

Araghchi calls Iran-Afghanistan security, stability interconnected

Taliban vows to even 'share single drop of water with Iranian brothers'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said security and stability in Iran and Afghanistan are interconnected after he met with Taliban officials during a visit to Kabul. Heading a high-ranking delegation on Sunday, Araghchi arrived in the Afghan capital on Sunday for a one-day visit to discuss various issues, including Afghan migrants and Iran's water right. He is the highest-level Iranian official to visit Kabul since the Taliban's takeover in 2021. During a meeting with Taliban government Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund, Araghchi referred to Iran's historical, religious, and economic relations with Afghanistan and said that Iran is glad to see the establishment of security across Afghanistan after four decades. Iran's top diplomat also said the exchange of high-level diplomats between the two countries indicate the strong relations between Tehran and Kabul.

Many countries closed their embassies in Kabul or downgraded diplomatic relations after the Taliban takeover that ousted the US-backed government, but Iran has maintained active diplomatic ties with Afghanistan's new rulers, though it has yet to officially recognize the Taliban government.

Iran's water right

During the meeting, Araghchi referred to Iran's water right in the border river of Hirmand, also known as Helmand, and the issue of illegal Afghan migrants as the two important issues in relations between the two countries.

He said Iran has never sought to interfere in Afghanistan and calls for the full implementation of the Hirmand River agreement signed between the two neighboring countries in 1973 to resolve the water issue.

Tensions between the countries have intensified in recent years over water resources and Afghanistan's construction of

dams on the Hirmand and Harirud.

Araghchi also called for turning the water issue into a matter of cooperation instead of conflict. Mullah Hassan Akhund, for his part, said the Taliban government is not seeking to prevent the flow of water from Hirmand river into Iran, adding that, "We have ordered the ministries of water and agriculture to send water to Iran."

"If we have a drop of water, we will share it with our Iranian brothers," he said. He emphasized that there is a specific agreement between Iran and Afghanistan regarding Iran's water right in the Hirmand River.

Illegal Afghan migrants

Both officials also discussed the issue of illegal Afghan migrants in Iran. Araghchi called for the development of a comprehensive plan for the return of Afghan nationals to their homeland.

The Taliban official also thanked Iran for hosting Afghan refugees for a long time.

Iran shares more than 900 kilometers of border with Afghanistan, and the Islamic republic hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world – mostly Afghans fleeing decades of war.

The flow of Afghan immigrants has increased since the Taliban took power. Also on Sunday, Araghchi met with his Afghan counterpart, Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Economic relations

Araghchi praised the two countries' economic, trade and political relations in his talks with Muttaqi, expressing hope that, "During this trip we will be able to further expand the ties in line with the national interests of both sides" as he placed a premium on security and economic arenas.

Muttaqi "expressed hope that (Araghchi's) visit to Kabul would create further momentum in relations between the two countries and they would enter a new phase of bilateral relations," the Afghan Foreign Ministry said.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi at the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry in Kabul on January 26, 2025. **AFGHANISTAN FOREIGN MINISTRY**

Araghchi also said the issues of water and migration demanded expanded cooperation and called for the full implementation of bilateral water treaties. The Taliban official said

the region was suffering from climate change-induced drought and that Taliban authorities were "trying to ensure that water reaches both sides" of the Iran-Afghanistan border.

Several Iranian delegations have visited Afghanistan over the years, including a parliamentary delegation in August 2023 to discuss water rights.

Incurred losses over continued presence on FATF blacklist 'undeniable': Deputy minister

National Desk

Iranian Deputy Finance Minister Hadi Khani said the extent of incurred losses over the continuation of Iran's presence on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s blacklist is obvious, undeniable and unjustifiable. Khani said that relevant decision-makers in the previous government also were informed about the issue. He said that unfortunately some countries, even those in the region, have begun to target Iranian natural and legal persons in order to prove their commitment to the FATF regulations. Khani emphasized that the continuation of the trend risks

tarnishing the reputation and credibility of the country's economic players.

Since January 12, Iran's Expediency Council has started re-examining various clauses of the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions of the FATF after Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati said in December that the country's top leadership had allowed renewed discussions on the FATF case in the council.

The Expediency Council's spokesman Mohsen Dehnavi said on Sunday that four clauses of the Palermo convention had been reviewed during the council's meeting.

Restrictions imposed by the

FATF on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and the CFT conventions.

The Iranian Parliament has approved the Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for some amendments.

Iran has approved other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF.

The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by President Masoud Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions.

Iran at UNHRC outlines efforts to promote free speech, information access

National Desk

Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Saturday, the deputy minister for media affairs at Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance delivered a detailed report on the country's efforts at promoting freedom of expression and information access as a fundamental human right.

Mohammadreza Norouzpour stressed that the efforts by the Islamic Republic to guarantee freedom of expression and information have been significant and "far exceed some alleged shortcomings."

"These endeavors reflect Iran's commitment to fostering a transparent, just, and inclusive environment where the rights and dignity of all members of society are respected and existing gaps are minimized," he said. Norouzpour specifically cited initiatives aimed at designing 21 educational programs to utilize artificial intelligence in media, granting direct and indirect subsidies to active media organizations promoting people-centric culture, ensuring access to high-speed Internet in under-privileged and rural areas, and establishing a system for publish-



ing and maintaining open access to information. The deputy minister also called attention to the fact that Iran has also recently lifted restrictions on access to commonly-used digital platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Play, while also supporting the development of new communication platforms.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran should reboot ...

Neglecting this reality will lead to graver threats, squandered opportunities and additional challenges. **Page 1 >**

The first step toward reaching an agreement with any neighboring country is achieving internal consensus and setting clear priorities and policies. Consequently, all bodies will implement these policies in a coordinated manner.

In the past, under the previous political system in Afghanistan, there were plans to sign a strategic agreement covering five key areas in the bilateral relationship but this opportunity was lost due to delays on both sides and the Republic collapsed in Afghanistan. The next step involves assessing the current situation of the neighboring country. It is evident that a compre-

hensive agreement and stable relations are not feasible with a political system still shrouded in uncertainty and lacks the fulfillment of basic prerequisites in bilateral relations. Currently, the Taliban's position is anything but stable and Iran should adjust its policies accordingly. All neighboring countries are feeling their way through their relations with Afghanistan under a cloud of ambiguity due to prevalent regional and international uncertainties. As a result, there is no consensus among regional countries to form a united front to manage their relations with Kabul. Currently, there are several axes of influence: the India-US axis, the China-Pakistan axis and the emerging Iran-Russia axis. However, the lack of alignment between regional and inter-

national agendas has led to a situation where the efforts of the international community are often counteracted by regional powers due to their interests and considerations and vice versa. In the case of Afghanistan, there might be issue-based collaborations, such as in combating drug trafficking and terrorism, as seen in the early 2000s when Iran and the US indirectly cooperated due to shared concerns, which demonstrated that even rival powers can find common ground. However, these instances are sporadic. Iran should send a clear and unequivocal message to the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The Iranian government can chart a new course in its relationship with Afghanistan, as many of its demands have gone unanswered in the past 40 months.