

Veep urges deepening economic ties with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan

Economy Desk

Iran's vice president described Turkmenistan as a friendly, brotherly, and neighboring country, emphasizing the need to elevate trade and economic relations through the determination of the leaders of both nations.

Mohammadreza Aref highlighted the shared civilization, history, and culture as the foundation for deepening cooperation.

The VP, speaking on Monday on the sidelines of the third Caspian Sea Economic Forum during a meeting with Khojamurad Geldimuradov, deputy chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, stressed the Islamic Republic of Iran's serious priority to develop relations with neighboring countries.

He noted that Turkmenistan holds a special place in this strategy, citing the Leader's description of Iran and Turkmenistan as not only neighbors but also relative countries.

Aref pointed to the diplomatic and political exchanges between the high-ranking officials of both countries, stating that there are no limitations to enhancing Tehran-Ashgabat relations.

He expressed hope that the agreements and negotiations during the Turkmen delegation's visit to Iran would be operationalized and finalized as soon as possible.

The vice president proposed expanding trade exchanges between the two countries, deepening economic and trade relations with a focus on the private sector, and facilitating government support on both sides.

He also emphasized the development of relations in energy, transportation, transit, and tourism, given the cultural and civilizational commonalities between the two nations.

Aref described the Caspian Sea



Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (R) speaks with Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda in Tehran on February 17, 2025.
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Economic Forum as a highly strategic opportunity to expand economic relations among the Caspian littoral states and enhance bilateral cooperation.

He noted that the forum in Tehran would address the development of relations in trade, economy, environment, tourism, and investment among the Caspian Sea countries.

The veep also stressed the importance of holding regular meetings of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

For his part, Geldimuradov conveyed warm and sincere greetings from the national leader and the president of Turkmenistan.

He stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of Turkmenistan's largest and closest neighbors, with serious priority given to enhancing cooperation in various fields.

Geldimuradov added that diplomatic visits between the two countries' officials not only create significant opportunities but

also contribute to expanding industrial, production, investment, and trade cooperation.

He highlighted the importance of increasing the current favorable trade volume between the two nations, describing Iran as Turkmenistan's priority, strategic, long-term, and forward-looking economic partner. He also expressed gratitude for Iran's efforts in hosting the third Caspian Sea Economic Forum and expressed hope that the results of multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the Caspian region would improve the welfare of the people in the Caspian littoral states.

Expansion of economic ties with Tajikistan

Also, in a joint press conference with Tajikistan's prime minister on Monday, Aref emphasized the necessity of strengthening the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission between Iran and Tajikistan.

He stated that the commission should pursue a comprehensive



Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (R) meets with Khojamurad Geldimuradov, the deputy chairman of the cabinet of ministers of Turkmenistan in Tehran on February 17, 2025.
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strategic plan to enhance Tehran-Dushanbe relations, aiming to significantly increase trade and economic ties in parallel with political relations.

Aref noted that the political relations between the two countries are at their best, highlighting the memorable visit of Iran's president to Tajikistan last month.

During the visit, strategic agreements for comprehensive cooperation were signed and approved by the leaders of both nations. He added that today's discussions focused on operational and executive measures to advance these agreements.

The VP elaborated on the objectives of the Tajik prime minister's visit, stating that, in addition to bilateral meetings, the Tajik delegation was invited as a special guest to the Caspian Sea littoral states summit.

Aref emphasized that the economies of Iran and Tajikistan are complementary and can meet each other's needs. He stressed the importance of the private sector's involvement from both

countries, urging efforts to activate the private sector's activities and facilitate government support.

He also noted that the recent visa waiver agreement has eased travel for citizens and businesspeople between the two nations. Highlighting the capabilities of prominent Iranian companies in the region, particularly in techno-engineering services, Aref expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with Tajikistan in these areas.

He added that high-ranking delegations from both countries will hold productive talks to further deepen bilateral cooperation.

Aref also pointed to the cultural commonalities between Iran and Tajikistan, emphasizing the need to prioritize joint tourism initiatives, given the mutual interest of citizens in visiting each other's countries.

Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda, during the press conference, expressed gratitude for the Islamic Repub-

lic of Iran's special attention to Tajikistan. He noted that negotiations between the two countries have always taken place in a friendly atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

Rasulzoda referenced constructive talks between Iran and Tajikistan, particularly during last month's visit by Pezeshkian.

He stated that following the Iranian president's visit and discussions with Tajikistan's President Imomali Rahmon, bilateral relations have entered a new phase of development.

He expressed confidence that the agreements signed during that visit will provide a solid foundation for expanding cooperation in the coming years.

The Tajik PM also highlighted the increase in trade transactions, the regular meetings of the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, and the Investment Committee between Iran and Tajikistan.

He stressed the importance of implementing a long-term trade program between the two countries until 2030 and executing a joint roadmap.

Rasulzoda reiterated Tajikistan's interest in expanding and strengthening cooperation with Iran, citing the free economic zones of both countries as key opportunities for development. He called for deeper collaboration in technical and engineering services, pharmaceuticals, technology, agriculture, energy, transportation, tourism, and the utilization of southern ports such as Chabahar and Bandar Abbas.

He concluded by emphasizing the need to develop relations in education and research, given the shared cultural, historical, and linguistic ties. He expressed his wishes for peace and stability for the people of Iran and its nation with an ancient civilization.

Hemmati: Iran fully braced for any US-orchestrated scenario

Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati said the Islamic Republic has prepared various scenarios to overcome future challenges.

Hemmati made the remarks during an interview with Saudi Arabia's Al-Sharq News Network late on Sunday.

While referring to the imposition of illegal sanctions and the so-called maximum pressure campaign during the previous term of US President Donald Trump, the Iranian economy minister said that it was a bit natural the Islamic Republic implemented various methods to neutralize Washington's cruel measures.

He emphasized that both positive economic growth and ever-expanding cooperation with various countries in the region and the world have been the outcome of Iran's measures.

So far in the current Iranian calendar year, which will end on March 20, "we have had an 18-percent growth in non-oil

trade, and oil exports are also on a good trend," Hemmati said, adding that Iran has been able to leave the main stage of pressure behind and will make more efforts in this regard in the future.

"In terms of exports, we have had the experience of 2018-2020, the period when Trump was in power, and our oil exports decreased sharply, and of course, the Corona factor [COVID-19 pandemic] was added to it, and Corona too increased the pressure on our economy," the minister acknowledged, saying that these pressures somewhat affected people's lives.

Hemmati, however, looked optimistic when he said that the Islamic Republic also came up with the necessary planning to mitigate the effect of the sanctions. "We have prepared various scenarios so that we can implement our own economic agenda, and we are prepared for any situation."

He also touched on the resil-



ience of emerging economies in the face of pressures and shocks, and said, "All countries today resort to a type of cooperation and coordination against unilateral US pressure, and alliances such as BRICS and D8 are what we are trying to expand." Hemmati expressed readiness for closer cooperation with neighboring countries, saying that regional stability lies in good economic relations with each other.

Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the Conference for Emerging Market Economies, which was held in the Saudi city of Al-Ula on February 16-17, Hemmati and his Saudi counterpart Mohammed Aljadaan discussed ways to expand economic cooperation between their countries.

On Sunday evening, Hemmati and Aljadaan emphasized the importance of developing trade and customs cooperation, bilateral investment and avoiding double taxation.

They also emphasized facilitating financial processes related to Iranian Hajj pilgrims.

The Iranian economy minister traveled to Saudi Arabia on Saturday to attend the Al-Ula Conference for Emerging Market Economies co-organized by the Saudi Finance Ministry and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Iran and Saudi Arabia restored their relations in March 2023 under a China-brokered deal, following a seven-year hiatus. The two sides have ever since worked on expanding their ties in various sectors including politics, economy and culture.

South Africa open to nuclear project bids from Russia, Iran: Minister



South Africa (SA) could turn to Russia or Iran to expand its civilian nuclear power capacity, a senior government minister said.

SA, which operates Africa's only nuclear power plant, Koeberg, plans to add 2,500 megawatts of new capacity to tackle electricity outages that have plagued the economy and to reduce emissions, according to Reuters.

"We can't have a contract that says Iran or Russia must not bid, we can't have that condition," Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources Gwede Mantashe said.

"If they are the best in terms of the offer on the table, we'll take

any (country)," he told Reuters. The country is under scrutiny from Washington after US President Donald Trump issued a far-reaching executive order this month halting aid. Among other criticisms, the order claimed, without providing evidence, that SA was "reinvigorating its relations with Iran to develop commercial, military, and nuclear arrangements."

An SA tender for nuclear projects, initially planned for last year, has been delayed for further consultation following legal challenges led by the then opposition Democratic Alliance party, now part of the coalition government.