
TAJIKISTAN: PRESIDENT RETURNS FROM CHINA TRIP WITH \$310M

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Tajikistans President Emomali Rahmon has returned from a trip to China with nearly \$310 million in grants and loans – the bulk of which is to be spent building a brand new government and parliament complex.

The financial haul was the result of Rahmons 16th visit to neighboring China.

As EurasiaNet.org has learned, the cost of the government complex alone will be around \$230 million and is to be entirely underwritten by the Chinese government. Logically enough, building materials and equipment are to be brought over from China and will be exempt from import tariffs and other similar inconveniences.

They said: Build and we will provide you with the means. Well, why on earth not? Our citizens will get jobs. We have an agreement so that even if Chinese companies do the work, 80 percent of the laborers will be citizens of Tajikistan. And thats great, Jamshed Ahmadzoda, head of the state architecture committee, told Asia Plus news website.

Other than the grant, the Export-Import Bank of China issued a \$79 million on preferential terms to fund the reconstruction of a 500-kilowatt power transmission line.

Rahmon sealed 24 separate cooperation agreements during his visit.

These included a commitment from Chinese companies to overhaul the TALCO aluminum plant, collaboration with the Khovar state news agency and assistance in the hydroelectricity and transportation sector. This latter point concerned in particular the proposed railway line joining China to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran – often talked about, but difficult to see happening in an immediate future.

Tajikistan is in deep to Beijing. External debt now stands around \$2.3 billion, of which \$1.2 billion is owed in China. Trade is also on the rise. Bilateral trade turnover in 2016 reached \$885 million, an 11 percent increase on the year before.

Tajik officials can only hope that China doesnt eventually want to be paid back in something other than money, of which Dushanbe has very little indeed.

In 2011, Tajikistan handed over 1,158 square kilometers of disputed territory in exchange for writing off a certain portion of its debts. Since Tajikistan has little else to offer by way of collateral, there is a fear in some quarters that yet more land could be given away.

Kaynak/Source: