

Iran-Tajikistan annual trade targeted at \$1b: *Lawmaker*

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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The head of the Iran-Tajikistan Parliamentary Friendship Group stated that the current trade level between the two countries stands at approximately \$350 million, emphasizing that the short-term goal is to increase bilateral trade to \$1 billion.

Talking to Iran Daily, Fat'hollah Tavassoli noted that, given the development of bilateral relations and the current trajectory, this target is expected to be achieved within the next one to two years.

The MP highlighted the upward trend in trade between the two nations, stating that in the Iranian calendar year 1400 (2021-2022), the trade volume was around \$140 million. This figure rose to \$240 million in 1401 (2022-2023) and reached approximately \$350 million in the current Iranian year of 1403 (2024-2025).

Tavassoli emphasized that Tajikistan is one of the countries with-

in the Great Persia civilization sphere, sharing deep cultural, historical, and civilizational ties with Iran.

He pointed out that the Tajik people's affinity for Iranian culture is evident across the country, particularly in markets such as those in Dushanbe, the capital and largest city of Tajikistan, where there is a strong demand for Iranian goods. This cultural connection is also reflected in the statements of Tajik officials. He added that the music, art, history, and identity of the Iranian and Tajik people are closely intertwined, creating significant potential for collaboration between the two countries. Tavassoli asserted that such a level of cooperative potential is rare among other nations.

Tavassoli noted that both countries possess unique capacities and opportunities that can be leveraged to meet each other's needs and further strengthen bilateral relations. While the target for increasing trade has been set at \$1 billion, he believes this figure is modest and that achieving a \$5 billion trade volume within four to five years is entirely fea-

sible.

He described the recent visit of Iran's Vice President Masoud Pezeshkian to Tajikistan as a significant milestone in relations between the two Persian-speaking nations, highlighting that the trip bolstered economic, political, and cultural ties.

Tavassoli acknowledged that while trade has been on an upward trend in recent years, there is still considerable progress to be made to reach the desired level of cooperation. He stressed that visits by the president and other high-ranking officials can accelerate this process.

The lawmaker revealed that over the past few years, more than 50 cooperation agreements have been signed between Iran and Tajikistan in areas such as technical and engineering services, tech-based industries, dam construction, and hospital development. He also addressed past misunderstandings between the two countries, stating that these issues have been resolved and that relations are now in a positive state.

"During a recent visit to Tajikistan with Parliament Speaker



Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Tajik officials expressed strong interest in expanding ties with Iran," Tavassoli said, emphasizing the need to establish structured programs to further develop political, social, cultural, and economic relations.

Regarding economic cooperation, Tavassoli highlighted Tajikistan's abundant water resources and ongoing negotiations to transfer some of the

water to Iran for various uses.

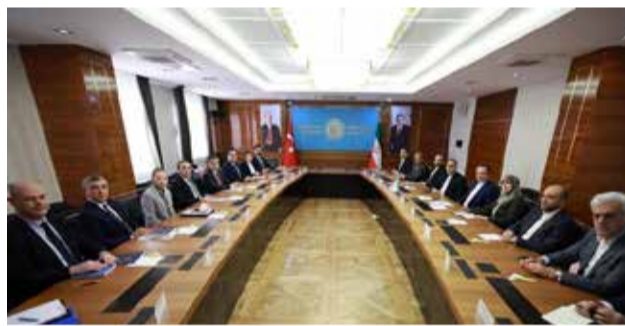
He also noted that Iran has been involved in dam construction in Tajikistan, having already built two major dams in the country.

However, he mentioned that Iran has outstanding claims with Tajikistan for these projects, which have yet to be settled. He expressed hope that these debts, primarily owed to Iran's private sector, would be paid soon to enable Iranian companies to

undertake new projects in Tajikistan. Additionally, he pointed out Tajikistan's potential in grains production, which Iran could utilize.

Tavassoli also stated that Iran has significant capabilities in new technologies, technical and engineering services, healthcare, mining, and agriculture, which can address Tajikistan's needs in these sectors and foster further collaboration.

Ambassador announces \$7b increase in Iran-Turkey trade



Iranian and Turkish trade delegations reviewed the details of implementing a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation as well as the mechanisms for achieving a \$30 billion trade target on March 12, 2025.

Economy Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad-Hossein Habibollahzadeh, highlighted the growth in bilateral trade between Tehran and Ankara, stating that trade between the two countries reached \$11.8 billion in the last Iranian calendar year and has surpassed \$17.5 billion as of the eleventh Iranian month (ended Feb. 18).

The envoy projected that the figure could rise to \$19 billion by the end of the year (March 20).

Speaking at a virtual meeting of the Iran-Turkey Joint Transportation Committee, Habibollahzadeh emphasized the importance of developing transit infrastructure, noting that transit and transportation volumes between the two countries have increased by \$7 billion this year.

However, he stressed the need for significant infrastructure improvements in rail, air, maritime, and port sectors.

Expansion of border crossings, increased flights

Habibollahzadeh cited statistics showing that 6 million passengers and approximately 330,000 trucks traveled

between Iran and Turkey last Iranian year, reflecting the high volume of bilateral trade and the extensive transportation responsibilities of both countries.

To accommodate this growth, the number of border crossings will increase from three to five. Additionally, plans are underway to expand rail lines and increase flights.

The ambassador expressed satisfaction with the swift organization of the meeting following a recent gathering of the two countries' transportation ministers, which voiced their commitment to enhancing transportation and logistics cooperation.

He expressed hope for significant decisions to be made regarding the development of relations between Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and Turkey's Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.

Habibollahzadeh highlighted the role of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd as the head of the Iran-Turkey Economic Commission, calling it a significant advantage. He emphasized that such cooperation could greatly impact the economic relations between the two countries.

Transit as key focus of Iran-Turkey cooperation

In the meeting with, Saeid Rasouli, deputy minister of roads and urban development, emphasized the strategic positions of Iran and Turkey in the southern Caspian Sea corridor, which connects China to Europe.

He stressed the importance of transit in bilateral cooperation, noting that it will be a central topic in future ministerial discussions.

Durmush Unvar, Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure of Turkey, expressed his country's readiness to develop transportation and transit cooperation.

He underscored the need for modern infrastructure and necessary investments, particularly in the rail connection project between the two countries at the Cheshmeh Soraya-Dilucu border and the development of transit between Iran and Turkey.

Key discussion points

The meeting focused on maximizing transportation development in road, rail, port, and air sectors, as well as enhancing transit and addressing obstacles in bilateral transportation cooperation.

Topics included facilitating procedures, addressing restrictions, fees, and taxes for Iranian and Turkish fleets in both countries, resolving limitations on taking in Iranian fleets at shared borders, and fuel pricing for Turkish fleets in Iran.

The two sides also discussed the launch of the Tehran-Van passenger train, the possibility of extending the route to Ankara and Istanbul, improving rail freight operations, increasing rail transport volume, and addressing the issue of empty wagons.

Other items on the agenda included the progress of the Iran-Turkey rail connection at Cheshmeh Soraya-Dilucu, the reconstruction of the Bazargan-Gürbulak border terminal, roads leading to Turkish borders, and the establishment of a new border crossing at Kuzerash.

The development of aviation relations and increased flights, as well as port and maritime cooperation and port investments, were also discussed.

It was agreed that an in-person meeting of the Iran-Turkey Transportation Committee will be held after the holy fasting month of Ramadan in either Tehran or Ankara.

Emphasis on joint investment in free zones

In a separate meeting, Reza Masrou, secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones, met with Turkey's Minister of Trade, Mustafa Tuzcu, to discuss strengthening economic relations through free zones.

Masrou, who was invited to Turkey by the Turkish Ministry of Trade, emphasized the implementation of a memorandum of understanding signed during the 8th meeting of the Turkey-Iran High Council of Cooperation and the creation of joint mechanisms within free and special economic zones.

Delegations from both countries evaluated potential cooperation in free and special economic zones and discussed joint projects and mechanisms to increase trade and investment.

The Turkish Ministry of Trade issued a statement reaffirming the commitment of Iran and Turkey to develop economic relations through trade and investment.

5m tons of int'l cargo transported via Iranian railways: *CEO*

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways announced that five million tons of international cargo were transported via the country's rail network this Iranian year (started March 20, 2024) which includes 2.4 million tons of transit cargo, 2.6 million tons of imports and exports.

Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, during a visit to the Torbat-e Heydarieh railway station on Wednesday, stated that the development of rail-based transit is a top priority for the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways.

He highlighted that this initiative has been advanced through programs aimed at expanding and utilizing the capacity of key cargo hubs, including Sarakhs, Incheh Borun, Amir Abad Port, and Caspian Port.

Zakeri added that plans and targets have been set to transport 8 million tons of international cargo next year (to start March 21), with the goal of increasing the total volume of domestic and international freight from 40 million tons to 54 million tons.

To achieve this, he emphasized the need to enhance loading and unloading capacities at ports and their connecting rail lines, as well as to increase the volume of cargo transported from CIS countries, such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, to southern Iran.

The CEO noted that, based on current assessments, 15 to 20 million tons of cargo can be transported using existing rail capacities. However, he acknowledged existing challenges and shortages that must be addressed to improve the current infrastructure.

Zakeri reported that last year's record for mineral cargo transport, both by road and rail, was approximately 15 million tons. He stated that rail transport efficiency could be improved to



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increase the volume. He further noted that the current road infrastructure, due to safety concerns, cannot handle increased mineral cargo transport. Adding more trucks and trailers to the roads would lead to higher road fatalities and casualties.

According to the planned program, mineral cargo transport is expected to increase to 22.5 million tons, requiring an additional 7.5 million tons of capacity. Achieving this goal depends on addressing existing challenges.

Zakeri said 70% of the country's domestic cargo passes through railway regions such as Khorasan, Isfahan, Yazd, and Hormuzgan, underscoring the critical importance of such areas. He added that the issues in these regions are being closely monitored.

One of the objectives of the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28), he said, is to increase the share of rail transport in ports to 25%. Currently, the share of rail transport in some ports is less than 3%. To meet this target, greater coordination among relevant agencies is required. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Ports and Maritime Organization to minimize inter-organizational challenges.

Zakeri also mentioned that unloading of wagons at the 17-hectare Shahid Rajaei Port, which was previously delayed, has improved significantly. Through enhanced coordination and measures, the daily unloading rate has increased from 60-70 wagons to 150 wagons.