

Kazakhstan signs \$25m logistics deal at Shahid Rajaei Port

First foreign direct investment in Iranian ports for INSTC development

Economy Desk

Kazakhstan signed a \$25 million investment agreement to build a logistics hub at Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port, in a move Iranian officials hailed as a major step toward attracting foreign investment and developing the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The 27-year contract, which includes two years of construction and 25 years of operation, marks the first 100% foreign direct investment in an Iranian port in recent years, according to Hormozgan province ports and maritime chief Hossein Abbasnejad. The 15-hectare logistics center is expected to handle annual transshipment of 1.5 million metric tons of goods once operational, Abbasnejad told IRNA ahead of Sunday's signing ceremony.

Mohammad Shakibi-Nasab, head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, said the project was backed by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and aligned with the agency's strategy to strengthen Iran's transit position.

"This investment, in addition to developing infrastructure and pro-

viding port equipment, will create jobs, increase the operational capacity of Shahid Rajaei Port and boost ports along the North-South corridor," Shakibi-Nasab said. He added that the agreement guarantees annual transit of 1.5 million tons of goods through Iranian territory, which would improve Iran's share of the regional transit market and raise transit revenues.

Kazakhstan's strategic role in regional transport

Shakibi-Nasab described Kazakhstan as a key logistics and transit hub in the region that could play an effective role in activating the North-South corridor. He said Kazakh investment in both infrastructure and equipment at the southern port would boost the international corridor and expand bilateral economic ties.

The official also emphasized the project's social impact, saying it would create new employment opportunities and increase productivity at ports along the corridor.

Bilateral trade set to triple

Aman Malgazhdarov, director of the QazExportPromotion Corporate Fund, expressed satisfaction with the signing and described the



project as a strategic step in economic and transport development between the two countries.

"We have been working continuously on this project for nearly a year, and today we are pleased to see this agreement signed," Gazhavarov said.

He stressed that the project was not merely a berth, warehouse or

terminal, but rather the "core of a future Kazakh port within Shahid Rajaei Port" that could play a significant role in developing regional transit corridors.

Gazhavarov noted that current bilateral trade between Iran and Kazakhstan stands at approximately \$400 million. He expressed hope that the agreement and the oper-

ation of the logistics center would increase that figure by at least two to three times.

First wholly foreign-owned port investment

Abbasnejad, the local ports director, said the facility would function as part of a chain of logistics centers linking Kazakhstan, Shahid Rajaei

Port and origin ports, with the goal of expanding cargo transit.

The contract includes provisions for review every five years to account for potential increases in transit volumes and changing conditions, he said.

The investment covers building construction, warehouses, site preparation and specialized equipment for port operations.

The deal follows the finalization of 14 memoranda of understanding during Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd's recent visit to Kazakhstan. Those agreements were originally signed during President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Astana last year.

Sadeq Malvajerd and Kazakh officials sealed the pacts to expand transit cooperation and activate logistics hubs at key ports in both countries, aiming to capitalize on Iran's role as a gateway for cargo moving from China to Europe while providing Kazakhstan with access to open waters.

According to Sadeq Malvajerd, another major focus of her mid-June visit was identifying locations for logistics hubs to store and redistribute goods along transit routes in both Kazakhstan and Iran.

Pakistan eases Iran trade with Taftan railway customs designation

Economy Desk

Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has officially designated the Taftan border railway station as a land customs station for handling import and export procedures, a move expected to facilitate cross-border trade with Iran.

The decision follows a telephone conversation between the head of Iran's railway company and his Pakistani counterpart, as well as subsequent correspondence with Pakistan Railways on activating the Taftan crossing, IRNA reported.

Under an official notification issued by the FBR, Taftan railway station, located on an 11.75-hectare site, will operate as a land customs station for the loading, unloading, clearance and customs processing of imported and exported goods.

The notification also defines the geographical boundaries of the facility, formally integrating the Taftan rail terminal into Pakistan's customs network. Taftan, Pakistan's main land crossing on the border with Iran, has long held strategic importance but has operated below its full potential in recent years because of infrastructure constraints and the lack of comprehensive customs facilities.

Experts say the formal launch of a rail customs of-



ice at the site will facilitate the movement of goods by rail while helping reduce transportation costs, speed up customs clearance and improve the management of border trade.

Other objectives of the measure include curbing the use of unofficial trade routes and smuggling, integrating documentation, inspection and customs clearance procedures, and reducing reliance on informal trade channels.

The decision comes as Iran and Pakistan have long discussed boosting bilateral trade, but progress has been constrained by international sanctions on Tehran, weak banking links and logistical barriers. The Islamic Republic is focusing on removing infrastructure bottlenecks, expanding border trade and activating barter mechanisms as part of a roadmap to increase bilateral trade with Pakistan to \$10 billion.

Achieving this target, however, remains challenging. Bilateral trade between

Iran and Pakistan was estimated at roughly \$2.8 billion in the fiscal year ending June 2025, according to Pakistani media reports citing official data — though some Iranian sources place the figure closer to \$3.1 billion for the overlapping Iranian calendar year, reflecting minor discrepancies in national accounting methods.

Economic analysts believe that directly linking rail infrastructure with customs services will improve the efficiency of the transport chain, facilitate the movement of bulk commodities, including agricultural products, minerals and petroleum products, and expand the capacity of formal trade between the two countries. Observers say the designation of Taftan railway station as a land customs station forms part of Pakistan's broader policy of expanding legal trade with Iran and making greater use of rail transport capacity along the two countries' shared border.

Parallel Hormuz ...

Put simply, those promoting such arrangements are driving the region toward greater instability, complexity and confrontation. Rather than easing tensions, they are effectively escalating them.

Geopolitically, these measures are intended to weaken Iran's strategic standing as one of the key and influential players in regional affairs. Under such circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself fully entitled to defend its legitimate rights with utmost vigilance and without the slightest negligence, while ensuring that no foreign power or parallel arrangement is allowed to disregard Iran's historic and legal role in managing this vital waterway.

What factors have prompted some regional countries and extra-regional powers to pursue new arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz? To what extent are these initiatives driven by security concerns, and how much are they aimed at achieving political objectives?

Available evidence suggests that US pressure on Oman over the management of the Strait of Hormuz has not only fueled the recent incidents but has also deepened the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust across the Persian Gulf region. These pressures are not merely an attempt to violate Iran's sovereignty and circumvent the provisions of the Islamabad Memorandum; they also reflect Washington's double-standard, interventionist and illegitimate

approach to regional affairs. These policies are being pursued at a time when Oman, as one of the two coastal states bordering the Strait, finds itself in a difficult and multilayered position — balancing its international commitments, its strategic relationship with the United States, and its neighboring ties with Iran — effectively leaving Muscat caught between competing pressures.

With a clear understanding of the conspiratorial nature of the US-Israeli approach in the region, the miscalculations of certain other actors, and the reality that Oman, despite being a trusted partner, cannot fully withstand comprehensive US pressure, the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted a smart, proactive and preemptive strategy. The first step in this strategy was the establishment of a joint working group with Oman under Article 5 of the memorandum of understanding, aimed at resolving misunderstandings and fostering a shared understanding of the legal framework governing the Strait.

In the subsequent stages, while remaining committed to its legal principles and international obligations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will roll out new political and security measures to safeguard its national interests, prevent any unilateral or parallel action that could undermine its sovereignty and national security, and consolidate the order it seeks to uphold in this vital waterway.

To what extent could the dispute over the management of security in the

Strait of Hormuz cast a shadow over the course of Iran-US negotiations?

The dispute over the management of the Strait of Hormuz goes beyond merely casting a shadow over negotiations; it could become one of the principal factors leading to the collapse of the Islamabad Memorandum between Tehran and Washington.

As recent incidents have clearly demonstrated, the disagreement has created a highly chaotic and dangerous environment in the Strait of Hormuz. Two competing shipping routes have now emerged, leaving shipping companies caught between fears of US sanctions on the one hand and the prospect of facing Iran's security measures in its territorial waters on the other.

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that Washington's disingenuous policy of pressuring Oman to establish an alternative corridor, coupled with its recent military attacks against Iranian interests, is not merely a reaction to current developments. Rather, it forms part of a concealed, long-term strategy designed to lay the groundwork for more hostile actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Tehran, however, with full awareness of the hidden dimensions and underlying objectives of US conduct, has effectively neutralized this strategy. Not only have these pressures backfired, but Iran, by adopting measured and intelligent responses, has further strengthened its strategic position in this

vital waterway and demonstrated that it will stand firmly and wisely against any interventionist action.

How should the recent threats by the US president, suggesting that the United States may be forced to finish the job militarily, be assessed? Are they part of psychological warfare and deterrence, or should the possibility of an escalation and even a return to a broader war be taken seriously?

The recent threats by the US president should be viewed as a multilayered and complex phenomenon. While they reveal Washington's concealed, long-term and deceptive intentions within the framework of the Islamabad Memorandum with Iran, in the short term they are more appropriately understood as part of psychological warfare, deterrence and an attempt by Washington to test Tehran's resolve.

What lies behind these threatening statements, however, is nothing other than America's strategic failure in the war and a desperate attempt to break out of the deadlock that has emerged in its confrontation with Iran.

Still, the possibility of a broader military confrontation remains a serious and plausible scenario. Under such circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran, fully aware of the unpredictable nature of US behavior and drawing on the experience of the two recent wars, has prepared itself for any escalation of tensions or military confrontation.