

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate

## **DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS**

### **1. Haqqani Stresses Reform, Service Standards, and Legal Framework in Governance Push ([Ariana News, May 27](#))**

Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani has stated that the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is making “serious and continuous efforts” to implement governance reforms, improve service delivery, and establish a standardized legal framework. Speaking at the closing ceremony of a seminar on reform and capacity building for ministry officials, Haqqani emphasised the commitment of Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada to strengthening the Islamic system through principled governance and legislative development. According to Interior Ministry Spokesperson Abdul Mateen Qani, Haqqani underscored that Akhundzada is “working around the clock” to expand services and enforce reforms. Haqqani urged officials to act with kindness and accountability, reminding them that they represent the bridge between the people and the government. He also highlighted the value of continuous administrative training and professional development, describing it as a “source of pride” and essential to improving the quality of public services. Addressing bureaucratic delays, Haqqani warned against using internal review as a pretext to hinder public affairs. He insisted that officials must uphold the law and seek guidance from senior leadership when necessary, but without obstructing timely service delivery.

### **2. UNICEF Delivers Over 100 Tonnes of Life-Saving Medicines to Afghanistan ([Ariana News, May 28](#))**

In a significant boost to Afghanistan’s fragile healthcare system, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has delivered more than 100 tonnes of essential medicines to the country this week. The shipment, transported via chartered flights, aims to meet urgent health needs across all 34 provinces. UNICEF noted that the supplies will be distributed to approximately 2,400 health facilities, helping to address critical shortages of medical resources. The delivery was made possible through support from the World Bank and other partner organizations, highlighting the importance of coordinated international efforts in addressing Afghanistan’s worsening humanitarian crisis. This development follows recent warnings from the World

Health Organization (WHO) about the spread of communicable diseases and the closure of numerous health centres due to insufficient funding. Many Afghans—particularly children—are at increased risk due to declining access to primary care, immunizations, and maternal health services.

### **3. Afghans Rally Nationwide in Support of Palestinians Amid Gaza Crisis ([Ariana News, May 30](#); [Tolo News, May 30](#))**

Thousands of Afghans across the country have taken to the streets in a unified show of solidarity with the Palestinian people, as Israel's military operations in Gaza continue to claim civilian lives. Protests were held in Kabul, Herat, Nimroz, Paktia, Badakhshan, Ghazni, and Nangarhar, with demonstrators calling for immediate action from the international community and Islamic nations to halt the violence. Waving Palestinian and Islamic Emirate flags, protesters gathered in city streets and mosques, chanting slogans against Israel and the United States. Many voiced outrage over the reported silence of global human rights organisations and accused Western powers of complicity in the continued suffering in Gaza. "All segments of Afghan society stand with the people of Palestine and will continue to do so," said Nasir Ahmad Fazli from Herat. In Nimroz, Abdul Wali condemned what he described as "horror and oppression unleashed by Israel and America in Gaza," calling the protests the least Afghans could do to show their resistance. Demonstrators also criticised institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) for what they see as selective justice. Musa Kaleem of Paktia demanded the public trial of former US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while Mohammad Shah from Nimroz challenged the UN and human rights groups to "see the hell in Gaza." Many protestors also called on Islamic governments to go beyond condemnation and provide both financial and material support. Similar sentiments were voiced by Ebrahim Salehi in Ghazni, who decried the lack of practical response from human rights organisations. From Nangarhar, protesters Abuzar and Javid Akbari demanded immediate, unified action from Muslim-majority nations, urging leaders not to remain idle in the face of what they described as an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.

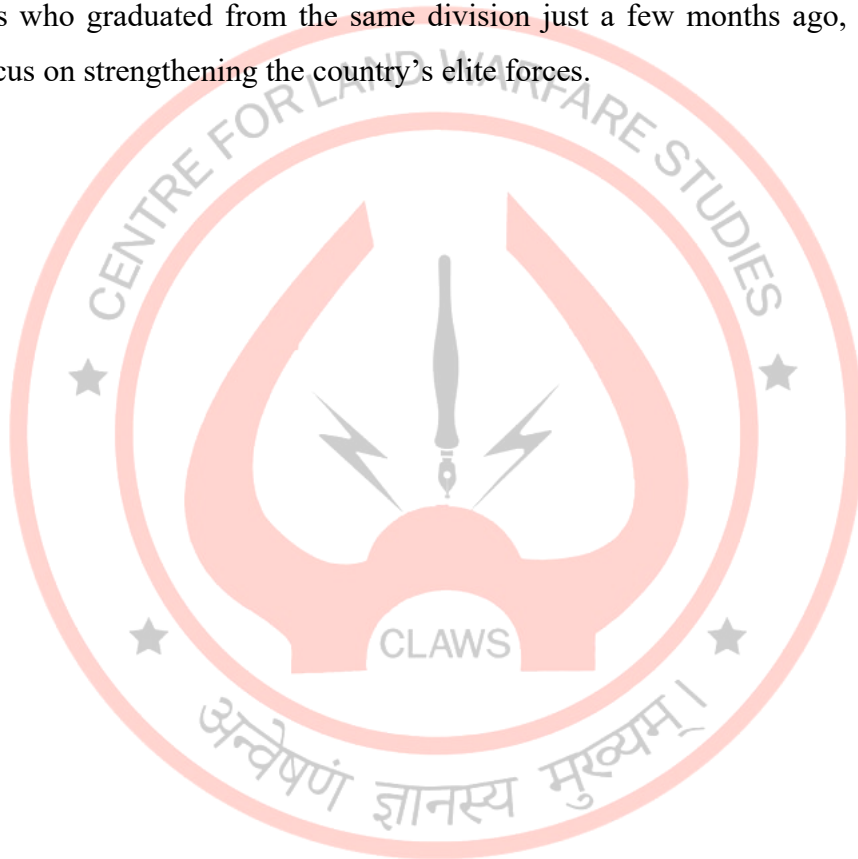
### **4. Herat Launches \$70 Million Wind Power Project to Bolster Energy Self-Sufficiency ([Tolo News, May 31](#))**

A landmark 220-megawatt wind power project was inaugurated in Herat, marking a pivotal step in Afghanistan's pursuit of energy independence. The project, estimated to cost nearly \$70 million, was launched in the presence of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, and is set to be developed in multiple phases, with the first phase already contributing over 40 megawatts to the national grid. At the inauguration ceremony, Mullah Baradar highlighted the strategic importance of this project in reducing Afghanistan's reliance on imported electricity. "This significant achievement is a major step on Afghanistan's path to self-sufficiency in the energy sector; it not only reduces the country's reliance on imported electricity but also creates opportunities in environmental protection, the promotion of sustainable energy, and the adoption of new technologies," he stated. Afghanistan currently depends on electricity imports from neighbouring countries such as Iran and Turkmenistan, supply routes that are often disrupted during extreme seasonal weather, causing blackouts and halting industrial activity. Herat, in particular, has suffered from these interruptions, with factories forced to shut down and residents facing regular power shortages. In response, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the national power utility, announced that it is aggressively expanding the country's energy infrastructure. Abdul Bari Omar, head of DABS, revealed that projects to generate over 900 megawatts of electricity are already underway, including ventures in coal, solar, and wind power. Officials stressed that the country's infrastructure development is now primarily driven by domestic revenues. Acting Minister of Economy Din Mohammad Hanif noted that despite the significant reduction in foreign aid post-2021, Afghanistan has managed to fund its development projects, public sector salaries, and operational expenses through internal income sources. Governor of Herat, Noor Ahmad Islamjar, called for urgent attention to the Pul-e-Hashemi substation project, which is crucial for addressing energy needs in Herat, Shindand District, and Farah Province. He expressed hope that with the current momentum and support from central authorities, construction would begin promptly.

## **5. 1,000 Commandos Graduate from Reshkhoo Special Forces Division** **(Kabul Times, May 31)**

In a formal ceremony held recently, 1,000 commandos graduated from the Reshkhoo Special Forces Division under Afghanistan's Ministry of National Defence. According to a statement

by the ministry, Deputy Commander of the Special Forces Division, Mawlavi Mumtaz Ahmad Haqqani, addressed the ceremony and praised the rigorous efforts of both the instructors and the trainees. He emphasised that the training was not only designed to enhance combat readiness but also to preserve the continuity of the Islamic system and ensure national security. Haqqani urged the new graduates to remain committed to protecting the nation's resources, to serve local communities with respect, and to build public trust through discipline and professionalism. During the event, the graduating commandos received their certificates and vowed to uphold the Islamic system, defend their homeland, and protect their fellow citizens with dedication and honour. This latest cohort follows a previous group of more than 500 commandos who graduated from the same division just a few months ago, highlighting an ongoing focus on strengthening the country's elite forces.





## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Developments with India**

#### **a. India Sends Food Aid to 5,000 Afghan Returnees from Pakistan (Khaama Press, May 20)**

India has provided critical humanitarian aid to 5,000 Afghan deportees returning from Pakistan, delivering essential food supplies to support their resettlement efforts. The aid was distributed in Kabul on May 20, 2025, according to the Taliban's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, which reported that 11 key food items were given to returnees facing acute shortages. This assistance comes at a pivotal time, as thousands of Afghans expelled from Pakistan are struggling with food insecurity, homelessness, and limited access to basic services. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Taliban Minister of Refugees, thanked the Indian government, calling the aid "timely and vital" in alleviating the hardship of returnees and aiding their transition back into Afghan society. The Taliban administration has also urged the international community to increase support for displaced populations, including assistance in shelter, healthcare, and job creation. In response to the growing returnee population, the Ministry of Refugees plans to establish 83 new settlements across 31 provinces to house and assist returning families. India's aid reflects a pragmatic approach to humanitarian engagement in Afghanistan. Despite not recognising the Taliban government formally, India has consistently provided medical supplies, food aid, and disaster relief since 2021. This recent initiative signals India's growing regional role in supporting vulnerable populations and underscores the importance of constructive cooperation amid political complexities. As the number of Afghan returnees continues to rise, sustained international engagement will be essential to ensuring effective reintegration and long-term stability in Afghanistan.

#### **b. India Introduces New Visa Framework for Afghan Nationals (Khaama Press, May 30; Tolo News, May 30)**

India's Ministry of External Affairs has announced the implementation of a new visa system for Afghan citizens, officially replacing the emergency visa mechanism that was introduced in response to the 2021 political upheaval in Afghanistan. Effective from 29 April, the new framework provides Afghan nationals with clearly defined legal avenues to travel to India for various purposes. Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed the discontinuation of the

previous E-Emergency Ex-Miscellaneous Visa, stating that the new model offers six specific visa categories: medical, medical attendant, business, student, entry, and United Nations diplomatic visas. The shift reflects a more structured and long-term approach to Afghan mobility into India. The previous emergency visa was a temporary measure, introduced to address urgent needs in the aftermath of the collapse of the former Afghan government. The new system is intended to streamline visa processing, enhance transparency, and promote regulated entry, particularly for those seeking healthcare, education, commercial engagement, or diplomatic assignments. Jaiswal also noted that Afghan nationals currently residing in India under older visa provisions are required to apply for renewal or conversion under the new scheme. “This move strengthens people-to-people ties and marks a new chapter in our engagement with Afghan citizens,” he said.

The development has been welcomed by Afghan officials and experts alike. Abdul Latif Nazari, Afghanistan’s Deputy Minister of Economy, described the move as a “constructive step” with the potential to deepen economic and trade relations. Former Afghan diplomat Aziz Maarej also highlighted the significance of visa resumption in reinforcing social and bilateral links, urging Kabul to reciprocate by easing visa procedures for Indian nationals. India’s decision is seen as part of broader efforts to re-establish humanitarian and strategic links with Afghanistan. With the visa suspension lasting nearly four years, many Afghans had been left with limited options for legitimate travel. The new system seeks to rectify that gap and reinforce India’s commitment to fostering regional stability through inclusive diplomatic engagement. The Ministry of Economy further expressed confidence that smoother visa access would support Afghan entrepreneurs and traders, encouraging deeper commercial ties with New Delhi.

## **2. CSTO to Bolster Tajik-Afghan Border with New Security Initiative** **(Khaama Press, May 22)**

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has announced plans to begin dispatching weapons and military equipment to Tajikistan in a bid to reinforce its southern border with Afghanistan. The move is part of a multi-phase strategy to counter security threats and extremist infiltration originating from Afghan territory. Speaking at the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, Secretary-General Imangali Tasmagambetov confirmed that preparations are underway to implement the program, first approved in 2024 in Astana, with full operational

rollout expected to commence in 2026. The initiative involves CSTO member states: Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus. Key elements of the plan include:

- Strengthening military infrastructure in southern Tajikistan
- Enhancing rapid response capabilities of CSTO forces
- Coordinated border security operations among member states

The decision comes amid mounting regional concerns over the presence of over 20 foreign terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, including ISIS and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Tajikistan, which shares a 1,400-km porous border with Afghanistan, has long warned of the risks of extremist infiltration and increased narcotics trafficking. While the Taliban administration maintains that no foreign militant groups operate on Afghan soil, neighbouring states remain sceptical, citing persistent reports of cross-border threats and instability. Regional experts interpret the CSTO move as a strategic step toward creating a “security belt” around Afghanistan, a concept previously championed by Tajikistan’s President. This framework is seen as vital to preventing the spillover of violence and maintaining regional stability amid the evolving Afghan crisis. As the plan progresses, its effectiveness will hinge on long-term commitment, coordination, and trust among CSTO states, with a broader call for global cooperation to address security challenges emanating from Afghanistan.

### **3. Kabul Advances Talks with Moscow and Beijing on Local Currency Trade Settlement ([Arab News, May 23](#))**

In a move aimed at bypassing Western financial sanctions and reducing reliance on the US dollar, the Taliban administration is in advanced discussions with Russia to settle bilateral trade in local currencies. Acting Minister of Commerce Hajji Nooruddin Azizi revealed the development in an interview with Reuters, adding that similar proposals are being explored with China. Technical teams from both Kabul and Moscow are currently negotiating the framework to facilitate trade worth hundreds of millions of dollars using national currencies. The plan aligns with Russia’s broader efforts to de-dollarise its economy and Afghanistan’s need to address a sharp decline in US dollar inflows following major international aid cuts. Annual trade between Russia and Afghanistan currently stands at approximately \$300 million, with expectations of significant growth, particularly in sectors such as petroleum products and plastics. Azizi described the proposal as “a very good option” for serving the interests of the Afghan people.



Talks with China are also underway. Azizi confirmed that a joint working group, composed of officials from Afghanistan's Ministry of Commerce and the Chinese Embassy in Kabul, has been formed to explore the possibility of conducting trade in Chinese yuan. Bilateral trade with China already exceeds \$1 billion annually. Afghanistan's financial system remains largely cut off from global banking networks due to sanctions on senior Taliban figures, hampering its access to international transactions. This has made alternatives to dollar-based trade increasingly critical for the country. The global landscape is also shifting. As geopolitical tensions mount, notably with China and over the war in Ukraine, more countries are questioning the dominance of the US dollar. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently underscored the risks of holding foreign reserves, suggesting national investment as a safer option. Since 2022, Afghanistan has been importing oil, gas, and wheat from Russia, marking one of its first major trade agreements since the Taliban's return to power. Despite dwindling aid and fewer dollar cash shipments flown in for humanitarian use, the Afghani currency has so far remained relatively stable. Azizi expressed confidence that increased international investment, including from the Afghan diaspora, would help cushion the economy from further dollar shortages.

#### **4. Infrastructure Ties Strengthen Between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan** **([Ariana News, May 30](#); [Tolo News, May 31](#))**

Kazakhstan has reaffirmed its commitment to deepening political and economic ties with Afghanistan, signalling a renewed phase of regional engagement. During a meeting with Nooruddin Azizi, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Islamic Emirate, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev highlighted the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation and proposed an ambitious goal of increasing annual trade volume to over \$3 billion. Held on the sidelines of the Astana Conference, the meeting underscored Kazakhstan's strategic interest in Afghanistan as both a trade partner and a regional connector. President Tokayev noted that Kazakhstan maintained its embassy in Kabul and continued diplomatic engagement even after the Islamic Emirate returned to power, demonstrating Astana's pragmatic and forward-looking foreign policy.

In response, Minister Azizi expressed gratitude for Kazakhstan's recognition of the Islamic Emirate, including its removal from Kazakhstan's list of terrorist organisations and ongoing diplomatic support at the international level. This endorsement is seen as a diplomatic win for

Kabul amid limited global recognition. Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for Afghanistan's Ministry of Industry and Commerce, welcomed the continued support, noting that such gestures enhance Afghanistan's legitimacy in regional affairs. According to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$600 million. However, officials report a growing momentum in exports, particularly of agricultural products like fruits and potatoes. Kazakhstan has shown considerable interest in expanding commercial links, viewing Afghanistan as a key route to South Asia. Khanjan Alokozay, a board member of the Chamber, confirmed the uptick in Afghan exports to Kazakhstan, noting increasing receptiveness from Kazakh markets.

## **5. Russia Warns Against NATO's Return to Afghanistan Amid Regional Stability Concerns ([Khaama Press, May 31](#))**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has issued a stark warning against what he perceives as NATO's attempts to re-enter Afghanistan under the guise of promoting security and stability. Speaking at the Eurasian International Public Political Hearings in Perm, Lavrov called such efforts a "time bomb" for the region and cautioned against the reintroduction of Western military infrastructure. Lavrov criticised the West's growing interest in re-engagement with Afghanistan, pointing to initiatives like the UN-led Doha consultations, which he implied may be more aligned with Western strategic interests than genuine regional stability. He warned that NATO's past intervention had already left Afghanistan in a fragile state and that any renewed military involvement could reignite conflict.

In a broader swipe at shifting geopolitical dynamics, Lavrov also expressed concern over India's increasing alignment with Western powers. He referenced joint military exercises and partnerships that, according to him, could disrupt the existing security balance in Central and South Asia. These remarks came despite the presence of an Indian delegation at the forum, underlining Russia's growing unease about expanding Western influence in the region. Nevertheless, Lavrov clarified that Russia is not entirely opposed to international involvement in Afghanistan, provided it is conducted transparently and without hidden motives. "We are in favour of honest and collective efforts to ensure stability," he said, adding that any external engagement must support Afghanistan's sovereignty and regional peace. The Russian foreign minister highlighted his country's continued diplomatic presence in Kabul, noting that the Russian embassy has remained operational throughout recent years. He also underscored

Russia's active role in regional dialogue formats, such as the Moscow-format consultations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which aim to facilitate coordinated approaches to peace and development in Afghanistan.

## **6. Upgraded Diplomatic Ties with Pakistan ([Associated Press, May 31](#); [Tolo News, May 31](#))**

In a significant diplomatic shift, Pakistan has announced it will elevate its diplomatic representation in Afghanistan from chargé d'affaires to ambassador. The move, aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and fostering deeper engagement, follows recent high-level discussions between Pakistani Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and his Afghan counterpart, Amir Khan Muttaqi, during a trilateral meeting in Beijing also involving China's top diplomat. Foreign Minister Dar described the decision as a step to maintain the positive momentum in relations since his April visit to Kabul. He expressed optimism that the appointment of a full ambassador would enhance economic cooperation, increase bilateral trade, and advance joint counterterrorism efforts. Afghanistan responded positively, with the Taliban-led Foreign Ministry confirming it would reciprocate by upgrading its diplomatic mission in Islamabad. Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, the ministry's deputy spokesperson, noted that this development would pave the way for expanding cooperation across various sectors. The announcement comes at a time when both nations face ongoing tensions, particularly over Islamabad's allegations that the Afghan Taliban provides refuge to members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Although the Afghan Taliban and TTP are separate entities, the latter has become more assertive since the former's return to power in 2021. Nevertheless, regional stakeholders are hopeful. China has stressed the importance of multilateral engagement in improving Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, while political analysts in both countries have praised the decision as a constructive move. Sayed Moqaddam Amin described it as a promising initiative that could deepen political ties, while Salim Paigir cautioned that mutual respect and clear recognition of sovereignty would be key to fostering lasting stability. Despite the absence of formal international recognition of the Taliban government, Pakistan's decision reflects a pragmatic approach to diplomacy. By establishing ambassador-level ties, both countries are signalling a willingness to engage more deeply, potentially marking a new chapter in their often tumultuous relationship.

## **7. Developments with Iran**

**a. Afghan Embassy in Tehran Suspends Consular Services, Raising Concerns for Migrants (Khaama Press, May 24)**

The Afghanistan Embassy in Tehran has temporarily suspended all consular services, including passport issuance, renewals, and the provision of legal documents, sparking concern among Afghan migrants in Iran who rely on these critical services. In an official statement, the embassy confirmed that services related to marriage and divorce certification, birth registration, legal guarantees, and police clearance certificates have also been halted “until further notice.” No explanation was provided for the sudden suspension. The embassy has urged Afghan nationals residing in Iran to avoid visiting the consular office until a new public announcement is made. This is not the first disruption in consular services. In the past, similar halts occurred due to overcrowding and the rising number of returnees from Iran, many of whom were in urgent need of identity verification and legal documentation. The current suspension has heightened anxiety among Afghan migrants who depend on the embassy for paperwork essential to their residency, employment, education, and family legal matters. Community leaders have called for immediate action and clearer communication from the embassy to prevent further hardship for already vulnerable Afghan populations in Iran. As of now, it remains uncertain when services will resume, leaving thousands in limbo as they await the reinstatement of vital consular functions.

**b. Iran Deploys AI-Powered Surveillance to Secure Border with Afghanistan (Ariana News, May 26)**

Iranian military officials have announced a strategic plan to employ artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to bolster border security along the country’s porous frontier with Afghanistan, in a major step toward modernizing Iran’s border control systems. The initiative, led by Brigadier General Kiumars Heidari, commander of the Iranian Army Ground Forces, will focus on sealing and securing up to 400 kilometres of the shared border by the end of the year. The effort comes amid increasing concerns over illegal crossings, drug trafficking, and unauthorised movement of individuals between the two nations. “Our objective is to establish a smart, high-tech border wall integrated with domestically developed sensors and AI systems,” Heidari said in a recent address to Iranian media. “This intelligent border barrier will provide real-time detection and monitoring capabilities.” The border wall, described as AI-integrated and sensor-equipped, is part of a broader push by Iran to digitise and automate its frontier management. The technology will allow Iranian security forces to track movements, identify unauthorised

crossings, and monitor foreign nationals through a network of advanced electronic surveillance systems. In a show of high-level backing, Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, chief of staff of Iran's Armed Forces, visited the Afghanistan-Iran border last week to review progress. He confirmed that the project includes intelligent monitoring solutions designed to address both security threats and humanitarian concerns stemming from migration. He stressed that the initiative will aid in curbing drug trafficking, controlling contraband smuggling, and managing the influx of undocumented Afghan migrants into Iran. With the Afghanistan-Iran border long considered a hotbed of illegal activity, Tehran's shift toward high-tech solutions underscores its intent to exert greater control and deterrence capacity along the frontier.

**c. Afghanistan Showcases Railway Progress at Regional Rail Conference in Iran**  
**(The Kabul Times, May 31)**

Afghanistan's railway development efforts took centre stage at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the Regional Railway Association of Middle Eastern Countries, held recently in Iran. Representing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Deputy Minister of Public Works for Railways, Mawlavi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, highlighted the country's progress in railway construction, maintenance, and management over the past year. In his address, Sahibzada underscored several major initiatives currently underway, including:

- Operational developments on the Khaf-Herat railway
- Survey work for the Mazar-Herat railway line
- Detailed design efforts for the Herat-Kandahar corridor
- The ongoing Afghan-Trans project
- Technical studies on regional rail corridor integration

These projects, he noted, represent Afghanistan's commitment to enhancing infrastructure and improving regional connectivity despite facing logistical and political challenges. On the sidelines of the conference, the Afghan delegation held a productive meeting with Dr. Jabbar Ali Zakir, Director of Iranian Railways. Discussions centred on expanding bilateral cooperation and boosting transit capacity along the Khaf-Herat line, one of the key arteries linking Afghanistan with Iran and broader regional markets. The Ministry of Public Works stated that Afghanistan's active participation in this regional forum reflects the Islamic Emirate's strategic aim of playing a constructive role in regional integration, transit development, and economic cooperation.



## About the Author

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