

Tehran calls for joint action plan to boost INSTC transit to 15m tons

Energy ties, electricity corridor top Baku meeting agenda



Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd addresses a trilateral meeting of Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia in Baku on October 13, 2025.

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd told a trilateral meeting of Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia in Baku on Monday that a concrete action plan is needed to ensure freight stability and achieve 15 million tons of transit through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) by 2030. “Guaranteeing cargo flow along the North-South Corridor is essential,” she said, adding that the trilateral cooperation in transportation, transit, and energy is of great importance, IRNA reported. The co-chair of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission also proposed that

the three countries finalize the action plan within three months and sign it at the next summit. The Baku meeting was attended by high-ranking officials from the three countries, including Azerbaijan’s Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk, and the Iranian minister. Participants emphasized expanding energy cooperation and creating an electricity corridor linking the national power grids of the three nations. Lauding the meeting as “an important initiative to strengthen transport, transit, and energy connectivity and deepen regional integration,” Sadeq Malvajerd said, “The

positive outcomes of this meeting can serve as a roadmap for developing transit infrastructure and improving connectivity among the three countries. Given the North-South Corridor’s importance as a key framework for cooperation, both hard and soft infrastructure development must remain a shared priority.” Launched in 2000 by India, Russia and Iran, the INSTC is a multimodal network of sea, rail and road routes connecting India and the Persian Gulf to Russia, Central Asia and Northern Europe.

Infrastructure development projects
Detailing ongoing projects, the minister said the 160-kilometer Rasht-Astara railway — implemented with Russian support — is underway. “Eighty kilometers of the required land have been acquired and graded, and the remaining section will be completed and handed over to the Russian contractor by the end of the year,” she said. According to Sadeq Malvajerd, Iran and Azerbaijan have agreed to complete the Astara railway terminal by the end of 2025. She also pointed to progress on the Aras-road corridor connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan via Iran. “The widening of the 107-kilometer Jolfa-Kalaleh road and construction of the Kalaleh-Aghband bridge are advancing. Based on our agreement, construction of the new border bridge will be completed by the end of this year.”

‘Energy corridor’
In the energy session, she emphasized that the sector is a strategic area of cooperation and highlighted the need to expand the North-South Corridor into an “energy corridor.” Concluding her remarks, the minister described the corridor as “a unique framework for developing economic, transport, and energy relations among the three countries.” In the meeting, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, managing director of Iran’s Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Company (Tavanir), emphasized the importance of linking the electricity grids of Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan. “This connection would enable the exchange of at least 200 megawatts of power among the three countries and strengthen regional energy security,” he said, according to ISNA. He added that the integration of power grids would not only improve network stability and efficiency but also create a reliable route for electricity exchange within the framework of the corridor. The initiative, he said, aligns with Iran’s strategic policy of expanding regional energy diplomacy and electricity cooperation, further enhancing the country’s role in the regional energy balance.

Customs cooperation
Sadeq Malvajerd also proposed expediting the signing of a memorandum of understanding on customs cooperation among Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, and India, which has already been drafted. “Electronic exchange of cargo and vehicle data among the customs authorities of the three countries under the INSTC framework is vital,” she said, suggesting that a joint technical working group be formed next month to develop a mechanism for data exchange.

Veep: Iran aiming to move from bypassing sanctions to eradicating bans

Economy Desk

Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Monday that the country is working to move from merely circumventing “inhumane” sanctions to eradicating them altogether, calling circumvention costly and emphasizing the importance of national experience and resolve. Speaking at a ceremony marking National Guilds Day, Aref said that despite the intentions of adversaries, sanctions have not brought the Iranian nation to its knees, IRNA reported. “In the face of all sanctions and the West’s inhumane and brutal actions against the Iranian people, we have not only resisted but continued firmly on our path,” he said. Aref acknowledged that sanctions create challenges for the country, but said the government, supported by the Iranian people and the Iranian Chamber of Guilds, will continue its course. “Sanctions have not defeated the country, but we are moving from circumventing sanctions — which carries costs — to eradicating them,” Aref added. He expressed hope that, with the experience gained by the government and national determination, the country can remove the sanctions. Iran has been under Western sanctions for decades over its peaceful nuclear activities. Beyond affecting the oil and energy sectors, the embargoes have imposed costs even on humanitarian areas, including access to medicines. Despite sanctions, the country has managed its oil output and exports. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Iran increased crude shipments — primarily to China — in 2022 and 2023. The country raised crude oil output by about 1 million barrels per day from 2020 to 2023, while exports to China grew by almost 870 million bpd during the same period. In response, the US expanded sanctions in April 2024 to cover ports, vessels, and refineries involved in purchasing Iranian oil. These new sanctions allow for 180-day waivers “if restrictions interfere with US national security.” Analysts say that if all oil sanctions were lifted, Iran’s crude oil production could return to its full capacity, estimated at 3.8 million bpd.

Iran’s oil output hit 3.45m bpd in September: US data

Economy Desk

Iran’s crude oil production climbed by 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) in September compared with August, reaching 3.45 million bpd, according to the US Energy Information Administration’s (EIA) latest monthly report. Citing data from the statistical arm of the US Department of Energy, the Iranian Oil Ministry’s news service Shana reported that the EIA’s Short-Term Energy Outlook showed the Islamic Republic’s output rise from 3.25 million bpd in August. The report also indicated that Iran’s average crude production in 2024 stood at 3.31 million bpd, up from 2.87 million bpd in 2023. According to the EIA, Iran pumped an average of 3.33 million bpd in the third quarter of 2025, compared with 3.37 million bpd in the previous quarter. The findings come despite US President Donald Trump’s so-called “maximum pressure” campaign, which sought to slash Iran’s oil exports to zero. Data from the US Energy Department, however, suggest that the effort has failed to curb Iran’s oil production significantly. The Iranian government does not release precise figures on oil production or exports, saying the data must remain confidential due to sanctions imposed on the country. However, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said last week that the country’s oil production had increased by 120,000 barrels per day in the year to September regardless of US sanctions. “Despite the restrictions and sanctions, new records have been set for exports and production of crude oil,” Paknejad told the state TV.

Economy minister unveils six key projects to drive 8% growth under development plan

Economy Desk

Iran’s Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ali Madanizadeh said on Monday that six major projects were being led by the ministry to achieve the goals of the country’s Seventh Development Plan (SDP) in the next for year, including an 8% economic growth target. Speaking at a meeting with members of the Parliament’s Economic Committee, Madanizadeh said that six key projects had been selected to “maximize efficiency” during the SDP, ensure 8% economic growth and boost investment, IRNA reported. According to the minister, the projects

include digitalizing the tax system, automating customs operations, improving resource management and utilization, advancing investment development initiatives, launching a national credit scheme to support young couples in line with population policies, and developing an economic modeling framework. Madanizadeh said the projects were chosen for their broad impact on the population and their inter-agency importance. “These projects will be directly supervised by me,” he added, noting that their implementation would be carried out by relevant deputies and heads of affiliated organizations.



Iran’s Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ali Madanizadeh (c) chairs a meeting with the head and members of the Parliament’s Economic Committee, at the ministry building in Tehran on October 13, 2025.

Trump’s overture to ...

This was a tactical decision. The Islamic Republic’s broader strategy is fundamentally anti-oppression and anti-hegemonic. But decisions about when to negotiate, with whom, and where are tactical. Therefore, the Leader’s stance on this issue should not be read as immutable; if new conditions emerge, negotiations can resume.

If talks were to begin, what risks and opportunities would they present for Iran?
The most important opportunity is that Iran would be able to present

its views directly to Trump and to hear his non-media, off-the-record views, because this man has shown that what he says in private policy rooms often differs substantially from what is said in the media. Second, it would demonstrate to the world that Iran is willing to come to the table. Third, Iran’s positions could be conveyed directly to the American side rather than through the media. Fourth, in general nothing would be lost. Iran’s international credibility would not be damaged as some claim. Loss would occur only if concessions were accepted. The reason the US imposed war on

Iran was because Iran stood firm on its positions in five rounds of negotiations. But there was nothing wrong with entering negotiations.

What message has Iran’s absence from today’s Gaza peace conference in Sharm el-Sheikh sent to regional countries and to the United States?
The decision to skip this conference served Iran’s best interests, because this was a top-down international gathering, not a forum where parties gather to arrive at a shared outlook. This conference was organized around a plan put forward by Trump

and its agenda was predetermined. Why would the Islamic Republic serve as a decorative presence at such a gathering? Iran should participate in meetings where it can influence the content, convey its message, and contribute to the session’s conclusions. Had Iran attended, its message would have been completely isolated among the 20 participating countries. Why give legitimacy to a conference whose foundation ignores and overrides the rights of the Palestinian people and imposes on the people of the Gaza Strip the demand that Hamas must be removed?