istration and Infrastructure announced.

The contract was signed by Gor Avetisyan, the executive director of Armenia’s Road Department Foundation, and representatives of the Tehran-based Abad Rahan Pars International Group and Tunnel Sadd Ariana joint venture, according to armradio.am

The project is financed by the Eurasian Development Bank loan and the Armenian government. Construction works are planned to start at the end of 2023, and will be completed within three years. The reconstruction of the 32km road section is to fall under the framework of the ongoing Kajaran-Agarak re-

construction project on the border and meet advanced international standards in terms of road safety, convenience, and travel time reduction.

Regarding the security of the INSTC, Armenia’s Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan said, “There is no way to say that there are no security issues, but at the same time, both Armenia and Iran have a clear commitment to the implementation of this project, and Iran has always expressed unequivocally its unconditional support for Armenia’s territorial integrity.”

The project plans to build five new intersections, six new flyovers, two new tunnels, with a total length of

920 meters, and 17 new bridges.

Bazrpash stressed that the current bridge on the Armenian-Iranian border is not enough for the large amount of traffic, adding that this new bridge can contribute to the development of Armenian-Iranian economic relations.

The current bridge on the Armenia-Iran border was built in 1995 on the Araks River, news.am wrote.

The Iranian minister pointed out that negotiations are underway between Iran and Armenia on holding a tripartite meeting between Iran, Georgia, and Armenia in order to facilitate transit in the INSTC, Tasnim news agency reported.



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Bazrpash said that Iranian companies are ready to assist the Armenian side in various projects. “We inform any Armenian company engaged in the field of housing construction and road construction that we are ready to assist them in their projects in Iran,” the Iranian official added. During his visit, the two

parties also agreed to nullify road duties for trucking as it “will make it possible to deliver goods at a lower price,” Bazrpash said at a press briefing in Yerevan. The Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Gnel Sanosyan described the move as an “important political decision”.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Riyadh to ease Iran participation in Saudi expos: Envoy

### Economy Desk

Saudi Ambassador to Iran Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi said that he will pave the way for the presence of Iranian businesspeople in Saudi exhibitions.

The Saudi ambassador made the remarks in a meeting with Iran’s Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mehdi Zeighami in Tehran on Sunday, according to IRNA.

For his part, the Iranian official expressed the eagerness of Iranian companies for participating in Saudi

health, food, and petrochemical events.

Furthermore, Zeighami called for exchanging the list of businesspeople between the two countries and hoped that Saudi trade delegations will visit Iran in the near future.

“Considering the farsighted programs of Saudi Arabia

and the country’s current investments, the two countries can benefit from trading in the field of new technologies,” he said.

The Saudi ambassador and the Iranian deputy industry minister were mainly focused on the growth of trade between the two neighboring countries.



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