

## Iran, Afghanistan discuss finalization of Khaf-Herat railway project

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways said given the proximity of Iran, Afghanistan and China, the Khaf-Herat railway route is the only axis that can shorten transit time and reduce costs; thus, completing this railway according to a specific timeline has great importance. Jabbarali Zakeri made the remarks in a meeting with Deputy Minister of Public Works and Head of the Afghan Railway Administration Mawlawi Mohammad Is'haq Sahebzadeh and his delegation. He emphasized that the Iranian railway organization is determined to assist Afghanistan in this respect, IRNA wrote. Zakeri called for arranging a tripartite meeting among Iranian, Chinese, and Afghan authorities to pursue the implementation of the railway project, which was proposed by the Iranian railway officials.

He added that many of the problems faced by the Iranian and Afghan railway consortium have been resolved, and currently, three trains are operating weekly on the designated route.

The deputy minister also noted that in response to Afghanistan's request, a third training course for Afghan railway staff will soon be held, both in-person and, if desired, partly online.

The construction of the Khaf-Herat railway, which links Khaf in eastern Iran with Herat in western Afghanistan, began back in 2007.

For his part, Sahebzadeh thanked the Iranian railway organization for training programs for 96 Afghan railway employees. He added that following the successful completion of the first and second training courses, they are now looking forward to the third course.

The Afghan official stated that the Khaf-Herat project symbolizes the friendship between the two countries, expressing hope that through joint cooperation, there will be an increase in the level of transit and cargo transport, resulting in the growth of trade between the two countries.

He emphasized that based on studies, there is significant cargo capacity along the China-Afghanistan-Iran route, assuring that Afghanistan is fully prepared to take the necessary steps alongside Iran in this regard.

The head of the Afghan Railway Administration also announced that engineering studies are underway for the construction of the Zaranj-Kandahar railway project, which, when connected to Zabol, will open a new chapter of cooperation and trade exchanges between the two countries.

# Exports of mining, mineral products top \$7.5b in seven months: **IMIDRO**

## Economy Desk

The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced on Wednesday that Iran's exports of mining and mineral products surpassed \$7.5 billion from the start of the current Iranian year (March 20) to October 21.

According to the report, Iran exported 36.596 million tons of various mining and mineral products valued at \$7.537 billion during the seven months. During the same period last year, exports stood at 35.94 million tons, worth \$7.43 billion, IRNA reported.

A comparison of the two periods shows a 2% rise in weight terms and a 1% increase in export value this year.

The largest share of exports during this period came from the production chains of steel, aluminum, and copper, totaling 19.015 million tons and valued at \$5.81 billion.

According to IMIDRO, the value of Iran's export of minerals in the previous Iranian year stood at \$13.7 billion, registering a nine-percent increase compared to a year earlier. The report added that \$7.3 billion worth of the mining and mineral products were imported into Iran from March 2023 to March 2024, showing a 35% rise compared to a year earlier.

Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries in the world. With 15,000 mining areas, Iran has the sixth largest zinc, seventh largest copper, ninth



largest iron ore reserves, and fifth largest gypsum and barite reserves glob-

ally. It also has 3% of the world's total lead and zinc reserves, and huge

coal reserves. Other mineral products such as chromate, and

manganese are also found in different regions of Iran.

## Iran-Russia power grids connection to boost regional supplies: **Minister**

Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said connecting the power grids of Russia and Iran would significantly increase the region's electricity supply capacity.

Aliabadi made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported. The official described the meeting as crucial, noting that Russia is one of Iran's key neighbors.

He stated that connecting the electrical networks of both countries could generate significant supplies of electricity for the countries of the region.

Aliabadi went on to say that Iran and Russia have already been collaborating extensively in the electricity sector. Iran has established electrical connections with Turkey, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan, he added. The construction of the Sirik power plant was also discussed during the meeting. The Sirik power plant which is under construction in Sirik county in the southern Iranian province of Hormuzgan will have a generation capacity of 1,400 megawatts.

A contract for the Sirik power plant has been signed between Iran and Russia, Aliabadi said, adding that both sides are eager to implement it, with Russia being interested in partnering with Iranian companies.

The Sirik project has an executive plan, and we are actively working to resolve any technical challenges in this regard, the minister further noted.

For his part, the Russian energy minister expressed support for bolstering ties with Iran, noting that Russia is working on a plan for Iranian and Russian officials to meet



in Moscow in December.

Tsivilev said Russia seeks to obtain Iranian technology for the design and manufacturing of gas turbines for its power plants.

The Russian minister also held a meeting with Iranian First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref on Wednesday. Speaking at the meeting, Aref announced Tehran and Moscow's strong determination to strengthen bilateral relations to the maximum level.

As there are considerable capacities in both countries for boosting cooperation, it is important that the two sides enhance trade exchange and implement the agreements on cooperation, Aref noted.

It is an indication of the strong will of both sides to foster ties as they continue consultations, especially during the current global and regional situation, the vice president said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran says that the all-out and long-term cooperation with Russia is of paramount importance, he added.

For his part, the Russian minister said there are various grounds for deepening cooperation between his country and Iran.

The exchange of meetings between the two sides' senior officials will facilitate the expansion of relations, he underlined.

Tsivilev, who is also the Russian chairman of the Moscow-Tehran economic committee, stressed that the committee's activities are significant as it helps facilitate cooperation.

## Tehran-Tbilisi trade registers 12% rise in six months

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadi  
Staff writers

Trade between Iran and Georgia reached approximately \$150 million in the first half of 2024, as announced by Arash Nikpey, the head of the Trade and Marketing Commission at the Iran-Georgia Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking to Iran Daily, he said trade between Tehran and Tbilisi grew by more than 12 percent in the first half of 2024 and totaled about \$149.5 million, an increase of \$16.5 million compared to the same period last year.

Nikpey emphasized that Iran and Georgia have significant potential for economic collaboration due to geographical, economic, and cultural advantages. "A shared political commitment to developing economic relations could substantially boost bilateral trade," he stated.

According to Nikpey, Iranian exports to Georgia in the first six months of this year included construction steel (such as rebar and pipes), building materials (like tiles and ceramics), petrochemical products, and agricultural goods.

Highlighting key areas for trade development, he said agricultural and food products in particular are promising. Georgia can serve as a strong market for Iranian produce, vegetables, and dried fruits, while the import of meat and livestock products from Georgia is attractive for Iran.

The trader added that petrochemical and chemical industries also play a key role in expanding trade volume, with Georgia's demand for petrochemicals and plastic products providing an opportunity for increased Iranian exports. Additionally, with Georgia's construction boom, the demand for



building materials like tiles, ceramics, and metal supplies remains high.

Nikpey emphasized the importance of developing

transportation and transit infrastructure to facilitate trade, noting that Iran and Georgia could leverage their strategic geographical positions for transport and transit cooperation between Asia and Europe.

He also pointed to tourism as a significant area of economic collaboration, stating that Georgia is a popular destination for Iranian tourists and suggested that developing tourism infrastructure and increasing direct flights between the two countries could generate economic benefits for both nations.

Nikpey referred to banking challenges and sanctions as obstacles to trade growth, suggesting alternative solutions like bilateral financial agreements.

He highlighted the establishment of financial mechanisms such as currency swaps and using national currencies to bypass sanctions, as well as enhancing cooperation between Iranian and Georgian banks to streamline financial exchanges and payments. Easing customs procedures and negotiating new agreements could further

strengthen trade relations.

He proposed various measures to boost trade, including creating new transportation routes (land, sea, and air) and expanding Iran's port capacities while utilizing regional transit corridors like the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC). Additionally, he recommended developing preferential or free trade agreements to reduce tariffs and signing economic memoranda of understanding to ease imports and exports.

Diversifying exports and focusing on products with higher added value, such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, and industrial goods, could help Iran gain a larger share of the Georgian market, Nikpey noted. He added that Iranian traders should meet Georgia's demand for imports, including raw food materials and dairy products.

Talking on joint investment opportunities, Nikpey highlighted that both nations could collaborate in sectors like food industries, construction materials, and petrochemicals. He suggested setting up joint manufacturing plants in economic free zones or near the borders to reduce production and transportation costs.

Furthermore, he emphasized Iran's potential to provide techno-engineering services to Georgia, especially in construction, energy, and technology, as a means of strengthening bilateral trade.