

**In the name of God**

**Country Report**

**The Railways of the I. R. of Iran (RAI)**

**Dushanbe - Tajikistan, 20-21 June 2019**

**Esteemed Chairman,**

**Dear Audience,**

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Tajikistan for their warm hospitality, as well as ECO for good organization of this meeting.

As you are aware, ECO is amongst the potential and competent organizations in the world and it own a unique and strategic position as a linking point between Asia and Europe, and since it is located along the north – south and east – west corridors, is considered as one of the key regional organizations.

In this line, the I. R. of Iran owns a key position due to having land border with 5 ECO member states and linking other member states to the international waters, which has always attempted to play an active role in expansion of international transportation.

Here, I avail myself of the opportunity and mention some of the achievements, plans and macro policies of RAI to develop rail transportation.

The Railways of Iran has 13000 km or rail lines, 25000 freight cars, 1900 coaches, and 556 locomotives. In 2018, RAI carried 50 million tons of freight and 28 million passengers. In the Sixth Development Plan of Iran (2016-2021) the Government of the I. R. of Iran considered the increase of rail transport and railway development as its priorities, where it has been foreseen to increase the railway's share from 12% to 30% and 8% to 20% in freight and passenger transportation respectively. It also intends to increase the freight transportation from the present 50 million tons to 95 million tons.

Due to the US sanctions imposed on Iran over past 40 years, RAI has attempted to produce its needed fleet in the country and become self-sufficient in this industry by setting-up 7 large locomotive and wagon manufacturing factories; as the latest freight locomotive, product of MAPNA Co. railway switches, product of IRID Co. and rails product of Esfahan Steel Company, were unveiled last week at the RAILEXPO in Iran..

Furthermore, the railway network of Iran owns a suitable position for passing of international corridors due to linking to the southern ports of Bandar Abbas and Imam Khomeini and northern ports of Amirabad and also several measures have been taken for removing the missing links and providing rail connection with the neighboring countries. Some of the measures taken in this regard are as follows:

**Rail connection with Azerbaijan:** inauguration of Astra-Astra railway (10 km) and Qazvin-Rasht (167 km) are amongst the recent key projects for completing north-south corridor which initially was done in the form of combined transportation and after completing Rasht-Astra railway, transportation to the en-route countries will be done completely by rail which will save up to %30 of the freight transportation costs compared to the sea transportation.

**Rail connection with Afghanistan:** fortunately, there has been a suitable progress in this regard. Khaf-Herat route is 207 km long (76 km inside Iran up to Afghanistan border has been completed and is under operation and 62 km in the territory of Afghanistan which the government of the I.R. Iran is

responsible for, the sub-structuring of which has been completed and the super-structuring of 60 km has been accomplished. The remaining 69 km is under construction by the government of Afghanistan.

**Rail connection with Turkey:** according to the recent agreements, Tehran-Van passenger train will come into operation in the next week and Tehran-Ankara passenger train within the next one month; and also it was agreed to establish a new railway border between Iran and Turkey, in addition to Razi border.

**Rail connection with Iraq:** the project of connecting to Iraq is being followed strictly. In order to connect to Syria and Jordan, the railway network of Iran is connected to Iraq at two points. To provide this link, two separate routes of Khoramshahr-Shalamchah-Basra and Kermanshah-Khosravi have been considered which pave the way for connecting to Syria and the Mediterranean coastal region by rail.

Moreover, in order to develop rail transportation and improve tourism, RAI has launched tourist trains to attract tourists:

Additionally, according to the plans, we intend to take effective steps forward by decreasing the stops of freight trains, executing the agreed tariffs, applying discounts based on the market conditions, increasing the running of Iranian wagons on the rail network of the neighboring countries like Turkmenistan, electrification of key lines (in cooperation with China and Russia) to increase railway efficiency.

I would like to inform that the NextStation conference 2019 which will be held by the cooperation of the International Union of Railways (UIC) on 11-13 Nov. 2019 in Tehran. This event will address the strategic issues related to development and operation of the stations, safety, security, designing, etc. this is the first time that a country from the Middle East (Iran) is to host this global conference. Hereby I would like to invite all the members to participate in this event.

Finally, I would like to propose some points to promote transport cooperation among ECO members and increase the effects of the measures taken by the members:

1. To prepare a vision document for ECO rail transportation by the year 2025;
2. More utilization of the ECO Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) to support launching of the corridors;
3. To standardize and facilitate the customs procedures in the ECO region;
4. To consider a specific entity for each of the ECO corridors;
5. Since active involvement of the private sector is of the necessities for commercial and transport development in the ECO region, it is suggested to set up a data bank of the competent private transport companies of the member states which could be accessed by other members;
6. To facilitate visa issuance for the merchants, investors and transport and transit agents.

I appreciate your attention and hope to witness the establishment of integrated rail networks and boosting of rail transportation among the member states under the auspices of ECO.

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