
TAJIKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN REACH AGREEMENT ON CONSTRUCTION OF RAIL LINK THAT WILL CONNECT THEM AND TURKMENISTAN

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The First Deputy Minister of Transport Suhrob Mirzozoda noted that Tajikistan and Afghanistan have reached an agreement on construction of rail link that will connect them and Turkmenistan on July 17, Asia-Plus reports.

According to him, this issue was discussed in Dushanbe in early July at a session of the Tajik-Afghan commission for trade and economic cooperation.

A Tajik-Afghan working group is currently developing an appropriate agreement that is expected to be signed before the end of summer and work on financing the project will start, said Mirzozoda. The sides have already agreed a route that will run from Jaloliddini Balkhi and Panji Poyon districts in Tajikistan to Sherkhan Bandar, Kunduz, Mazor-I Sharif, Sheberghan, and Aqina-Andhoi in Afghanistan, the deputy minister said.

Recall, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan finally managed to reach an agreement on intensification of work on implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan (TAT) railway project in October last year. This issue was discussed at a meeting of the Tajik-Turkmen joint commission for trade and economic cooperation that took place in Dushanbe on October 26. The meeting participants reportedly pointed to the necessity of intensifying work on completion of construction of this rail link connecting three nations.

Turkmenistans Foreign Ministry expressed incomprehension over an interview given by Tajik Ambassador to Uzbekistan Sodiq Ashurboyzoda to Russian media outlet Kommersant on September 20, 2018. Ashourboyzoda told Kommersant that Tajikistan decided to indefinitely postpone the TAT railway project. The decision was reportedly taken because improved relations with Uzbekistan mean that the project is no long feasible. The link would have enabled rail traffic to reach Tajikistan without transiting Uzbekistan.

Turkmenistans Foreign Ministry said on September 22, 2018 that it has formally notified Tajikistan that it did not understand the statement.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) for construction of the rail link connecting the three countries was signed during a trilateral meeting of the presidents of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan that took place in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat on March 20, 2013.

The 400-kilometer railroad is expected to connect the Afghan town of Aqina-Andhoi to Atamurat-Yamnazar in Turkmenistan and Panj in Tajikistan.

The presidents of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan officially inaugurated the construction of the railway connecting the three nations on June 5, 2013. The ceremony took place in Turkmenistan's northeastern province of Lebap.

TAT railway will be a part of a broader regional transportation initiative that will open a new transit corridor between Central Asia and world markets through Indian Ocean ports, a route less than half as long as Central Asian existing railway export options through Russia to the Baltic Sea coast. It is expected to diversify the transport routes of Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

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