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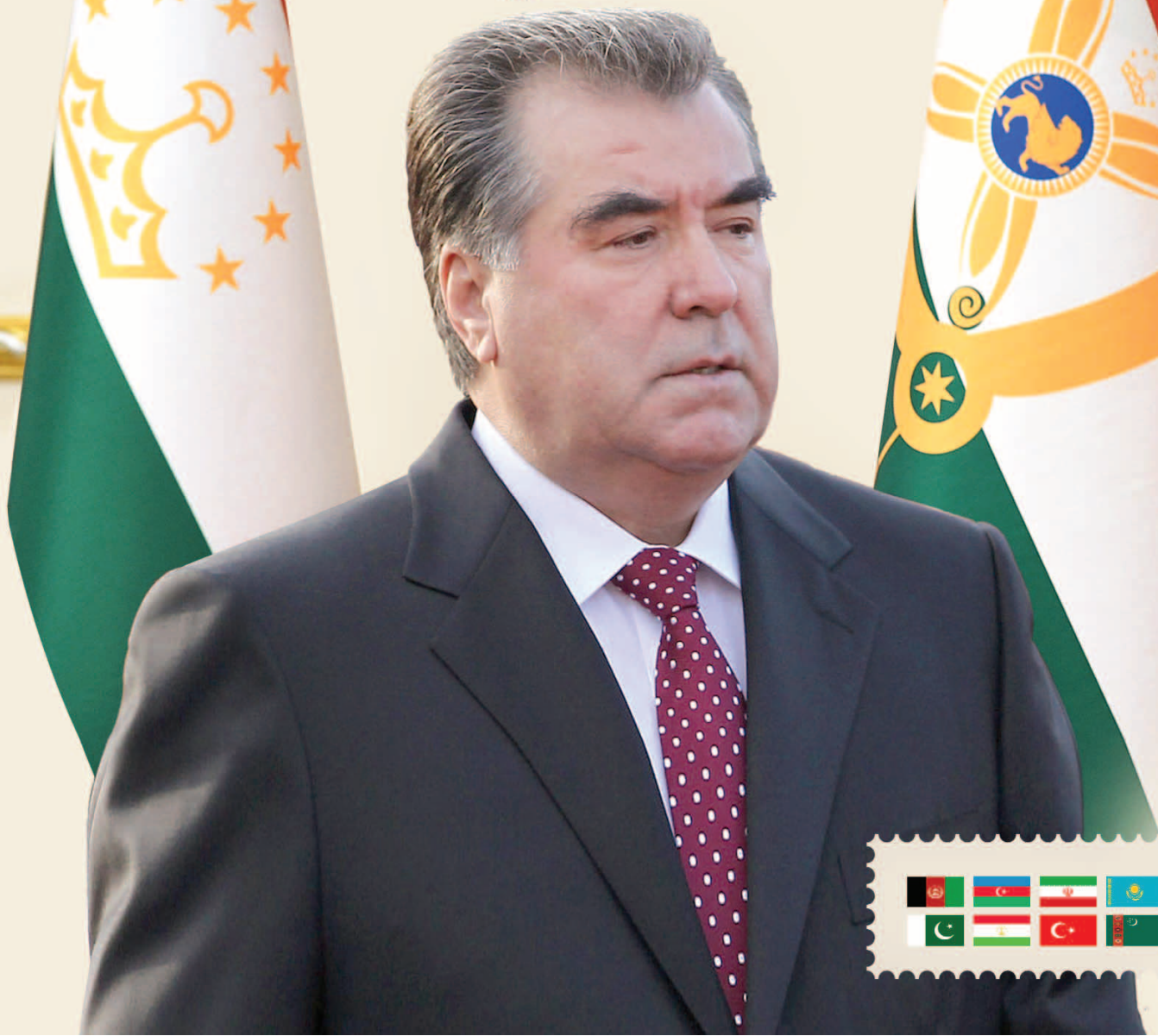
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ECO CHRONICLE

Dedicated to the 30th
Anniversary of Independence of
Tajikistan





Foreword



I am delighted to introduce this special edition of the ECO Chronicle on the Republic of Tajikistan.

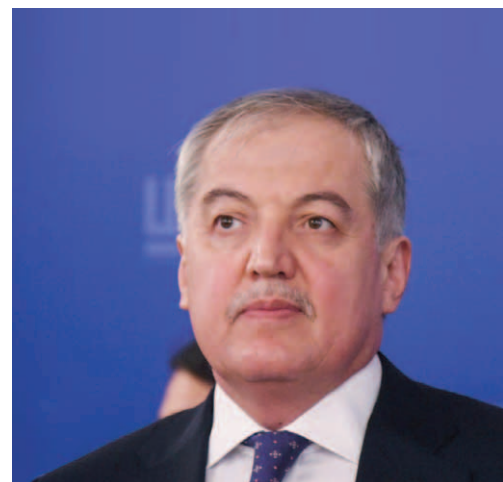
The Republic of Tajikistan, one of key Member States of the ECO, has been fully committed to the principles and objectives of the ECO. In its bid to open up to the outside world and as a manifestation of its urge to revive its historic affinities with the peoples of the region, the ECO was one the first regional organizations that Tajikistan joined at the dawn of its independence along with five other Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan.

Under the excellent leadership and commendable support of the President of Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, Tajikistan has successfully implemented a series of national initiatives for achieving macroeconomic stability and sustainable socio-economic development. This present issue of ECO Chronicle presents a snapshot of various aspects of the national development of Tajikistan as well as its active role in the activities of the ECO to contribute effectively to the regional economic development.

As the Chairman of the ECO from April 2018 to November 2019, Tajikistan adhered firmly to promoting regional cooperation among countries of ECO. ECO has come a long way since the 23rd Council of Ministers (COM) Meeting held in 2018 Dushanbe, Takikistan. During Chairmanship of Tajikistan, we have made remarkable progress in our activities and initiatives for fostering regional socio-economic development. Particularly, I would like to mention the lead role of Tajikistan in finalizing the ECO's comprehensive reform process aimed at increasing the sense of ownership among all Member States and enhancement of efficiency of the organization.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government and people of Tajikistan for their enduring support to the ECO in pursuit of the common agenda of the regional development as well as the cherished goals that are envisaged in the Treaty of Izmir and ECO vision 2025. I shall particularly count on the continued assistance and kind guidance of the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan at ECO, H.E. Ambassador Nizomiddin Zohidi in achieving the organization's objectives under his Chairmanship of the Council of Permanent Representatives.

Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour
ECO Secretary General



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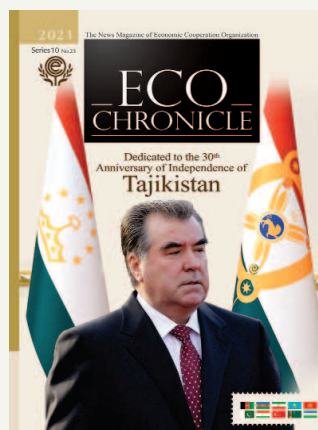
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In The Name Of God

Front Cover



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Patron & Supervision

Dr. Soleimanpour
ECO Secretary General

Address

No.1, Golbou Alley,
Kamranieh St., Tehran-Iran
P.O.Box \ 14155- 6176
Tehran(I.R. Iran)

Tel \ (+98-21) 22831733-4
22292066

Fax \ (+98-21) 22831732
<http://www.eco.int>

Graphic Design

Kia Saadatmand
0912 321 0 716



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A Special Message by the President
of the Republic of Tajikistan

H.E. Emomali Rahmon

It is our common task to explore approaches and methods of effective cooperation meeting the interests and desires of our people and ensuring their enforcement within the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Facilitation of stronger and deeper integration, vitalization of mutual support, and the expansion of trade and investment as key pillars of regional cooperation are among

Tajikistan and the Economic Cooperation Organization

the aspects we need to acknowledge as our strategic goals.

We can link the sea and landlocked countries by establishing transport corridors with the use of our own resources, thereby fostering the process of economic growth and addressing social challenges within the organization.

Currently, from our perspective, it is high time to develop and implement a comprehensive program for collaboration and mutual support between the ECO member states on emergencies within the organization.

I have no doubt that the expansion of tourism cooperation framework between the ECO member states would serve as another influential driver for sustainable development of our countries and as an effective tool for strong people-to-people relations. Regional cooperation still remains a vital objective for the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan and the entire region. In this context, Tajikistan welcomes engagement of its close neighbor - Afghanistan into the regional integration processes. Afghanistan is located in the Eurasian crossroad and can serve as a transit centre to boost trade cooperation between Europe, Asia and the

Middle East.

At the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan and proactive support of the ECO member states, the United Nations adopted its important resolution "International Decade of Action: Water for Sustainable Development



(2018-2028)." I believe that the Economic Cooperation Organization will play a proactive role in the implementation of the plans of action within this new initiative and make its decent input towards achievement of the objectives related to water resources as well.

In our view, it is important to strengthen the unifying


and creative role the Economic Cooperation Organization plays by updating and improving this institution's agenda. Our renewed organization should be strong and practical, with the ability to react immediately and appropriately to socio-economic

phenomena and processes in its region of operation.

The Republic of Tajikistan was and will remain dedicated to the Economic Cooperation Organization's approaches and objectives, and stands ready to upgrade and improve its level and quality of engagement within the organization's activities.

H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon

Sworn in as President of the Republic of Tajikistan

 H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon inaugurated as President of the Republic of Tajikistan in a ceremony that took place at the Great Hall of the Kokhi Somon Palace on October 30, 2020. H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon is re-elected in the Presidential Election held on October 11, 2020 with a vast majority of 90.92 percent of the votes.

The Sign of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan was presented to H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, under the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The Chairmen of National Assembly and the Assembly of Representatives Mr. Rustam Emomali and Mr. Mahmadoir Zokirzoda opened a joint session devoted to the inauguration ceremony of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

President of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon addressed the participants of the inauguration ceremony with a keynote speech, in which he outlined the main ways

and directions of development. The Head of state, in particular, noted that within the next seven years, "we must achieve complete energy independence, come out of transport deadlock and turn Tajikistan into a transit country due to effective use of national resources and all opportunities we have."



"During this period, we must move closer to another strategic goal - ensuring food security and speeding up the process of industrialization that will allow creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs and reducing labor migration," President said.

He also pointed to the necessity of improving the level and quality of life of people due to expanding implementation of the National Development Strategy of Tajikistan designed for the period up to 2030, "because every citizen of the country deserves a decent life."

"Within the next seven years, we must double the country's gross domestic product



(GDP) growth rate, increase middle class percentage to 45 percent and reduce poverty rate to 15 percent," the head of state noted.

Later the same day, as the President of Tajikistan and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Tajikistan's Armed Forces, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon attended a wreath-laying ceremony under the Monument of National Unity and Revival of Tajikistan, where the Armed Forces gave their oath to their Commander-in-Chief in the Dusti Square to mark his inauguration.

Minister of Defence, Sherali Mirzo, reported on the readiness of the branches of the

Armed Forces to begin the oath taking ceremony and the military parade.

After his greetings, President Rahmon delivered a speech where he noted that an oath of commanders, officers, soldiers and military personnel is an ancient tradition of a national state system and illustration of responsibilities of military personnel in defence of the homeland, state and nation.

The ceremony concluded with the marching of 8,000 officers and soldiers of the Armed Forces and service personnel of other military and law enforcement agencies. A 30-gun salute was fired to mark the occasion.



A Special Article by H.E. Sirojiddin Muhriddin
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan

Economic Cooperation Organization: **Challenges and Opportunities**

Cooperation within the framework of regional economic organizations or groupings has acquired a special importance as it facilitates the integration of the countries

into the world economy in a more harmonized way making use of their comparative advantages.

The Republic of Tajikistan has always advocated and is committed to the progressive

development of regional cooperation and the achievement of economic prosperity based on mutual cooperation.

We regard the regional cooperation as an essential element of national development. Building and strengthening regional cooperation remains among the top priorities of our foreign policies. In view of this, the latest Foreign Policy Concept of Tajikistan that was adopted in 2015 pays a special attention to multilateral diplomacy, including Economic Cooperation Organization.

The Economic Cooperation Organization is one of the first regional organizations that Tajikistan joined at the dawn of its independence. We are firmly committed to the progressive development of regional cooperation and interested in the development and strengthening of the ECO as an authoritative regional platform.

Personally I am of the view that ECO should focus on development of those main areas of cooperation which the Organization was established for. The common historical, geographical and cultural ties, and mutual aspiration of our peoples for prosperity and peace, brought us together in this forum, where we have to work towards fulfilling objectives. We consider ECO as a unique multinational economic platform that unites us under this common vision. Our organization, the membership of which covers nearly 8 million square kilometers and represents a population of almost a half billion people, possesses a great economic potential. Our region, with its vast natural resources and dynamic work force, holds great developmental promise and potential that we must fully utilize in the interests of our people and future generations. The ECO region enjoys an incomparable geographical location as a corridor between large markets and an abundance of rich and varied energy resources.

ECO Member States are the heir of a great and magnificent civilization. ECO countries

share the same religion and aspiration. Nothing can justify the need for a joint effort towards prosperity and growth for our countries than these commonalities.

Since ancient times, our region has been the crossroads of world civilizations. ECO is a valuable instrument for regional economic development. Since its accession, my country has been fully committed to the principles and targets envisioned by the ECO and will continue its constructive cooperation and partnership with the member countries. Tajikistan



hosted many events at different levels including summit and Council of Ministers, as well as other sectoral ministerial meetings.

Tajikistan hosted the 23rd Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) on 17th April 2018. The Meeting was attended by the delegations from all ECO Member States, observers and representatives of International Organizations. Excellent arrangements were



made and constructive deliberations were conducted in an efficient manner during the meeting. The Meeting concluded with the adoption of number documents of vital importance for the bloc. Protocols amending the Statute of Regional Institute for Standardization, Conformity Assessment, Accreditation and Metrology Dushanbe Communiqué, New ECO Advocacy Programme for Afghanistan were amongst them.

Republic of Tajikistan attaches great importance to multifaceted relations and ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness and visibility of our Organization. We are satisfied with the existing level of cooperation in trade, transit and transport, tourism, as well as the

strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties.

Tajikistan is fully committed to further strengthening the comprehensive cooperation in trade, investment, energy, transport and communication, industry, agriculture, environment and tourism sectors with the other ECO member states.

The strategic geography and abundant natural resources provide ECO enormous potential for regional integration. Regional cooperation and integration has the potential to support sustainable development and growth, as well as infrastructure to support sustainability and resilience.

But, the future economic and social integration of the sub-region depends on how economic corridors can be operationalized by creating regional production and value chains, as well as new industries to revitalize economies and their trade with diversification



and job creation. Access to the sea should be offered to landlocked countries. Regional connectivity, especially transport links are critical for further integration of ECO.

Low level of intra-regional trade within the region is a matter of concern. Unlocking the full potential of ECO's members will require more trade and investment agreements and facilitation mechanisms and windows. ECO members at this point have more trade and investments agreements with non-ECO members than with their regional organizations partners.

ECO Member states possess vast potential for development of regional tourism. The expansion of cooperation in tourism sector is amongst the priorities of the Organization, which is envisaged as important objective for ECO under the ECO Vision 2025. Dushanbe city has been proclaimed as a ECO tourism capital for the years of 2020 -2021 at the 3rd

ECO Ministerial Meeting on tourism held on 4 October 2019 in Khujand.

Today, like many other regions and countries, ECO States have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to mitigate the negative impacts of such a crisis, besides national measures, we have to attach special attention to multilateral measures in the framework of regional organizations like ECO.

The task before ECO in nowadays is not an easy one. However, it is the time that demands transformation. I am confident that with commitment and ownership of Member States, ECO is a right platform to realize our shared destiny.



ECO Secretary General met with the **Tajik President** in Guliston City, Tajikistan

ECO CHRONICLE The Secretary General of the ECO, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour met with the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, at the Guliston city of Sughd Province of Tajikistan on August 21, 2019 to discuss the possibilities for the enhancement of regional tourism, ensuring peace, security and stability in the neighboring countries of Afghanistan as well as the country's socio-economic development.

The two sides discussed the mat-

ters related to reform process and the implementation ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA).

While describing reform as a mean to the enhancement of the efficiency of the Organization, the Secretary General briefed the Tajik President that the Organization is undergoing structural reforms which are currently under deliberation at the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR). On the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), Dr. Soleimanpour added that in order to facilitate further economic cooperation within the region; the ECOTA Cooperation Council is amending the 2003 Free Trade Agreement to reflect the new realities of the region.

The Secretary General proposed that next ECO ministerial meeting on Economy could be convened

in Tajikistan that could serve as a catalyst for promotion of further economic cooperation in the ECO Region.

The Secretary General informed the President that the Organization is committed to railway transport corridors and is focusing on transforming the transit corridors of the region into economic ones, and seeks to facilitate more connectivity between landlocked Member States to the seaports of the ECO region as envisaged in the Turkmenbashi Declaration, he added.

The Secretary General said that the valuable experience gained from the Central Asia-South Asia power project commonly known as CASA-1000, could effectively contribute to the implementation of the ECO Regional Electricity Market project.

While welcoming the initiative of Tajikistan's President in declaring 2019-2021 the "Years of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts", Dr. Soleimanpour explained that the arrangements required for the meeting of ECO Tourism Ministers scheduled to be held in Khujand city on October 3-4, 2019 are underway within the Secretariat.

Appreciating the efforts made by the Secretary General and his team, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan expressed satisfaction over the existing cooperation in trade, transit and transport policy as well as the strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties.

He emphasized on Tajikistan's commitment to further strengthening the comprehensive cooperation in trade, investment, energy, transport and communication, industry, agriculture, environment and tourism sectors with the other ECO member states.

Welcoming the selection of Dushanbe as ECO's tourism capital, the President expressed optimism that the forthcoming ministerial meeting on tourism would give an effective impetus to the development of tourism sector in the ECO Member States.



ECO Secretary General meets with the Tajikistan's Foreign Minister



ECO CHRONICLE Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan Mr. Sirojiddin Muhridin met with the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour on 5 October 2019 in Dushanbe.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of bilateral cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Economic Cooperation Organization in trade and investment, transport and communications, energy and environment, industry and technology, agriculture and tourism.

At the meeting, the ECO Secretary-General

briefed Minister of Foreign Affairs on the activities of the Organization during the Chairmanship of Tajikistan.

The Foreign Minister of Tajikistan appreciated the existing level of regional cooperation in various fields and reiterated the Tajikistan's commitment to further strengthening the comprehensive cooperation in trade, investment, energy, transport and communication, industry, agriculture, environment and tourism sectors with the other ECO member states.

Meeting of ECO SG and Tajikistan's Minister of Economic Development



The Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), H.E Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour met with Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Nematullo Hikmatullozoda to discuss the latest development on economic and trade cooperation in the region.

During the meeting of August 22, 2019, the Tajik Minister underlined the great human and natural potential in the region as well as the importance of its efficient utilization for the progress and prosperity of the ECO nations. He also underscored the continuity of Tajikistan's relations with the Organization, adding that the ECO's chairmanship of Tajikistan coincided with an important span of time.

Referring to the ECOTA Trade Agreement, Mr. Hikmatullozoda noted that despite the passage of



20 years since the signing of the said agreement, its full implementation has yet to take place. Given the current realities, it is necessary to reconsider the ECOTA Trade Agreement, he said.

Referring to ECO's priority areas within the Vision-2025, the Secretary General of the ECO underlined the necessity for strengthening economic, trade, financial and investment ties amongst the Member States. Mr. Soleimanpour also encouraged Tajikistan to consider becoming a member of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ECO-TDB) which was established on August 3, 2005 in Istanbul.



Tajikistan's Contemporary Economy and Cooperation with the **ECO**

The implementation of the President Rahmon's initiatives on national economic reforms particularly the enhancement of investment opportunities, support to the private sector, and activities on development of priority sectors made a positive impact on the development of Tajikistan and created a favorable environment for sustainable economic



growth of the country.

Since its independence, Tajikistan has implemented a series of national economic reforms by transferring a target-based economy to the market one and has undertaken various important steps in this direction, such as adoption

of a number of laws and regulations, and defining and regulating economic relations.

The emergence of different forms of owner-

ship, creation of various economic activities, privatization of public property, introduction of national currency, liberalization of pricing, establishment of joint ventures, ensuring free foreign trade and addressing priority social issues are few important steps for strengthening Tajikistan's economy.

More comprehensive and targeted economic reforms started in the mid-90s, which made it possible to avoid decline in production and ensure sustainable economic development. Consistent implementation of institutional reforms in important public sectors, particularly in governance, finance, banking, real sectors of the economy, as well as in education, health, and social security through development and implementation of a number of socio-economic development programs, and undertaking effective measures contributed to the overall development of the country's economy.

Currently, the Tajik industry is equipped with a comprehensive developed framework and technical infrastructure, and covers various sectors. The sector represents more than 90 kinds of production and more than 140 varieties of products covering mineral extraction and processing, coal mining, light and chemical industry, engineering, metal processing, construction materials and food industry.

The Government of Tajikistan constantly attaches a particular importance to acceleration of industrial development and its sustainability, comprehensive institutional reforms, establishment of private enterprises with mobilization of domestic and foreign investment to improve economic efficiency, and introduce technical and technological innovations in industrial production. Dozens of agreements on cooperation between the Government and local as well as international companies on establishment of new enterprises of metallurgy, cement production and other construction materials, extraction and refining of oil and gas, chemical products, and engineering and metal processing are signed and successfully implemented.

The Strategic papers, local development and sector-specific programs define the country's industrial priorities in terms of establishment of new production capacities in the regions based on availability of raw materials and agricultural products. The Government's policy focusing on economic integration with the international community made it possible to expand Tajikistan's economic and trade relations based on the princi-



ples of mutually beneficial cooperation. Consequently, the international community acknowledged Tajikistan as a country with open economy. Accession to the World Trade Organization made it possible to expand Tajikistan's trade and economic cooperation, ensure more transparent foreign trade, and gradually overcome administrative and technical barriers.

Tajikistan enjoys trade and eco-

conomic cooperation with 120 countries of the world currently. Expansion of its cooperation made it possible to significantly improve foreign trade during 30 years of national independence. Effective trade reforms, improved legal and regulatory framework, reduced administrative and technical barriers to trade increased Tajikistan's foreign trade by 33 times during its independence period. The process of diversification

intensified the competition in the international markets. In this regard, the Government decided within its midterm export strategy to focus on stronger competitiveness of products in domestic and foreign markets, and improvement of quality in accordance with the rules and standards of WTO, Eurasian Economic Union and other potential markets, improvement of packaging and labeling, introduction of innovations in export-oriented production and import substitution, arrangement of logistic services, transport infrastructure and the quality assurance.

Brief information on the socio-economic situation of Tajikistan in 2019

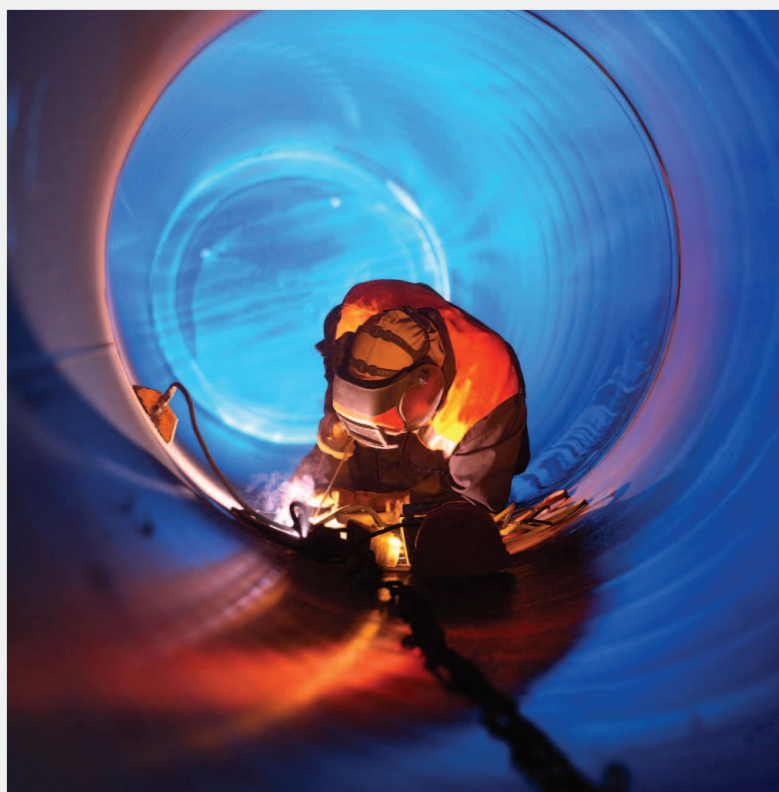
In the context of global economy slowdown and the anticipated global recession, the timely anti-crisis actions undertaken by the Government of the country aimed at ensuring macroeconomic stability, the efficiency and transparency of the public sector, social protection and employment, improving the banking system, the investment climate and developing entrepreneurship, supporting SMEs, made it possible to ensure macroeconomic stability, accelerated development of the industrial sector, and expansion of the production through commissioning of new production facilities, a steady increase in agricultural production, increase in incomes and improve living standards.

The efficient operation of economic sectors made it possible for the country's GDP in real terms grown by 7.5%. Thus, its value amounted to TJS 77.3 billion and increased by TJS 8.5 billion compared to 2018. The economic growth during this period was achieved due to an increase of industrial production by 13.6%, agricultural production with an increase in gross output by 7.1%, the volume of trade increased by 9.0%, and an increase in the volume of paid services sector by 2.9 percent.

In 2019, sixty five investment projects with the total amount of USD 3.3 billion, of which

of export-oriented production and implementation of production development programs in various spheres of the national economy significantly changed the commodity and geographical coverage of the country's exports. The share of finished industrial products, agricultural products, energy, minerals, and precious stones gradually increased in the export structure.

The political and economic crises



USD 1.8 billion was spent as of January 1, were under implementation in various sectors of the economy within the State Investment Program. In addition, a number of other projects with direct and portfolio investments are under process.

The service sector also made a positive contribution to the growth of the economy due to the increased consumer purchasing power as the household income has increased. The total volume of goods turnover in 2019 increased by 9.0% as compared to 2018 and the volume of paid services has increased by 2.9%. The national foreign trade turnover in 2019 increased by 7.1% as compared to the last year having an increase in import deliveries by 9.4% and exports by 6.3 percent.

Strategic Plans of Tajikistan

The objective of the National Development Strategy 2030 of the Republic of Tajikistan is to specify Tajikistan's strategic plans. The strategy harmonized medium and long-term socio-economic development plans, specified national objectives, and sets forth targets and action plans. This important policy paper specifies the ultimate objective of the country's transition from agrarian to an industrial country.

Tajikistan's Cooperation with Economic Cooperation Organization

The proactive engagement of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Economic Cooperation Organization aims to strengthen good neighborliness, facilitation to confidence and friendship based relations between the member states of the organization as well as economic and sustainable development in the region. Tajikistan stands for the stronger authority and role of the Economic Cooperation Organization in the deepening of economic relations, implementation of infrastructural projects and promotion of cooperation in the

field of environmental protection and enhancement of cultural dialogue for the sake of the regional integration.

The Republic of Tajikistan in its foreign policy places a primary emphasis on the strengthening fruitful cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization and acknowledges it as a regional organization with a specific geostrategic



importance and enormous economic potential. Tajikistan is committed to assist the Organization's activities particularly the implementation of regional economic, trade, transport, communications and energy projects. The Republic of Tajikistan within the Economic Cooperation Organization also focuses on establishment of effective mechanisms to overcome present economic challenges.



NAWRUZ IN TAJIKISTAN

by Dr. Dilshod Rahimov Research Institute of Culture and Information of Tajikistan

The Nawruz or Navruz is one of the greatest national events of Tajikistan. One of the most vivid patterns of the Old Iranian culture, which according to legends, established by Jamshid-i Peshdadi is the biggest spring festival namely Nawruz.

The Nowruz with passing centuries and millenniums brought to contemporary Tajik people the best ideals of the life such as good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; respect of the nature and humans; freedom and peace; appreciating the efforts of others; creature and constructive thought and so forth.

Celebration of Nawruz encountered with many political obstacles and social problems during the past centuries, but in spite of the hard circumstances, it gathered people of

various classes and social status around the table of festival and accorded to the peace and forgiving the offence of each other.

The history knows that many times Nawruz went under pressure of conquerors. However, having concepts of the peace and nature rebirth, it not only was kept, but also was integrated into cultures of conquerors. During Nawruz was ignored rather discouraged during the Soviet era as it was considered as a conservative religious celebration under the ideology of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government fearing of the increasing national identities among the multi-national republics, had spent many efforts for changing and/or exterminating the traditional values like alphabets, languages and religions. At the same time Soviet policy also restricted celebrating of certain national festivals and holidays like Nawruz.



In the late 1980s, the Government of Tajikistan recognized the Nawruz celebration and declared 21st of March as a Nawruz holiday. At last, after Tajikistan gained independence on September 9, 1991, Nawruz gained national status and is celebrated with all of its rituals and customs in the territory of country. Now in Tajikistan people have four-day vacation on the occasion of Nawruz festival and gradually strengthen its magnificence and splendor.

On February 23, 2010, the UN General Assembly in its 64th session adopted the Resolution on International Day of Nowruz and declared 21st of March as the International Day of Nowruz. Nawruz was also included in the Representative List of UNESCO as an element of intangible cultural heritage by 12 countries, including Tajikistan.

Having recognized Nawruz as the national and traditional festival, Tajik people revived

many rituals and customs related to Nawruz and introduced some new festival competitions like exhibition of the traditional dishes, national costume show and Miss Nawruz. Below are some of the rituals and customs which are performed on Nawruz:

Khonaburoron (Clening rooms): One or two weeks before the Nawruz women and their daughters sweep and clean the rooms, spray perfumes, wash curtains and mattress', and etc. They also clean the kitchens and yards, wash tea pots, bowls, plates and kettles. Before the Navruz everything must be clean as new. A new year is coming and the house must be symbolically purified.

Gulgardoni (Bringing new flowers): One of the first customs of the Nawruz performed by children and adult is Gulgardoni. This custom is also called as Boychechak ("Snowdrop") in Khujand, Sayri guli lola ("Tulip festival") in Isfara, Idi guli surkh ("Red flower festival") in Istaravshan, Panjakent, Guli Siyohgush or Seyovush (the flower of Seyavosh or Flower with black ears) in the southern districts of Tajikistan. The ceremony of informing on the coming spring consists of the following: a group of children and adults go up to hills and pick some flowers like snowdrops, irises, tulips and visit houses of the inhabitants in rural villages and sing the special congratulatory songs.

Traditional Nawruz Dishes: Traditional Nawruz dishes are also cooked with different grains and herbs symbolizing the fruitful nature and healthy food. Women in Hisor District cook gandumkucha contained of ground wheat, beans, peas, sorrel, onion, mint, salt and water during the spring cele-

bration. Other regions of Tajikistan call this dish dalda (Kulab,Yavan), baj (Badakhshan), gouja (Panjakent) and add some other grains and herbs to its recipe.

Sumanak is the most widespread and traditional Nawruz food, a sweet pudding made from germinated wheat, symbolizing affluence. Two weeks before the celebration small groups of women living in the same village neighborhood grow grains of wheat in the plates up to a few inches and they bring their germinated wheat to the idgah - celebration yard, where they cook sumanak in a big pot on the celebration day. Cooking sumanak is a hard work that is difficult for one person to handle, because the pot contain should be regularly mixed during 15-20 hours. The whole process of preparing sumanak continues 24 hours and therefore young men and women also join the group in some villages. Women play doira (daf, dafcha)- musical instrument of tambourine type, and sing folk songs about Nawruz, spring and satiric quatrains, and dance. There is a legend that if you welcome the New Year joyfully you will spend the entire year in the same mood. On one hand, women believe to this belief, while on the other hand, the social function and entertainment part of sumanak cooking ritual challenges them to the community. Women usually start their entertainment part of this ritual singing collectively the well-known folk song Sumanak dar jush mo kafcha zanem.

Oshtikunoni (reconciliation): Oshtikunoni is another custom performed before the New Year. On the eve of Nawruz people should forgive each other, or in other words, nobody

should be injured or offended in the welcome days of next year. Usually elderly people play a great role in carrying out this custom by mediating between the younger generation to forgive each other if they had some offence from anybody and friends.

Traditional Games: Traditional sport games and contests like wrestling, running, buzkashi (goat-snatching) are among the entertainment activities of Nawruz celebration. Alongside these competitions, non-traditional or modern sport games such as football, basketball, volleyball and tennis contests also take place in many districts and villages. Children and adults hold wrestling, cockfight, egg fight, and other games in the villages.

However, the most widespread Nawruz contest is considered to be Gushtin that is wrestling. Gushtin competition for Nawruz prizes takes place in every village, town, district center and city. Winners are awarded





with different prizes such as carpet, TV set, video player, tape recorder, refrigerator, and car, and traditionally prizes like bull, horse and sometimes camel by the private organizers and local governments.

Besides the above-mentioned customs, show of the traditional costumes, national dishes, dancing and singing events and Miss Nawruz competitions are organized in the most of regions and districts of Tajikistan during the Nawruz celebration. The show of bride and groom in traditional dresses is also a typical custom, in which young spouses are characterized as the symbol of year and their traditional costume means being an old tradition of the Nawruz.

The Tajik folklore has many rubaees, quatrains, and folk songs dedicated to Nawruz, which are usually performed in the beginning of spring and during the Nawruz festival days. The main meanings of the Nawruz,

opposing the winter and spring; considering the human as a part of nature, and identifying Nawruz with freedom are reflected in many quatrains.

The theme of Nawruz festival is also one of the favorite themes of the Tajik poets, starting from Rudaki, the Founder of the Persian-Tajik Literature to poets of the modern time. Almost every single Tajik poet composed some lines of poem about Nawruz.

Nawruz is a mean and a cause for gathering, communication, enjoyment, getting aesthetic delight, remembering the ancestors and expressing their tight connection with the nature. More importantly, through participating in the social gatherings people feel themselves as a member of the society. Nawruz is the festival without borders that belongs to people of different ethnical backgrounds, languages, religions, gender, ages and social statuses.

Dushanbe

the City of Friendship and Peace

Dushanbe is the capital of the Republic of Tajikistan, a city embraced by picturesque and flowering foothills and located in the large emerald valley of a turquoise riverbed. The terrain of auspicious climate and geographical location of the city has a very long history.

Dushanbe, a place for living and activities, connects all parts and regions of the country through highways, railways and air services.

The grand gates in four directions of the capital embody the urban development traditions and sustainable system of urban management, noble traits of kindness, brotherhood, and hospitality of the capital's citizens.

Construction of architectural and cultural complexes and palaces, broad avenues and streets, large industrial enterprises, and academic institutions in a relatively short historic period transformed Dushanbe into one of the stateliest cities in the modern world.

The Tajik capital as a large spiritual, scientific, education and service center along with a favorable infrastructure, administrative and residential build-



ings constructed with high architectural art, is a place of landscaping and infrastructure development, cleanliness and loveliness, and high standard communication ethics.

The area of Dushanbe is 127 km². The city with a continental climate is located in the prolific Hisor Valley at an altitude of 930 meters above the sea level on both shores of the Dushanbe River. Officially, the population of Dushanbe is 900,000. The city consists of four administrative districts namely Ismoili Somoni, Sino, Firdavsi and Shohmansur.

Year after year, the city of Dushanbe as an administrative center of Tajikistan and a mirror of culture-forming Tajik nation, is

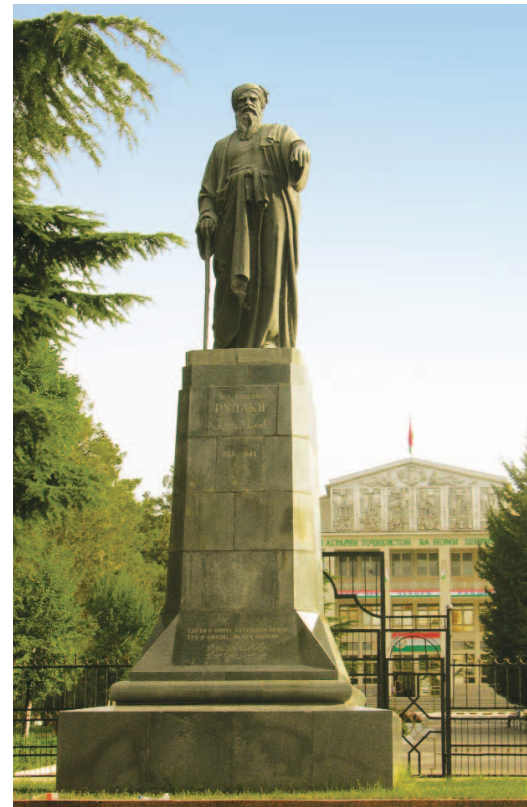
becoming more comfortable and lovely. Nowadays, more than 450 industrial enterprises of Dushanbe not only supply the city residents, but also export their products beyond the country.



Currently, 24 higher education and 145 secondary education institutions as well as 135 pre-school facilities educate 200,000 students and attendants respectively. Overall, about 900 sports facilities have been established in the city and the number of such facilities is increasing day by day.

While in 1991 only 30 hospitals provided health services in Dushanbe, now 61 hospitals and other health facilities offer health services to 900,000 residents and





other visitors of the capital. One of the particular health protection achievements which Dushanbe city has made in the independence period is the construction and commissioning of the Istiqlol Medical Complex, a unique centre in Central Asia. This healthcare complex is equipped with the latest advanced technology.

The construction of Dushanbe International Airport's new terminal enabled to provide better services to passengers and visitors and improve customs control services.

Dushanbe is a grand intellectual centre, and its symbol of statehood and spiritual

world is embodied in the Memorial Complex of National Unity and Revival of Tajikistan with Ismoili Somoni Monument and the statues of worldwide prominent scientists and thinkers such as Abuabduullo Rudaki, Abuali ibni Sino, Abulqosim Firdavsi, Omar Khayyam, Sadriddin Ayni, Bobojon Gafurov and other celebrities. Verily, Dushanbe as a scientific and cultural center of the country has become an unprecedentedly developing and prosperous city.



One of the globally highest flagpoles with 165 meters of height is erected in Dushanbe and it is included in the Guinness World Records. One of the sight-

seeing facilities of the city is "Kohi Navruz" Complex, which embodies the national flavor of ancient and modern architecture of six thousand year history.

The city has nine museums, including the National Museum of Tajikistan, the National Museum of Antiquity, the Museum of Ethnography, Unified Memorial and Literary House, and house museums of the prominent figures of the Tajik classic and modern science and culture. Several theatres such as Abulqosim Lohuti State Academic Drama Theatre, Sadriddin Ayni State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, Mahmudjon Vohidov State Youth Theatre, State Puppet Theatre, Muhammadjon Qosimov Youth Theatre, the Model Miniatures Theatre "Oina", cinemas of "Tojikiston", "Zebunniso", "Vatan", Aka-Sharif Juraev State Philharmonic of Tajikistan, State Circus of Tajikistan and 'Ahorun' Amphitheatre glorify spiritual and cultural life in Dushanbe. They attract any newly coming visitor not only with their professional performances but also with their unique architecture.

There are 20 public libraries with a stock of 3.12 million books and publications functioning in the city. The National Library of Tajikistan is the biggest facility of this kind not only in Dushanbe but also in Central Asia as one of the most beautiful architectural sites in the region.

Another attractive point is the establishment of public squares, cultural and leisure parks in the city. Nowadays the city has more than 60 parks and squares covering an area of 1080 hectares. The cultural and leisure parks of 'Abulqosim Firdavsi', 'Sadriddin Ayni', 'Omar Khayyam', 'Ahmadi Donish', 'Nizomiddin Alisher Navoi', 'Vose', 'Youth Lake', 'Javonon', 'Rudaki', and 'Great Kurush' are favorite places of leisure for residents and visitors of the city.

Tangible social and economic achievements, stable political situation and international recognition have transformed

Dushanbe into a platform of large high-level international and regional summits.

Dushanbe enjoys twin-city relations with many cities of the world including Klagenfurt (Austria), Boulder (USA), Reutlingen (Germany), Saint-Petersburg (Russia), Tehran and Shiraz (Iran), Minsk (Belarus), Mazar-e Sharif (Afghanistan), Lahore (Pakistan), Sanaa (Yemen), Monastir (Tunis), Lusaka (Zambia), Ankara (Turkey), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Urumqi, Xiamen, Hainan and Qingdao (China).

The city of Dushanbe is the symbol of sovereign Tajikistan and the scientific and cultural centre of the ancient Tajik nation and the pride of every resident of Tajikistan, both youngsters and adults. The individuals and the institutions of Dushanbe are making every possible effort to improve the political, administrative, scientific and cultural heart of Tajikistan so that everybody could love and enjoy it.



ECO
CHRONICLE

The Ministry of Transport of Republic of Tajikistan hosted the 14th Meeting of Heads of Railway Authorities of ECO Member States/8th Railway Committee of TTCC (MHRA) which was held on 20-21 June, 2019 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The First Deputy Minister of Transport of Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Sohrab Mirzozoda the inaugurated the meeting and welcomed the delegates. Mr. Ahmad Saffari, Director for Transport and Communications of ECO Secretariat represented the Secretariat in the meeting.

Dushanbe hosts the 14th Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities

8th Railway Committee Meeting of TTCC

High level delegations from the ECO Member States updated the meeting on prospective progress on railway development at national and regional levels. Official representatives of International Organizations,

including ESCAP, IsDB, ADB, UIC, OTIF and UNECE contributed to the meeting by sharing views, suggestions and constructive proposals on the betterment of regional railway connectivity, common access, and safety.

In line with the recommendations of Turkmenbashi Declaration adopted by the 9th Meeting of Ministers of

Transport of ECO Member States, the meeting reviewed progress relating to operationalization of existing railway routes by completing rehabilitation and construction of missing links.



Along this path, the meeting noted considerable progress on railway projects: Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Azerbaijan)-Astara (Iran) and Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul. Pre-operationalization steps for the existing railway routes have been developed: (i) on KTI, the need to ensure that the implementation of the Study Project on KTI be realized timely, in line with its set schedule was highlighted and the Inter-Governmental Agreement was said to be in place for endorsing Common Management Mechanism for the route; (ii) on Istanbul-Almaty & Bandar Abbas-Almaty routes, no sharp issues were revealed for regular run of container trains and, thus, pre-operationalization plan was

agreed to be put up for endorsement by the upcoming meeting of enroute countries.

In line with recommendations of Dushanbe Communiqué (17-18 April 2018, Tajikistan), new ways of widening the ECO regional connectivity by rail were discussed by the meeting. From this stance, a new railway project "Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China" was also endorsed for implementation.

The need for transforming ECO's existing railway routes into economic spaces with structured integrated economic and free trade hubs with production sources in close proximity with supply chains so that railway services could further maximize on large scale spillover

effects of such zones has been emphasized.

The Meeting also agreed to cooperate on railway passenger transport. Prerequisite arrangements for the proposed railway transport mode were quoted by Iran, Azerbaijan and others. The passenger tourist train was said as tested in the direction of Mashhad (Iran)-Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) and those ECO countries that have an interest in improving their tourism potentials by transport means were welcomed. The participants suggested issuing ECO Railway Maps, Annual Railway Transport Statistical Year Book and compile ECO Railway Directory for the purposes of information and knowledge sharing.





Energy Sector in Tajikistan and Prospects for further Development

Energy is the main driving force of economic development of a country and ensuring the social welfare of the population. It also plays an important role in achieving environmental sustainability. The contribution that energy can provide to these three main pillars of sustainable development makes it prime driver in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which the world community believes to be the most important task for the coming years.

The contemporary world is rapidly expanding and accordingly doing so the global trends on application of energy-saving technologies and alternative energy sources based on increasing energy demand of the global economy. The global environmental developments including climate change are leading to changes in the global energy balance.

Tajikistan is a unique country with its natural and climatic conditions experiencing energy shortage in winter and looking for new markets to export its surplus energy in the summer season. Overall, Tajikistan needs

to develop its energy capacity, in particular, hydropower, introduce effective mechanisms for sustainable management and commercialization of the industry, reduce losses, increase energy conservation, electrify remote and mountainous areas and develop renewable energy sources.

Tajikistan has abundant hydropower resources estimated at 527 billion kW/h per year. Prospective hydropower resources in technical terms constitute 317 billion KW/h per year, and only 4-5% of this potential is currently used. In the world, Tajikistan ranks eighth after China, Russia, USA, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, India and Canada, and the first in Central Asia in terms of hydropower potential. Tajikistan's hydropower potential is three times higher than the current electricity consumption in the entire Central Asian Region. Effective utilization of these resources would supply the region with affordable and clean energy. The country's hydropower potential is mainly concentrated in the river basins of Vakhsh, Panj, Amu Daryo, Kofarnihon and Zarafshon.



The availability of large hydropower resources set out the agenda of power development in Tajikistan via construction of hydropower plants. The largest hydropower plants include Norak, which is located in Vakhsh River with an installed capacity of 3000 MW (1972-1979) and average annual power generation of 11.2 billion kW/h, and Boyghozi (1988) with 600 MW of installed capacity and average annual power generation of 2.5 billion kW/h. The Vakhsh River cascade includes a range of plants totaling 285 MW (1962), Varzob River cascade - 25 MW (1936-1949), Syrdaryo River - Kayrokum HPP with an installed capacity of 126 MW (1956) and Khorugh and Pomir HPPs with installed capacity of 36.7 MW (1971-1973) located in the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region. At present, the total installed capacity of Tajikistan's power system accounts for 6,483 MW.

Energy security is also one of the four strategic objectives of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. Consequently, the highest priority has been given to the power sector development after the independence of Tajikistan. During this period, significant investments amounting to about 2.6 billion US dollars have been raised within 29 large and medium projects on generation, transmission, and improvement of energy supply services. In this context, the joint Tajik-Russian project of Sangtuda-1 HPP with the capacity of 670 MW (698.72 million US dollars), Tajik-Iranian



facility of Sangtuda-2 HPP with the capacity of 220 MW (358.89 million US dollars), South-North power systems connection and construction of second phase of Dushanbe CHP-2 supported by China's ExImbank substantively contributed to the power sector development. The contribution of other developments institutions such as the ADB, World Bank, EBRD, IsDB, KfW, Arab Development Funds and others helped to substitute the winter energy shortage and secured a more sustained power system operation. This effort resulted in the increased generation capacities by 1320 MW, commissioning of three 500 kV and nine 220 kV substations as well as the construction of 461.8 km of 500 kV and 675.8 km of 220 kV power transmission lines.

Several major substations, high, medium and low voltage electrical networks were also rehabilitated and a metering system was intro-



duced. These projects not only improved the quality and reliability of power supply, but also made a significant contribution to establishing the unified power grid of Tajikistan, and substantially reduced the winter energy shortage that the country has been experiencing annually over the past decades. Since the initial years of independence, the energy shortage was completely removed for the first time during the autumn-winter period of 2017-2018.

Currently, seven investment projects with a total investment of 1.1 billion US dollars are ongoing and tender for six other projects amounting to 325.7 million US dollars is in the process. The energy sector has two operators, Joint-stock Holding Company Barqi Tojik (Tajik Electricity) and JSC Pamir Energy. The Barqi Tojik is a monopolist and responsible for the major part of generation, transmission,

and distribution. The company has 24 joint-stock energy facilities, ten of which are operating as distribution companies. The Pamir Energy' as the second operator supplies the customers in Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region. The company was established within the framework of the Concession Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and JSC 'Pamir Energy'. Under this agreement, the Government of Tajikistan transferred energy assets located in the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region on concession for a period of 25 years. UNECE included this project to the list of top PPP projects in 2016 for effective management and achievement of the SDGs. Pamir Energy also won the "2017 International Ashden Award" for its work bringing clean, reliable and affordable hydroelectric power to the population of the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region and neighboring Afghanistan.

Investment in this sector is facilitated by several factors primarily considering its role in socio-economic development, huge capacity as well as investment attractiveness with a quick return of capital costs and revenue generation.

Tajikistan is progressively developing the regional electricity market. In 2019, it exported more than 2.9 billion kW/h of electricity to neighboring countries. In this regard, the electricity transport corridor between energy excessive countries of Central Asia and energy

deficit countries of South Asia found to be a beneficial project by international experts. The implementation of CASA-1000 regional electricity transmission project is a particular case. The transmission line with the total length of 800km will be installed starting from Sangtuda site (Tajikistan) to Nowshera (Pakistan) through the Afghan territory. The co-financing by the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, USAID and DFID will support necessary project infrastructure. The volume of electricity available for exportation from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan within the project estimates for about 5 billion kW/h. seasonally.

CASA-1000, a unique project in the region, is expected to serve as a catalyst in the chain of projects aimed at long-term and stable economic growth in the region. The CASA-1000 is of a simple structure - transmission of seasonal surplus electricity during summer to the system with a high demand in energy. The project also has a strong economic component and is designed to facilitate addressing global environmental challenges since Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan would supply the region with clean and green energy.

Besides, in the context of regional cooperation, ADB is helping Tajikistan to develop a regional electricity market. Reconnection to the Central Asian Power System Project (CAPS) is intended to provide the necessary infrastructure to achieve a full parallel operation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's electricity grids, meaning the reconnection of Tajikistan to the wider CAPS via Uzbekistan. An interconnected power system in Central Asia will benefit all countries, optimize power use, enhance the regional energy efficiency, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, special attention is also given to energy savings and the development of renewable energy sources. The country adopted the Law on energy efficiency, and institutional capacity development activities are in progress.

Tajikistan also adopted its National Development Strategy to 2030 (NDS-2030) focusing on four strategic development goals: 1) energy security and efficient use of energy, 2) country's connectivity and transform it to a transit country, 3) food security and access of the population to proper nutrition, and 4) industrialization and innovative development of the national economy.

The NDS-2030 particularly sets forth the power sector indicators of 10/10/10/10-500, which means increase of installed capacity of the power system up to 10 GW, reduction of technical and commercial losses in distribution networks to 10%, increase energy export up to 10 billion kW/h, power generation diversification for 10% as well as generation and energy savings of more than 500 million kW/h from renewable energy sources and application of energy-efficient technologies.

The Government has also initiated the energy sector reform with the support of the Asian Development Bank with a focus on the establishment of an independent power regulator. The project will facilitate the unbundling process of JSC 'Barqi Tojik' to separate entities for generation, transmission, and distribution. The designed restructuring would be favorable for establishing the renewable energy market and mobilizing private investments for their further development.

Given the existing favorable environment, investing in the power sector of Tajikistan is attractive and sustainable due to several factors such as direct support of public organizations and huge demand for energy domestically and beyond. Various cooperation tools are being used in the power sector to collaborate with entrepreneurs and investors like 'build-operate-transfer', 'concession agreement', 'public-private partnership', 'production sharing agreement' and so on. Overall, the aforementioned and many other factors make the Tajik power sector attractive for investments.



Development of Tourism Sector in Tajikistan

Dushanbe as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2020-2021

The city of Dushanbe was selected as the ECO tourism capital for the years 2020-2021 by the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism held on 2-3 October 2019 in Khujand.

Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, has become a venue for high-level international, scientific, cultural and

political events, which introduced the city to the world community as a tourism brand of Tajikistan.

Currently Tajikistan is making its initial and steady steps in the development of the tourism sector. In this process, it is very important to study the international experience and to promote the country's tourism potential.

"Selection of Dushanbe as the ECO tourism capital for the





years 2020-2021 is the fruit of the wise and constructive policy pursued by the Founder of Peace and National Unity, the Leader of the Nation, President of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon and the landscaping and infrastructure development activities under the leadership of Dushanbe city's Mayor Rustami Emomali, which have been turning the capital city into an entertainment tourism destination.

This initiative has been facilitating the development of tourism, improvement and promotion of historical sites, antiquity and architecture sites, medical treatment and other facilities in the capital city".

Some 40 hotels in Dushanbe offer services to the capital residents as well as domestic and foreign visitors. Additionally, cultural and leisure parks and colorful fountains in the centre of the capital have become places of recreation and festivities for residents and visitors. Today, every visi-

tor of the Tajik capital enjoys the sites of Dushanbe, its cozy and neat streets, flower parks erected in a modern and national style, and feels that Dushanbe has truly turned into a dream city.

The Strategy for Tourism Development in the Republic of Tajikistan to 2030 highlights Tajikistan's membership in international organizations, reputable world tourism organizations and its participation in international exhibitions as an important issue for the country's integration into the world tourism market. Dushanbe city was acceded by the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) at the World Tourism Federation Summit in Qingdao, China in 2018.

An international airport, a modern railway station, 40 hotels, 75 grand restaurants mostly serving wedding parties and large celebrations, 113 cafes with cuisine of different nationalities, 26 entertainment centres, 224 cafes with dominated national

cuisine, 4 national teahouses, 17 parks, 26 souvenir shops, 4 swimming and recreational lakes, 23 ancient monuments, 59 medical and preventive facilities, 40 banking service points, 17 lodges, 73 libraries and museums are operative in Dushanbe and they meet the everyday needs of hundreds of domestic and foreign visitors.

Dushanbe Central Mosque

The largest in Central Asia Dushanbe Central Mosque is located in the heart of the city. The Mosque is designed to accommodate up to 120,000 prayers. Tajikistan is now home to the Central Asian largest mosque.

2019-2021-A Period of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts - a New Phase in Tajikistan's Advancement



With a view to reviving the folk crafts and developing tourism in Tajikistan, the Founder of the National Unity and Peace, the Leader of the Nation, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon proclaimed the year 2018 as the Year of development of tourism and folk arts

in the country. One year after, President Rahmon in his Address to the Parliament of Tajikistan proposed to proclaim the years 2019-2021 as the period of devel-



opment of rural areas, tourism and folk arts. Both the Parliament and the people of Tajikistan welcomed this constructive initiative.

While proclaiming the year 2018 as the Year of development of rural areas and folk arts was the symbol of appreciating the crafts and craftsmen and the globally prominent history and civilization of the Tajik nation by the State of Tajikistan, and particularly by the

as development and expansion of tourism. Originally, the objective from proclaiming the Period of development of rural areas, tourism and folk arts is to create new jobs, encourage the young generation to arts and crafts activities, introduce the ancient history and civilization of the Tajik nation to the world and create favorable environment for every resident of Tajikistan to have a decent life.

It should be noted that all the initiatives of the Leader of the Nation during the years of independence have given impetus to the development of Tajikistan and improve the living standards of its people. Hence, in the light of this vital initiative, the people of the country have become more creative and have taken firm steps towards achieving the great national aspirations. At the initiative of the Leader of the Nation, folk artisans are exempt from all taxes and fees, which has become a driver to the development of folk crafts, the development of private entrepreneurship and family business, as well as improvement of the population's living standards.

President Rahmon, proclaiming the years 2019-2021 as the Period of development of rural areas, tourism and folk arts is a unique initiative to guide the society towards enlightenment, and new creations and development.

No doubt that this initiative of the Leader of the Nation would definitely promote the revival of folk arts, development of different types of crafts as well

Within this initiative, Tajikistan implemented projects that have contributed to the revival and development of various folk crafts and attracting other nations, especially foreign tourists from near and far, to the works of artisans in the country, the cultural heritage and historical sites of the civilization-forming Tajik nation. In a very short period of time, the country's rural areas have experi-



enced positive changes, most of the handicrafts that were lost or were on the verge of extinction, have been revived, and tourism, which is one of the most lucrative industries in Tajikistan today, significantly developed and expanded. Thousands of people of all ages and professions have been provided with permanent jobs.

The creative initiatives of the Leader of the Nation made it possible for the Tajik society to make a significant progress and achievements in various fields, and to improve the reputation of the Tajik state and nation in the international arena. The revival and development of folk crafts has been central for the State and the Government of Tajikistan. Several tourism companies have launched their effective activities in the cities and districts of the country with the initiative and support of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and local authorities. The Period of development of rural areas, tourism and folk crafts also facilitated commissioning dozens of modern hotels in line with international standards, erecting recreation and treatment centres with the necessary facilities for leisure of tourists and foreign visitors in various towns and districts, as well as renovating and rehabilitating roads and bringing them in line with international standards.

On the occasion of the Period of development of rural areas, tourism and folk crafts, at the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, series of festivals and competitions in the capital and other cities and

districts of the country have become a tradition. Jewelry Festival "Learn Crafts", National Festival "Chakomai Gesu" (Chant on Swirl), Festival of Folk Crafts "Crafts are Better than Jewelry", Festival "Hundred Colors of Chakan" (embroidery), National Festival "Atlas and Adras" National Festival "Oshi Palov" (Pilav), National Festival "Effulgence of Colors": national and modern costumes, Festival of national dishes, National competitions "Stone Decorative Crafts", "Tulip and Flower



Tour", "Dastarkhanoroi" (The best food table design), "Best Cook", "Wood carving, Plaster Work, Mirror Work and Kundal making", "Coppersmithing and Blacksmithing", "Pottery, Carpentry and Basket Weaving", "Appreciation of Bread by All" and other activities were held at a high level. Holding such competitions and festivals, on the one hand, promotes the development of folk crafts, on the other hand, can educate the younger



generation in the spirit of beauty, self-awareness and pride with their civilization-forming nation.

The objective of arranging various cultural events was to facilitate sustainable development of folk arts, attract tourists to historical and cultural sites and to promote the good traditions of our ancestors. During the last two years dozens of shops of folk handicrafts, workshops for production of atlas and adras, as well as sewing and weaving enterprises manufacturing products in line with the current requirement were launched and have been successfully operative in several cities and districts of the country, including Khujand,



Istaravshan, Panjakent, Konibodom, Guliston, Buston, Isfara, Khorog, Bokhtar, Kulob, Tursunzoda, Hisor, Vahtat, Rogun, Mastchoh, Rushon, Ishkoshim, Shughnon, Bobojon Ghafurov, Mir Said Ali

Hamadoni, Varzob, Rasht, Faizobod, Shahrituz, Panj and Vose. Indeed, the better the product, the more it is demanded. Realizing this point, the owners of these facilities make efforts to equip their enterprises with the latest machines.

Every single resident of Tajikistan is proud that Chakan embroidery was inscribed on UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in the Year of tourism and folk crafts with a valuable contribution by scholars from the State

Enterprise "Scientific and Research Institute of Culture and Information" of the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan in arrangement of documents on this case. On the occasion of this cultural achievement, the National Festival "Hundred Colors of Chakan" and the National Festival "Effulgence of Chakan" were held at the initiative of the Dushanbe City Municipality in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies.

With a view to further developing the tourism industry, in accordance with the instructions of the Leader of the Nation, the relevant government agencies have introduced a simplified electronic visa system for citizens of more than 80

countries, and exempted the importation of equipment and construction materials designated for construction of tourism facilities from customs duties and taxes and exempted brand-new tourism companies from corporate income tax for the first five years of their operation.

All these incentives can contribute to the significant development of tourism and increase the number of tourists visiting Tajikistan.

We, Tajiks, are proud of the fact that the ancient and civi-

lization-forming Tajik nation has made a valuable contribution to the development of human civilization by creating its invaluable and lasting heritage. Noble and life-changing initiatives of the Leader



of the Tajik nation also testimony the creative native and advanced culture this nation. It is these creative and civilization-forming initiatives that have led to the fact that today Tajikistan has deserved its decent rank in the international arena, was recognized as one of the top five countries with the simplest visa regime, ranked among the 10 most attractive countries for tourism was ranked the second country with a rapidly growing tourism in the world.



Today Tajikistan is one of the safest countries in the world. Its capital city - Dushanbe - among the world's ten safest cities for night walking.

E-visa System

Tajikistan introduced e-visa system for foreign citizens in June 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan electronically processes and approves the electronic visa.

After the application is reviewed and a decision is made in favor of applicant, the electronic visa (A4 format) is sent to the applicant via his/her e-mail address.

The service receiver needs to print out the electronic visa and take it together with his/her travel documents.

The consular fee for the review of an electronic visa application is received via international electronic payments systems such as Visa, Master Card, American Express and Union Pay.

With a view to creating modern facilities for training, further improving the investment climate and encouraging foreign investors investing more than 1 million USD into the economy of Tajikistan, the Tajik Government offers five-year multi-entry visas to foreign investors.

Within the initiative on development of rural areas, tourism and folk crafts and with a view to attracting greater number of tourists, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan offers the citizens of the countries entitled to simplified Tajik visa multi-entry tourist visas and extended the validity of such a visa to 60 days.

Tajikistan hosted the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism



ECO CHRONICLE The 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism proceeded by the 5th High Level Experts Group (HLEG) on Tourism was held on October 3-4, 2019 in Tajikistan's second-largest city of Khujand.

The meeting was hosted by the Committee of Tourism Development of the Republic of Tajikistan with the presence of delegations from the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Uzbekistan. In his opening statement ECO

Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour underscored the importance of tourism and its sustainable development within the region.

The tourism industry has gained a very positive attention from the Member States and has become a priority development field for the coming decade, he said. The Secretary General drew attention to the fact that the development of the tourism industry throughout the region needs intra regional international connectivity through all modes of transportation.

This could ensure comfortable, cheaper, more accessible and secure travel in

ECO Region, Dr. Soleimanpour said.

The session was inaugurated by the Governor of Tajikistan's Sughd Province, Rajabboy Ahmadzoda, who highlighted the potentials and progress of the Republic of Tajikistan in Tourism Sector and the importance of knowledge sharing events in support of mutually beneficial cooperation among the Member States.

The Chairman of Tajikistan's Committee of Tourism Development and chairman of the session, Numon Abdughafforzoda highlighted the achievement of the Republic of Tajikistan during the past few years and proposed the inception of a special ECO-tourism investment chain between

Member States which could attract investment in the tourism infrastructure including roads, hotels and hostels.



The meeting adopted the ECO Principles for Sustainable Tourism Development in ECO Region and the ECO Tourism Plan of Action. It also designated Tajikistan's city of Dushanbe as ECO Tourism Capital for 2020-2021 and the Iranian cities of Sari and Ardabil for the years 2022 and 2023 respectively.

The 4th and 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism will be hosted by The Republic of Uzbekistan and Islamic Republic of Iran respectively in 2020 and 2022.



Intensive industrialization in Tajikistan

as a fourth National Strategic Goal



With a view to implementing the Government's efforts to achieve further prosperity of Tajikistan and given the importance of the industry in addressing socio-economic issues and creating new jobs, the Founder of Peace and National Unity, the Leader of the Nation, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, in his Address to the Majlisi Oli (Parliament) of the Republic of Tajikistan on December 26, 2018,

announced the intensive industrialization of the country as the fourth national goal.

To achieve this goal, a draft plan of administrative and technical actions on industrial development is being developed.

The country's industrialists take as their primary task this noble initiative of the Head of State on promotion of sustainable industrial and innovative development of the country addressed to the Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan.

This initiative of the President of Tajikistan on transformation of Tajikistan into an industrial country (the fourth strategic goal) is a logical and bold step in the

context of current global trends of development, globalization of all aspects of society's activities, given the efforts of advanced countries to develop the markets of goods and product as well as the interests of consumer countries.

Two main factors - the source of energy and the smooth operation of the transport infrastructure - are crucial for the country's industrialization. Luckily, two of the three strategic goals set for the Government ensure these factors and provide a solid foundation for the achievement of the fourth goal. In announcing the fourth objective, we expressly feel the smart logical policy pursued by the Leader of the Nation to transform Tajikistan into an advanced economy.



The industry of Tajikistan is in its revival period now. Further investments, introduction of new technologies, development of national scientific and technical capacity, elimination of barriers between science and production, mobilization and implementation of advanced foreign technologies, formation and improvement of structure and infrastructure, and modernization of fixed assets in the industry will lead to new growth rates.

The industrialization of the country, first of all, requires having qualified and experienced engineering and technical specialists. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the physical infrastructure

of universities that are able to train highly qualified professionals.

Currently, the industry of Tajikistan covers more than 90 areas of processing, extraction and production, and in 2019, the country manufactured products worth more than TJS 27billion, while its growth rate reached 114.4% compared to 2018. In 2019, the volume of manufacturing products amounted to TJS 15 927,400,000 and it grew by TJS 2,407,400,000 or 117.9% compared to 2018.

Tajikistan has a huge potential for the production of high-quality industrial goods and services, increasing exports and gaining a decent position in the global market of goods and services. Last year the country has exported goods amounting TJS 11,379,900,000 (USD 1,174,400,000), which is more by TJS 979,600,000 (USD 101,100,000) or 109.4% than in 2018.

One of the most important areas in the country's industrialization process is the constant increase in the share of the processing sector in the structure of industrial production.

In order to ensure sustainable growth of the national economy, the number of industrial enterprises is increasing and production is being adjusted depending on the availability of raw materials and market demand. In this regard, it is important to note that Tajikistan has abundant resources of raw material in the mining,

construction materials, food, garment and cocoon industry, as well as automotive and coal industries. Ensuring production of high-quality competitive products in line with international standards through adequate use of these resources and introduction of the latest technologies would make it possible to transform the country from an agro-industrial to an industrial-agrarian economy in the nearest future.

In 2019, industrial production had identical indicators, the country exported 96 800 tons of

pipes and metal profiles, 26 tractors, 2620.4 tons aluminum fluoride, and 356.6 m2 of decorative stones.

The main factors for achieving this goal are the introduction and use of the latest innovative technologies, improvement of the professionalism of entrepreneurs and their management, the introduction of up-to-date methods of quality management and training.

Efficient and quality implementation of adopted programs and investment projects, and increasing the share of the industry in the country's GDP, (in 2019 it was increased to 17.4%, and there are plans to rise it to 22.0% by 2030) is identified as a key objective in achieving the fourth national goal -



primary aluminum, 360.300 tons of refined ores, 1 537 300 tons of cement, 18 200 tons of coal, 2300 tons of salt, 18 500 tons of cotton yarn, 3 900 tons of leather, 273 tons of canned fruits and vegetables, 545 tons of fruit juice, 94 100 tons of cotton fiber, 125.6 tons of paint, 399 600 pieces of drywall, garments worth of TJS 156.8 million, 1439.3 tons of aluminum profiles, 542.4 tons of

intensive industrialization of the country.

In particular, President Rahmon announced the intensive industrialization of the country as the fourth national strategic goal and initiated two-year moratorium on inspections of manufacturing businesses, which will lay a favorable foundation for the industrial development and its positive contribution to the country's economy.

Economic reforms aimed at improving the investment and business climate in the country have made it possible to keep the country's macroeco-

conomic indicators stable over the past ten years and ensure real growth at the average rate of 7 percent.

In order to create favorable environment for entrepreneurs, the Tajik Government annually implements important reforms in various areas of the economy, including simplifying the procedures for registering business entities, protecting and supporting entrepreneurs and investors, improving the tax system, simplifying business audits and conducting comprehensive reforms. Moreover, the Tax Code of the Republic of Tajikistan exempts from customs duties and value added tax the importation of goods for personal needs by the brand new enterprises engaged in the full range of processing of cotton fiber and manufacturing of final products. In order to support cotton-processing enterprises, the amendments incorporated into the Tax Code of the Republic of Tajikistan removed the tax for cotton fiber sale within the country and the Tajik Government resolution set 10% export duty in January 2017. The incentives offered to the cotton processing sector attracted foreign investment and laid the foundation for increased cotton processing in the country.

Additionally, relevant Tajik Government resolutions set reduced export duties to promote processing of leather and cocoon within the country in order to avoid their export as raw materials.

Industrial development is also being achieved through sectorial programmes, including the "Concept Framework for the development of the coal industry in the Republic of Tajikistan to 2040", "Programme for the development of non-ferrous and ferrous metallurgy in the Republic of Tajikistan to 2025", "Programme for the development of garment industry in the Republic of Tajikistan to 2022", "Programme for development of food industry of the Republic of Tajikistan (2020-2025)", "Programme for development of sericulture and cocoon production in the Republic of Tajikistan (2012-2020)" and "Programme for development of weaving in the Republic of Tajikistan (2014 - 2020)". These programmes will facilitate increase production, ensure its competitiveness, create new enterprises and workshops with created jobs, addressing social issues in the country and lay the foundation for the transition of the economy from a producer of raw materials to a manufacturer of final products.

The country has been increasingly introducing the latest technologies, which is making it possible to increase the volume of import-substituting products and promoting supply of the national market with domestic industrial products. For example, new import-substituting industrial products such as polypropylene yarn, non-woven silk fabric, polyethylene yarn, medical cotton, cotton balls, screws, mats, various brackets, rubber tracks, dry towels and cotton yarn were introduced in 2019.

The industrialization process has expanded and now encompasses the use of new modern technologies, and last year about one billion Tajik Somoni of domestic and foreign investment were mobilized to create new industries, import new technological equipment and expand industrial production capacities. Thus, TJS 12m were invested in the construction materials industry, TJS 68 400,000 in the garment and silk industries, TJS 56,400,000 in the coal industry, TJS 166,000,000 in the food industry, TJS 537,700,000 in the mining and metallurgy, TJS 63,200,000 in the machine building industry, and TJS 42,800,000 in in other industries for introduction of technologies and equipment.

The widespread use of modern technologies, increased volume of import-substituting products, supply of the market with competitive domestic products, strengthening the country's export capacity and creation of new jobs will further stimulate the country's industrialists to avail the existing resources.



Republic of Tajikistan

Key Statistics and Economic Indicators

Tajikistan with total area of 141.400 km² is located in the southeast Central Asia. The capital of the Republic of Tajikistan is Dushanbe. Tajikistan borders with Uzbekistan (910 km) and Kyrgyzstan (630 km) in the west and the north, Afghanistan in the south (1030 km), and China in the east (430 km). The total length of its borders is 3000 km.

■ Tajikistan is a mountainous country with an absolute altitude of 300 to 7495 metres. Some 93 percent of the country's territory is covered by mountains belonging to the highest in Central Asia Tien Shan and the Pamir ranges. Its climate is subtropical.

The temperature in the country ranges from +22 (in the Panj district) to - 61 (in Bulunkul Lake) in January, and from - 8 (in Bulunkul Lake) to +49 (in Panj District) in July.

■ Tajikistan ranks the second among the CIS

countries, after Russia in terms of water resources, the main source of which are glaciers. The Pamirs is the largest glacier chain with a total area of 8041 km² in the CIS region. Some 1085 glaciers in the Pamirs are registered.

■ Tajikistan has a vast number of lakes, the water level of which covers 1005 km² or about 1% of the country's territory. The area of 22 lakes covers 625 km². The lakes of Karakul and Sarez are the biggest in Tajikistan. The main rivers are the Syrdaryo, Amudaryo and Zarafshon rivers. Tajikistan's ecosystem also includes desert, steppe, highland and meadow.

'Varzob', 'Qayroqqum', 'Sarband', 'Norak', 'Boyghozi', 'Sangtuda-1' and 'Sangtuda-2' hydropower plants are the major electricity generators in the country.

■ Tajikistan's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 amounted to TJS 77,354,700 with the growth rate of 107.5% based on preliminary estimates. The nominal GDP increased by TJS 8,510,700 compared to the same period of the last year thanks to the 28.5% of value added in the agriculture, 24.9% in the industry, 17.4% in the hotel and restaurant business, and 9% in other public services.

■ In 2019, the industrial enterprises jointly with private businesses have reached TJS 27586.6mln and increased by 13.6% as compared to 2018 (in comparable prices). The main drivers of industrial development were the 16.2% of increase in processing industry output,

12.6% in the mining industry, 5.3% in the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning, and 9.1% in the water supply, cleaning, waste recycling and accessible secondary products.

■ The gross agricultural output in 2019 by all categories of farms made



TJS 27,750,400 with an increase by 7.1% in comparable prices in comparison with 2018, including increased crop production by TJS 19,279,700 or 7.8% and cattle breeding by TJS 8,470,700 or by 5.7 percent.

■ As of 1 January 2020, the number of cattle in farms of all categories was 2,358,300 (increasing by 33,300 or 1.4% as compared to the similar date of the previous year). Number of sheep and goats increased by 69,900 heads or 1.2%, amounting to 5,671,800.

■ The fishery products in January-December 2019 were of TJS 51,200,000 that in compari-

son with the similar period of the last year increased by 31.2%. The yield of fisheries amounted to 2749.3 tons, which is 32.1% more than in the corresponding period of 2018.

put into operation, which is 124.2% to the corresponding period of the last year.

During this period, 94 general secondary schools for 21.706 students, 81 medical centres with 1,059 beds, and 7 hospitals with 469 beds were put into operation.

■ As of December 2019, enterprises of all types of ownership registered 1,201,400 persons or 51.5% of the total number of employed people in their list of hired employees. The average monthly nominal salary of hired employees in December 2019 was TJS 1503.3, which is 10.8% higher than it was in November 2019 and 3.3% more against

■ In January - December 2019, TJS 12140.3mln of investments into fixed capital from all sources of financing were implemented and in comparison with the similar period of the last year they increased by 93.7% (in comparable prices).

■ In total, 1364.5 thousand square meters of housing were

December 2018 respectively. The minimum salary amounted to TJS 400.

Based on the number of births, deaths and migration, the number of population (according to preliminary estimates) was 9 316 800 people as of January 1, 2020 and increased by 2.1% compared to the same time in 2019. The provinces had the following number of population: Khatlon - 3,350,000, Soughd - 2,705,500, Republican subordination districts - 2,169,300,





Dushanbe City - 900,000, Badakhshon Mountainous Autonomous Province - 229,000.

■ The foreign trade turnover of the Republic of Tajikistan in January - December 2019 valued USD 4523.7mln (or 7.1%) compared to January - December 2018 (or USD 299.4mln). The trade balance was positive and amounted to USD 2174.9mln.

■ Exportation of goods in January-December 2019 amounted to USD 1174.4mln. (or 9.4%) compared to January - December 2018 or USD 101.1mln. Importation of goods amounted to USD 3349.3mln (or 6.3%) compared to January - December 2018.

■ Tajikistan's main export partners are Turkey - 19.9% of total exports, Switzerland - 19.2%, Kazakhstan - 18.6%, Uzbekistan - 14.6%, Afghanistan - 8.3%, China. - 4.7%, Russia - 3.8%, Belgium - 1.8%, Iran - 1.5%, Kyrgyzstan and Latvia - by 1.0%, Italy and Pakistan - by 0.9%, the Netherlands and the Virgin Islands - by 0.6% and so on.

■ The country mainly imported goods from the following countries: Russia (30.1%), Kazakhstan (22.1%), China (18.1%), Uzbekistan (5.7%), Turkey (4.3%), Germany (2.3%), USA (2.2%), Japan (2.0%), Pakistan and Iran (1.4%), Kyrgyzstan (1.3%), Ukraine (1.1%), Italy and the Republic of Korea (1.0%), Belarus (0.9%), India (0.7%), and UAE (0.6%).

■ In the foreign trade transactions, the export of Tajik prod-



ucts against the import increased with Switzerland (USD 216.2m), Afghanistan (USD 97.7m), Turkey (USD 90.3m), Belgium (USD 13.8m), Latvia (USD 11.6m) and the Virgin Islands (USD 6.5m).



Interview with Ambassador

Nizomiddin Zohidi, Tajikistan's Permanent Representative to ECO

■ Thank you Mr. Ambassador for speaking with the ECO Chronicle. I would like to take your view about the role of the economic organizations for promotion of coopera-

tion between countries in the region?

Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to share my views with ECO Chronicle. Economic regionalism and intra-regional interactions has been promoted for achieving socioeconomic

development during the last decades. These two interrelated concepts help to attain a win-win situation for the trading countries. Regional trade agreements bring improvements in the socio-

economic settings of the member countries as well as at the world at large. Intra-regional trade is beneficial for the countries, because of least cost in terms of transportation along with comparative advantage in terms of the production of specific commodities. However, various constraints limit the actual gains and expansion in trade.

One of the main constraints is the lack of proper infrastructure. Over the past three decades, resurgence of this is accomplished by gradual removal of barriers to mutual trade in goods and services through the dialogue and negotiations on the aspect of free trade, custom union or other preferential trade agreements. Economic regionalism focuses on the collaboration of organizations, governments, and businesses within a multijurisdictional economic region.

The waves of globalization and liberalization have further made it obligatory for all the states to strengthen their regional economic inter-linkages. In such a changing global scenario the economic challenges have become a dynamic policy issue for both developed and developing states. Presently the economic cooperation, whether bilateral, or regional has

become vital for the socio-economic development of the state and economic organization, which integrates all countries of our vast region is the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

■ **Excellency, since its inception in 1985 what has been, in your opinion, the main achievements of the ECO in 35 year experience?**

The ECO has completed 35 years of existence. Although it's not a long period for a regional cooperation to establish its worth in promoting regional cooperation and solidarity, however, during these years, organization has "widened" as well as "deepened".

The widened aspect shows that it has enlarged its membership from three to ten countries. The ECO gained observer status at the UNO, OIC and other international organizations since 1993. ECO has emerged as a reliable regional organization and has signed more than forty MoUs with different international and regional organizations and continues to have very close working relationship with UN and its affiliated bodies.

It has also established vibrant ties with many regional organizations such as SAARC, ASEAN, OIC, Colombo Plan and EU. It has also increased its activities

and institutional set-up as deepened aspect.

The organization has marvelous potential for mutual advantage of the member countries of the region. Due to geostrategic position, its global stature and power is growing.

■ **Excellency, what kind of progress was gained after involving the rest 7 countries into ECO membership?**

The major objective of ECO is to provide steady development and prosperity, and, based on this, enhancement of living standards of our nations. ECO was established in 1985, as an intergovernmental regional organization by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical, financial and cultural cooperation among the member states.

In 1992, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan became members of ECO, thus turning it into a major regional structure with immense economic potential. Before the beginning of 1992 the interaction between ECO members was mainly limited to bilateral

relations and with membership of seven new members in 1992 the activities of the ECO were largely extended.

With a total territory of almost 8 million sq. km and a population of more than 500 million, vast supplies of raw minerals and various other natural resources, and a high transport-transit potential, this Organization has the necessary prerequisites for dynamic economic interaction among its member states. These ten countries are characterized by common religion, culture, historical and economic affinities. External relations of ECO and its member states help in economic integration with the global market.

The most strategic significance of this region lies in the fact that it contains the biggest reserve of oil, natural gas and mineral resources.

Due to geo-strategic position and rich in energy resources it has a potential to serve as an engine for world economic growth in the future.

Globalization and liberalization has further emphasized upon establishing strong regional linkages. The establishment of ECO is a significant development in regional cooperation and a recent

phenomenon in comparison to many other regions of the world.

■ **Please tell us about significance of ECO for the regional cooperation of Tajikistan?**

Tajikistan has maintained good bilateral political, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations with all ECO member states since independence, and today these relations are gaining a new level and quality. Along with bilateral relations, we pay great attention to the development of multilateral cooperation in the framework of the ECO, and we see the ECO as an effective tool in regional cooperation for the purpose of trade and economic development between member countries, implementation of regional transport, communications and energy projects, removal of obstacles in unimpeded movement of goods and people in the region, joint solution of various problems in the region and mutual assistance in improving the living standards of the peoples of our countries.

Modern-day global threats, including the Covid-19 pandemic, have proved once again that countries can counter and overcome such threats only through joint efforts and consolidation of their capabilities. International and regional organizations, including the

ECO, today play an important role in mobilizing the forces and capabilities of the world and the region against global threats. In this context Tajikistan attaches great importance to its membership in the ECO and seeks to contribute to all aspects of the ECO's activities.

In confirmation of this statement, I would like to note that my country, in addition to the current activities of the ECO, is constantly active in hosting high-level meetings of the organization, various sectoral meetings at the ministerial and expert level.

In particular, Dushanbe hosted the the 8th Summit meeting of Heads of the ECO member states on September 14, 2004, which was chaired by the President of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon and during that Heads of delegations emphasized the importance of steady cooperation of the ECO member states in all priority spheres of economy and expressed their support to the further development of cooperation for achievement of economic prosperity of the region and successful integration into the system of the global economy at this meeting. As a result of the 8th ECO Meeting, Dushanbe Declaration 2004 was adopt-

ed. Moreover, the Eleventh (May 4, 2001), Fourteenth (September 12, 2004) and Twenty third (April 17, 2018) meetings of the Council of Ministers of ECO was hosted by Tajikistan in beautiful Dushanbe city. Each of these meetings played an impor-

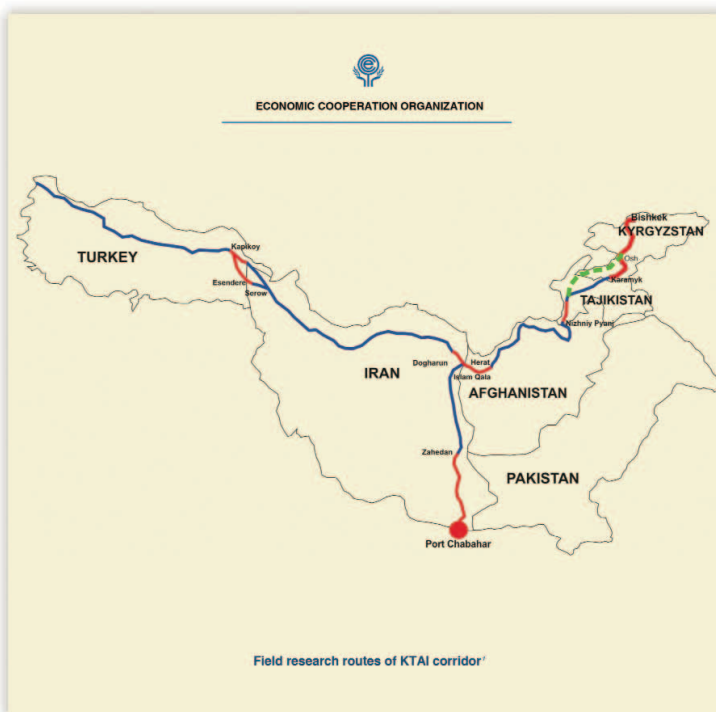
tion, were Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Rail and Road Corridors. KTAI Corridor was established as a shortcut for transiting goods from Iran's southern ports to Central Asian countries including Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The corridor was launched by IRICA in collaboration with the International

savings when transporting goods.

■ Excellency, what are the main initiatives of Tajikistan within the ECO region?

The implementation of the high-voltage electricity transmission line CASA-1000, which is acknowledged to be the first energy bridge between South and Central Asia, is one of the important initiatives within the ECO region. Construction activities of this project officially launched in Dushanbe on May 2016, with participation of the Heads of State and Government of the project countries namely Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. We hope that this strategic project will make it possible to connect the energy grids of the countries of the two regions and promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 7 - ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Hydropower plants make the core of the energy sector in Tajikistan, which generates 98% of power in our country with the use of renewable energy sources. Tajikistan is among the top six countries



tant role in promoting the activities of the ECO.

One of the important initiatives developed within the framework of ECO and adopted by the Council in Dushanbe Communiqué contributing to inter-regional connectivity and coopera-

Road Transport Union (IRU), and ECO under the framework of the TIR Convention (Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets) on July 26, 2020. This new route opens up the region to trade and development and will enable freight forwarders and transport operators to benefit from significant cost and time

of the world in terms of "green energy" generation and it is ranked as one of the countries with huge hydropower resources. The hydropower potential of the country is 527bn kw/hours of environmentally friendly electricity per year of which



we currently use only five percent. This is despite the fact that the ECO wider region's energy market demands for energy are continuously growing.

Tajikistan has a favorable

climate, beautiful nature with unique landscapes and many historical and civilizational sites attracting tourists. Given these opportunities, the Government of Tajikistan has been developing and implementing specific public programs on tourism development. In this regard, 2019-2021 were declared as the Period of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts in Tajikistan. This year was adopted "Tourism Development Strategy to 2030" and promoted the tourism advantages of Tajikistan. Within these programs we envisage a number of privileges and benefits in the tourism sector, including for import of equipment and other materials for development of tourism infrastructure.

There is no doubt that expansion of cooperation between the ECO member states in this area would serve as another influential factor for sustainable development of our countries and as an effective tool for strengthening people-to-people ties.

United Nations General Assembly adopted its resolution entitled "International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028) at the initiative of Tajikistan and the proactive support of the ECO member states. We believe that the ECO will proactively participate in implementation

of the new Decade and will also substantively contribute to implementation of water related objectives and targets.

The Government of Tajikistan is keen to have civilized relations and wide range real cooperation with all friendly countries as well as regional and international organizations. This is the core of our foreign policy which is based on the acknowledged and imperishable principles of sustainable friendship, equal rights and mutual trust and respect.

Accordingly, we stand ready to expand our partnership with all ECO member states in the areas of mutual interest.

We are also trying to increase our trade with ECO member states, which currently shares 36 percent of Tajikistan's foreign trade with these countries.

I hope that cooperation of the ECO member states in realization of the important document "ECO Vision 2025" will contribute to the development of trade and economic relations and the implementation of the SDG goals in the ECO region.

Thank you so much

