

Iran chairs TRACECA intergovernmental commission

# Roads minister stresses integration of corridor infrastructure

Economy Desk

The minister of roads and urban development emphasized the integration of corridor infrastructure among TRACECA member states during the 17th meeting of the group hosted by Tehran, where the members highlighted the importance of unifying transportation processes and digitizing them.

On Wednesday, Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd, speaking at the meeting of the heads of the Intergovernmental Commission of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor (TRACECA), told reporters that achieving this goal would lead to increased transit and transportation, ultimately fostering regional development.

Sadeq-Malvajerd noted that Iran's hosting of the TRACECA conference and the organization of related meetings and events demonstrate the initiative of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development in advancing transit and managing regional transit relations to enhance regional connectivity and solidify development.

The minister pointed out that the TRACECA corridor comprises 14 countries from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, with 12 members attending the 17th meeting hosted by Iran. Starting today, the Islamic Republic of Iran will chair TRACECA for one year.

She emphasized that when discussing the groundwork

and integration of transportation processes, facilitating customs procedures in Iran and other member states will be one of the most critical areas of cooperation.

Sadeq-Malvajerd also stressed that Iran's primary agenda during its TRACECA chairmanship will be completing transit infrastructure in the country to facilitate the integration and digitization of processes.

She stated that due to Iran's central role in this matter, the result will undoubtedly be an increase in transit through the country.

Sadeq-Malvajerd added that unjust sanctions have not hindered Iran's initiative in regional transit, and the presence of TRACECA members in Iran is proof of this.

She said that all 14 TRACECA members, including Iran, aim to achieve significant growth in regional transit by completing the North-South and East-West corridors.

The minister emphasized that affordable and smooth transit through Iran is one of the most important objectives being pursued.

She noted that due to Iran's unique geopolitical position, it is naturally the preferred choice for transit by many countries.

Sadeq-Malvajerd stated that increasing the share of rail transport would lead to safer and more reliable transit, along with fuel savings. However, transit development encompasses road, rail, and mar-

itime routes, and plans must be made in all these areas.

The cabinet member highlighted that securing resources in development budgets will help complete the mentioned corridors, utilizing both domestic and foreign investments and asset optimization.

Establishment of TRACECA investment fund

In response to a question about the establishment of a TRACECA investment fund, Sadeq-Malvajerd said the proposal was put forward by representatives from Romania, Turkey, and two other countries and will be discussed, reviewed, and examined by the TRACECA secretariat.

She emphasized that the establishment of this joint fund would help develop economic and trade relations among member states.

When asked about India's involvement in Chabahar Port following the Trump administration's taking office in January, the minister clarified that Iran's communications with India regarding the development of Chabahar Port continue.

Iran as key link in TRACECA

Also on Wednesday, the TRACECA secretary-general stated that Iran serves as a vital link among TRACECA member states, providing access to the Persian Gulf for member countries.



Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd speaks at the meeting of the heads of the Intergovernmental Commission of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor (TRACECA) in Tehran on February 26, 2025.

On the sidelines of the 17th TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission meeting, Asset Assavbayev thanked Iran for hosting the high-level sessions and noted that this is the first time Iran has hosted the TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission meeting since joining the organization.

He highlighted the importance of Iran's agenda during its one-year chairmanship of the TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission, emphasizing Iran's role as a connecting link among member states and its provision of access to the Persian Gulf.

The secretary-general expressed hope that during Iran's chairmanship, favorable conditions for transit, exports, and imports among member states would be established.

Assavbayev stated that to better utilize transit routes through Iran, border crossings, rail, and maritime infrastructure must be improved to encourage member states to prefer transit through Iran.

He added that the approval of a transit agreement among TRACECA member states would facilitate the smooth transportation of goods across their borders.

The secretary-general noted that harmonizing customs tariffs and border crossings for cargo transit from Kazakhstan to Turkey and then to Europe would increase other countries' interest in using Iran's routes.

He emphasized that since Central Asian countries lack access to open waters, Iran's route and infrastructure development would provide member states with access to open seas for cargo transport.

The TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission includes 14 members from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Iran, Central Asian countries, and Turkey, collectively forming this East-West corridor network.

This marks the first time Iran has hosted the meeting of the TRACECA.

## BRICS members emphasize trade in local currencies



Economy Desk

Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s Deputy Governor Asghar Abolhassani, highlighted the pivotal role of BRICS members in the global economy during an international meeting of BRICS central bank deputies in Cape Town, South Africa.

The meeting, held alongside the G20 summit and chaired by Brazil, focused on operationalizing agreements from the recent Moscow summit of BRICS central bank governors, IRNA reported.

Key discussions included the use of national currencies for trade settlements, the creation of an independent financial messaging system as an alternative to

SWIFT, the integration of payment systems, and the potential development of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) among BRICS members.

Abolhassani emphasized the need for a permanent secretariat or an independent financial institution within BRICS to enhance monetary and banking relations. He noted that BRICS has become a significant global economic force, with collective efforts addressing economic cooperation, financial stability, and sustainable development.

He also proposed establishing a non-banking developmental entity under BRICS to facilitate in-depth studies on critical issues using

the expertise of member countries.

The deputy governor outlined practical solutions for using national currencies in trade settlements, creating an independent financial messaging system, and integrating payment systems. These measures, he argued, could transform the international monetary and financial system, fostering stronger banking and trade ties among BRICS members.

BRICS, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, the UAE, Iran, Indonesia, Bolivia, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria, aims to strengthen unity and efficiency amid rapid global financial changes.

## Iran, Philippines ink MoUs for agriculture cooperation

Iran and the Philippines signed two cooperation agreements in the field of agriculture as the two countries express their willingness to expand bilateral ties in economy and trade.

The two memoranda of understanding were inked on "agricultural cooperation" and "plant inspection and quarantine" following a meeting between Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah and Philippine's Agriculture Undersecretary Zamzamin Ampatuan in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Tuesday, wrote Press TV.

"We have close ties with the Philippines as a country with similar international views and are eager to expand our relations in various fields," Nouri-Qezeljah said.

Pointing to the various capacities of Iran and the Philippines, Nouri-Qezeljah underlined, "These capacities can provide the basis for deepening relations between the two nations. Iran's strategic geographical location is such that it can be considered a route and gateway to Europe for the Philippines, and the Philippines also has a similar position for Iran in relation to East Asia."

The Iranian minister also stressed that his country has made great progress in the agricultural sector in recent years,



especially in the production of various fruits, and is one of the leading countries in the world in the production of apples, kiwis, dates, pistachios, and saffron.

The Philippine official, for his part, expressed Manila's interest in expanding trade relations with Tehran, saying, "We are willing to open the Philippine market to Iranian fruits, especially Iranian red and yellow apples, which are produced in world class."

Stressing that the Philippines has always been by Iran's side in times of challenges and has kept its doors open for Iran, Ampatuan said the export of bananas to Iran is a 30-year business.

"We import oil and petrochemicals from Iran, but unfortunately, now the only commodity in our country is bananas that we can continue to trade," he added.

Ampatuan said most of the Philippine bananas exported to Iran are grown in a predominantly Muslim region and are produced by Muslims in the southeast Asian country.

## Pursuing Iran's technology diplomacy in Europe



By Seyed Sattar Hashemi  
Iran's minister of ICT

OPINION

Belgrade, a city of history and nature, lies at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers in the Balkan Peninsula. It is the new destination for a foreign mission aimed at advancing relations focused on technology diplomacy.

This city, with its captivating blend of modern structures, historical landmarks, churches, and fortresses from the Ottoman and European eras, bridges the past and the future. Its strategic and geopolitical position makes it a gateway to the European continent.

Following visits to Cuba, Venezuela, Kazakhstan, and the United Arab Emirates, we now head to Serbia—a vibrant and motivated country. Thanks to the calm in diplomatic relations, Serbia has become Iran's largest trading partner in the Balkan region.

Trade between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Serbia reached €120 million in 2023, marking a 100% growth. Coupled with Serbia's average GDP growth rate of over 3% in the past five years, this sets a logical and evident expectation for continued economic growth and expanded cooperation between the two nations.

Over the past six months, the Ministry of ICT has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to leveraging technology diplomacy to enhance economic and trade collaborations.

During this visit to Serbia, we aim to deepen cooperation between technology companies in the fields of information and communications, as well as to pursue shared interests.

Meetings have been arranged with Serbian counterparts, including the Minister of Information and Telecommunications and the Minister of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation. These discussions will highlight Iran's readiness to exchange experiences, deepen collaborations, and provide diverse infrastructure for digital transformation and the promotion of a digital economy. Additionally, the implementation of previous memoranda of understanding, such as increasing postal traffic between the two countries, will be pursued.

Proposals from Iran in the upcoming negotiations include establishing a joint investment fund to support digital innovations, facilitating e-commerce processes, increasing imports and exports of technological products, launching and maintaining data centers, fostering cooperation between technology parks, and developing joint solutions to enhance cybersecurity.

In this context, the signing of a joint cooperation document between Tehran and Belgrade, focused on creating and expanding cloud infrastructure and defining joint projects in artificial intelligence, underscores the determination and interest of both countries in building strong bilateral relations.

Serbia's current presidency of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and the activities of the Iran Chamber at the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Belgrade over the past five years provide additional platforms for shaping and enhancing scientific and research collaborations between the two nations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's approach to bilateral relations with Serbia emphasizes respect for the 87-year history of their ties and mutual respect despite differences, aiming to maintain stability and sustainability.

Capacity-building for expanding cooperation in less-explored areas of communications and information technology is crucial, especially given that the economic prosperity of both countries depends heavily on advancing technological and innovative developments in the ICT industry.

Key potential opportunities in the bilateral relationship include visa-free travel for Serbian citizens to Iran with a one-month stay allowance, Serbia's position as Iran's largest trading partner in the Balkans, and the readiness to implement joint projects in nanotechnology, biotechnology, and academic exchanges.

We hope that these potentials, through expanded interactions and continued negotiations in the coming months, will create fruitful opportunities and complement the capacities of Iran and Serbia in new areas of information and communication technology. With a focus on technology diplomacy, we believe that ICT can serve as a facilitator and accelerator for Tehran-Belgrade relations.