

# Tehran, Moscow agree to expedite implementation of strategic INSTC

Economy Desk

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larijani and Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Savelyev underlined the need on Tuesday to accelerate the implementation of North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) as they described the project as a key strategic undertaking for both countries. The two senior officials met in Tehran as part of follow-up to high-level agreements reached between the presidents of their countries, with the talks focusing on removing existing barriers and moving the INSTC into its practical implementation stage. During the talks, both sides hailed the strategic project as a key geopolitical component shaping regional connectivity. Larijani said the Islamic Republic has taken a clear and final de-

cision to operationalize the corridor, adding that all executive and institutional impediments would be addressed within a short timeframe. The SNSC chief underlined that the required agreements would be finalized to provide a solid legal and operational framework for the project. "Following directives by President Masoud Pezeshkian, ownership of all lands located along the corridor's route will be transferred to the Iranian administration within the next few months to ensure the project proceeds without disruption," Larijani said. Savelyev, for his part, welcomed Iran's determined stance and announced Russia's readiness to speed up the project and commence practical operations. Both sides emphasized that the INSTC forms part of a shared Iran-Russia strategy to deepen sustainable cooperation and



Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani (R), meets with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Savelyev in Tehran, Iran, on December 16, 2025. ● IRNA

establish independent regional connectivity routes. They also agreed to activate mechanisms for continuous high-level follow-ups and to

maintain regular coordination among relevant institutions in both countries. In a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the

sidelines of the International Conference on Peace and Trust in Turkmenistan's capital of Ashgabat on Friday, Pezeshkian expressed Iran's full readiness

for implementing the project by the end of the year. "Joint cooperation, particularly in the fields of power generation, transportation, and transit corridors, is currently being pursued. Regarding the [North-South] corridor, Iran will fully prepare the grounds for the project's implementation by the end of the year," he added. Stretching over seven thousand kilometers, the INSTC is an emerging cargo transit route connecting Indian Ocean countries to Central Asia, Russia, and Europe, which is becoming increasingly popular due to its economic and geopolitical benefits.

## ISPA: Steel industry fetches over \$5.3b as exports surge

Economy Desk

The Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) reported on Tuesday that the value of exports for products in the country's iron and steel chain surpassed \$5.3 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2025), and registered a 27-percent growth. According to the association, more than \$5.3 billion worth of iron and steel products was exported from the country between March 21 and November 22, 2025. The report said the total export volume of the entire steel chain increased by

41 percent and the total volume of export of iron ore concentrate indicated a 77 percent rise in the same period. The value of exports of all types of steel sheets almost tripled, reaching approximately \$500 million. Iran possesses abundant raw materials, ranking among the world's top 10 for both iron ore reserves and steel production capacity. Iran dominates West Asian steel output at 61.1% of the region's 5.4 million tons in October 2025, fueled by direct reduced iron-electric arc furnace processes that comprise 90% of capacity. First-half 2025 (Iranian year) hit nearly 15 million tons, up

3.2%, despite energy challenges like power cuts, with rebar and iron ore concentrate showing strong growth. Annual output exceeded 30 million tons in 2024, targeting 55 million by 2030 via efficient tech. In 2025's World Steel in Figures, Iran placed 10th with 31.4 million tons projected, reflecting resilience under sanctions through export focus and regional primacy. Projections estimate 3.6 million tons monthly by 2026, solidifying Iran's Middle East leadership, with finished products, including slabs, hot-rolled coils, and rebars, being major exports to markets in the West Asia, Asia, and Africa.



● IRNA

## Iranian wagons authorized to operate in three Central Asian countries: Official



● ISNA

Economy Desk

Director General for International Affairs at the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development Amin Taraffo emphasized on Tuesday the country's efforts to maintain its pivotal role in regional transit, announcing the complete lifting of restrictions on the movement of Iranian wagons in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. "Permission was obtained for Iranian wagons to operate in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan," he said, whereas before, Iranian wagons were not allowed to travel in Com-

monwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Pointing to the challenges and restrictive conditions inside and outside the country that put transit through Iran under pressure, Taraffo described the ministry's strategy as "mobility" with the aim of providing cheap, smooth, and high-speed access to transportation. The official added that infrastructure development, despite limited resources, has been prioritized, especially key projects that ensure Iran's rail connection to its neighbors and trans-regional markets. Taraffo underlined that the

restriction removal was achieved under the "anti-isolationist policies" of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, which aims to maintain the global transportation chain's reliance on Iran's route. Highlighting Iran's role as one of the safest and most economical transit routes in the region, Taraffo said, "Even if alternative routes are created in the region, including connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan via other paths, Iran's route will still remain the best option due to its economic, security, and infrastructural advantages."

## Zimbabwe calls for strategic economic partnership with Iran

Economy Desk

Bright Kupemba, the Zimbabwean ambassador to Iran, underscored on Tuesday the long-standing and robust relations between the two countries, calling for the expansion of bilateral ties into a sustainable and strategic economic partnership. "The relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Zimbabwe have deep historical roots that date back to Zimbabwe's independence era. These relations have always been stable and built on mutual trust," Kupemba said in a meeting with business people in the northwestern Iranian city of Zanjan. Stressing that the connection between the two countries should extend beyond economic interactions, the Zimbabwean ambassador said, "There is a strong and strategic political bond between the leaders of Iran and Zimbabwe. Both countries believe that these political relations should effectively transform into extensive and robust economic ties." Pointing to formal cooperation mechanisms between Harare and Tehran, Kupemba said, "The Joint Commission for Co-



Bright Kupemba (C), the Zimbabwean ambassador to Iran, addresses a meeting with business people in the northwestern city of Zanjan on December 16, 2025. ● IRNA

operation between Iran and Zimbabwe is one of the most important platforms for developing bilateral relations." Referring to the sanctions imposed on both countries, he said, "A large part of the trade between Iran and Zimbabwe is conducted through third countries. The import of tobacco, gold, and precious stones from Zimbabwe to Iran, and the export of bitumen, tractors, machinery, industrial fuels, plastics, carpets, and agricultural products from Iran to Zimbabwe are among the main axes of trade between the two coun-

tries." The ambassador described Iran's pharmaceutical industry as one of the key areas of co-operation, adding, "Zimbabwe warmly welcomes investment from Iranian companies in the fields of drug production, medical equipment, and technology transfer."