
TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN OPEN 10 NEW BORDER CROSSINGS

-

02.03.2018

Eurasianet, Mar 1, 2018

The development adds deeds to words of improved relations between the formerly hostile neighbors.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan opened 10 new bordering crossings on March 1, adding deed to words of improved relations between the formerly hostile neighbors.

The new transit points include one for trains, eight for both automobiles and people on foot and another just for foot passengers.

In the preceding eight years, only two crossings were available to the local population. One was west of the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, near the town of Tursunzoda. Another was around two hours south of the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, and entered Tajikistans northern Sughd region.

There are now crossing points up and down the border, linking sections of the shared Ferghana Valley and areas in the south, toward the Afghan border.

The resumption of train traffic along a route near the Afghan border promises to eventually plug Tajikistan into a transportation network reaching as far as the Persian Gulf.

Under a 2002 agreement, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan actually have 16 crossings along their shared border, but almost all have largely been inoperative as a result of a history of mutual suspicion and hostility. Things have taken a turn for the better, however, since Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to power in Uzbekistan in 2016.

Mirziyoyev is set to travel to Tajikistan on March 9 for a historic state visit. His meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon are expected to culminate in a series of deals □ with one potentially comprising a further breakthrough on easing travel between the nations.

Tajik citizens are currently required to obtain visas to travel to Uzbekistan, and vice versa, but sources in the presidential administration in Dushanbe have told Eurasianet that there is a deal in the works to allow Tajiks and Uzbeks to visit each other for up to one month visa-free. That arrangement is to be rolled out on a trial basis in advance of a possible full-fledged visa-free regime.