

Tehran, Kabul eye ‘operational plan’ for joint mining investments

Economy Desk

A senior official from the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced Iran an Afghanistan’s resolve to cooperate and invest in the mining sector.

"The determination of Iran and Afghanistan for joint investment in the mining sector is serious, and both sides are pursuing an operational plan," said Chairman of the Board of Directors of the IMIDRO, Mohammad Aqajanloo, as reported by IRNA.

During a meeting with Afghan Taliban officials on Wednesday, Aqajanloo said, "In a recent session, it was agreed to form two committees for developing Afghanistan's mines: the ‘Exploration, Laboratory, and Extraction Committee’ (overseen by the Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations Organization) and the ‘Investment and Establishment of Joint Factories and Special Economic Zones Committee’ (overseen by IMIDRO)."

He stated that although numerous co-operation opportunities exist in the mining sector, "to operationalize this collaboration, we must commence projects with established infrastructure that can be implemented more rapidly." The IMIDRO chairman emphasized that "processing at mines with established

infrastructure is more cost-effective." Noting the lack of transportation and energy infrastructure near Afghan mines, he proposed establishing "a border market for gemstones and building lead-zinc processing plants in free trade zones along the border."

He added that, "We can install gemstone processing equipment in Iran’s Dogharon Special Economic Zone (located at the zero point of the border with Afghanistan), train Afghan personnel, process Afghan gemstones into finished products, and sell them in the border market." Aqajanloo pointed out that "Iran currently imports lead-zinc ore from abroad."

Given Afghanistan’s rich lead-zinc deposits, he stressed, "We propose establishing processing plants for these minerals at the Afghan border, utilizing Iran’s existing infrastructure and Afghan ore as feedstock."

The IMIDRO chairman further said, "Similar models can be designed for iron ore, aligning with the economic interests of both nations."

Investment guarantees in Afghanistan

Meanwhile, Khalil Rahman, the head of Afghanistan’s Investment Facilitation Unit, described the bilateral discussions over the past two days as "productive and promising," adding, "We

Cooperation in geology, mining and Earth sciences

Also, Head of Iran’s Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations Organization Darioush Esmaeili underscored the

must operationalize the memorandum of understanding signed two years ago and leverage Iran’s expertise to develop Afghanistan’s mining sector."

"We require Iranian specialists’ collaboration to equip laboratories. Additionally, Iran’s public and private sectors have valuable experience in exploration, extraction, and processing," he added.

Rahman emphasized that, "Afghan laws guarantee foreign investors’ rights. Investors can repatriate their capital at any time. Security is the government’s responsibility, and we are prepared to provide separate guarantees if needed." The Afghan official further proposed, "We aim to establish joint markets and factories in designated areas along the Afghanistan-Iran border."



need to "expand bilateral cooperation in geology, mining and Earth sciences" during a meeting with the Afghan delegation.

The parties also reviewed strategies to enhance scientific, educational, and technical exchanges. The Afghan delegation toured the organization’s specialized laboratories and Earth Sciences Museum, gaining insights into its technical and scientific capabilities.

Expressing satisfaction with Iranian

experts’ proficiency and infrastructure, the delegation requested access to Iran’s geological resources. Key discussion points included, "training personnel, transferring technical knowledge, identifying Afghanistan’s geological potential, and utilizing advanced laboratory equipment."

The Afghan delegation, led by Hedayatullah Badri, the acting minister of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan, visited Iran for the talks.

Iran reports record non-oil exports last calendar year TPO chief prioritizes regional pacts, barter deals



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The head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced a record-breaking figure in the country’s non-oil exports last Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2024), emphasizing the necessity of strategic export development, particularly through regional agreements, barter arrangements, and joint investments.

According to ISNA, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, during a televised interview discussing Iran’s export statistics, stated, "Last year, Iran’s non-oil exports reached \$57.8 billion, marking a 16% growth compared to the previous year. This achievement can be regarded as a highly favorable statistic and a significant milestone for

the country’s economy."

The head of TPO enumerated Iran’s export goods, saying a substantial portion of non-oil exports relates to petrochemical products and polymer materials. Mineral industries and industrial goods, as well as agricultural products and food industries, also hold significant shares in exports.

"China, Iraq, the UAE, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are among Iran’s primary export destinations. Exports to China rank first, while Iraq holds the second position with approximately \$12 billion in exports," the deputy minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade added.

The head of TPO highlighted Turkey’s prominent role in regional markets, noting, "Turkey employs progressive and effective export strategies, ranging from strong incentives to transportation and logistics infrastructure. Some of these strategies can be adopted in Iran. Large factories in Iran, particularly in the food and detergent sectors, could dominate regional markets with adequate support. TPO is planning to provide necessary incentives and facilities to exporters."

Barter to counter sanctions

The deputy minister underscored, "Amid ongoing sanctions against Iran, barter has emerged as a vital instrument to sustain and expand foreign trade. Iran has signed barter agreements with several countries, though their names cannot be disclosed due to technical and security reasons."

He cited the formal launch of banking cooperation with Russia as a successful example, stating, "If there is political will on the other side, even formal banking activities become possible."

Missing link in exports

The TPO chief stressed Iran’s weakness in export branding, saying, "A large portion of our exports consists of raw and semi-processed goods, which do not require branding. However, industrial and food products need commercialization and branding. Measures have been initiated in this regard: The National Brand Commission has been established at TPO, and conferences have been held to prioritize support for export management companies and export consortia."

Iran, Turkmenistan to boost annual rail transit to 4m tons

Economy Desk

Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) announced that the rail transit between Iran and Turkmenistan would increase to four million tons.

In an interview with IRNA, Jabar-Ali Zakeri outlined plans to elevate annual rail transit between Tehran and Ashgabat to four million tons.

The RAI head highlighted the outcomes of the 18th meeting of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, noting, "Transit cargo operations between Iran and Turkmenistan are currently at their peak efficiency."

"Last year (began on March 20, 2024), over 1.6 million tons of transit cargo were transported between the two countries," he said, adding, "We aim to expand the scope of bilateral cooperation to an annual four million tons."

The deputy minister of Roads and Urban Development further elaborated, "We anticipate that resolving border challenges at Sarakhs, Lotfabad, and Incheh Borun (in the northeast of Iran) will lead to increased rail exchanges. Recent discussions



at the joint commission — hosted in Tehran — have focused on addressing existing obstacles, such as facilitating the movement of Iranian rail wagons in Turkmenistan and reactivating the Lotfabad border terminal."

Zakeri emphasized that bilateral negotiations will prioritize resolving customs-related issues, enhancing capacity at the Sarakhs terminals in both Iran and Turkmenistan, and developing the Incheh Borun terminal. He also highlighted plans to expand daily bogie exchange operations at Sarakhs from 400 to 600 wagons, a move designed to streamline cross-border rail logistics.

"These measures," he remarked, "will enable seamless bogie-exchanged wagon operations between the two countries."

Iran targeting leadership in global halal industry: Official

Economy Desk

Vice chairman of Iran’s Chamber of Commerce stated that Iran, positioned at the heart of Islamic nations, is poised to become a key player in the global halal industry.

Payam Baqeri, speaking at a conference on World Halal Standards Day aimed at advancing halal industry trade in global markets, stated on Wednesday, "Neighboring countries possess a \$1 trillion halal market, yet Iran has no substantial share in the halal industry or international trade," as reported by IRNA.

Baqeri highlighted the need to "maximize the use of Iran’s economic diplomacy capabilities," adding, "We must set clear targets for the halal industry’s

growth to achieve an 8% economic expansion. Despite significant private-sector potential, Iran has a major opportunity in this global market."

He emphasized that the "regulations, standards, and licensing processes in this sector are fragmented and inconsistent," stating, "The complex bureaucracy and lack of an official, centralized body for issuing halal certifications are major technical and professional obstacles to developing this industry."

Baqeri noted that the halal industry, with an \$8 trillion turnover in the near future, will encompass protein-based products, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, healthcare items, tourism, and financial services.

He identified Malaysia and Indonesia as

leading countries in this field, stating, "Other nations have economically entered this market."

Stressing that the halal products market is "highly competitive," he said, "Non-Islamic countries have now entered the halal industry. The trade balance of 57 member countries of the Islamic Cooperation Organization in 2023 was a negative \$47 billion, and we too have no share in this market."

Baqeri asserted, "The halal tourism market is projected to exceed \$225 billion by 2028."

The vice chairman added, "The lack of coordination and unified policymaking is a critical challenge. Exporters and businesses interested in entering the halal market often do not know which

institution to approach or where the central command for this sector lies."

18 national halal standards

At the conference, also, the head of Iran’s National Standard Organization stated that Iran has 18 national halal standards, adding, "To date, 26,000 halal certifications have been issued to producers."

Farzaneh Ansari, addressing the intense competition in the global halal market, said, "The top 10 countries active in halal trade are predominantly non-Islamic. Despite Iran’s vast potential, its share in this global trade remains negligible."

She called for greater focus on halal standardization in Iran and emphasized



that "halal activities are not limited to food products," clarifying, "These activities span a wide range of sectors, including tourism, insurance, clothing, food, protein-based products, and other services. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s standards are actively focused on these areas."