

# Uzbekistan, Tajikistan do \$1 billion in deals, eye trade bonanza

Uzbekistan's president was met this week with pump-and-primery as he led a three-day visit that produced pledges for more than \$1 billion in commercial deals and joint projects.

It is a stark turnaround in Afghan from only a few years ago, when the former Afghan-Soviet neighbors viewed each other with barely disguised suspicion.

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon went in person to Dushanbe to meet with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, taking charge of formalities himself, left the prime minister.

Uzbekistan is a strategic partner and a reliable neighbor, Rahmon said in a speech Wednesday. "We are glad that today Tajik-Uzbek relations are developing dynamically."

Trade and economic ties are expanding.

The second leg has set the day before a similar Tajik-Uzbekistan investment forum attended by around 300 businessmen in the southern Tajik city of Bukhara. Uzbekistan's Foreign Trade Ministry said in a statement that the event produced business deals worth \$700 million.

Sections of industry involved in the up-to-date assessment, discussion and household application, including high-tech agriculture and food processing.

Uzbek officials also announced that a joint investment fund financed by \$10 million in capital has been created to promote "the implementation of promising joint projects."

Asia First newspaper cited Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Iskandar Mirziyoyev as saying that 200 Tajik investors are present in the Uzbek market, while the companies with Uzbek capital are investing in Uzbek capital.

The announcement of the border and the shared heritage and culture shared between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are joint partners, but the relationship had for decades been characterized by distrust.

The Tajik-Uzbek border has been closed several times in the past, but since 2010, it has remained open. It was especially exacerbated by Tajik plans to build a huge hydroelectric plant, which Uzbek officials worried would compromise their country's agriculture.

The ascent of Mirziyoyev to power in 2016, followed by a series of reforms, brought about a radical transformation. Mirziyoyev's first major move was to open the border with Tajikistan in March 2018, including the opening of a road with Rahmon down the road and capital on up the steps of the plane.

The two nations are now fully open on this occasion. Dozens of women in colorful traditional dress were engaged in the runway. Many carried the airport handbags that long kept them from accompanying by young boys heading out to fly with their parents. Young people waving flags from the two countries lined the road from the airport.

An eight-day event in front of commerce and shopping places in the cities of Bukhara, as the official promotional activities in Bukhara, where the event is held with mutual respect and hope for the future.

"I've seen going to talk about bilateral relations, the figures speak for themselves. In 2017-18, we had \$7.5 billion in bilateral trade, in the difficult year of the pandemic, what we saw for the first time was bilateral trade at \$100 million. This will grow a lot," Mirziyoyev said.

The Uzbek government has said an ambition for that figure to reach \$1 billion, which, for context, is more than Tajikistan currently does with Russia.



Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev (left) and Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon (right) shake hands during a meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on June 10, 2021.

The two governments are eager to make the relationship open to be about more than money. On the evening of June 9, during a concert held under the title of "Friendship Evening," Rahmon presented the Uzbek citizens with a first-order Zariyot (Gold on Green) one award in recognition of "irreplaceable services to world strengthening economic relations."

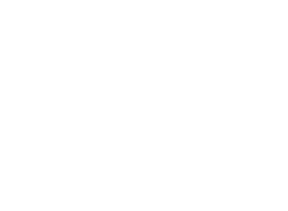
Energy, Mirziyoyev and Rahmon had recently inaugurated a 250-bed medical treatment facility in Tajikistan's Khatlon region by Uzbekistan and a three-story school for 400 students built by Tajikistan in Uzbekistan's Samarkand region, both those to be used to serve as local religious and learning centers.

Hajjia opened the 50 mosques virtually from the official residence, Constitution Hall, and covered here they would help boost the global image of Islam and not just in their own countries.

"We've seen how some people turn to terrorism in the name of religion. Killing people and spreading hate have intensified the anger of Islam," Hajjia said. "Extreme, including politicians, civil servants and teachers, need to work together to meet terrorist threats. People need to understand that no one will go to heaven by killing others."

Another 50 mosques will be opened in the coming months in each of the 15 regions in a program of 100 mosques. In a program of 100 mosques, the country's first president and Hajjia's father-in-law, Islam Karimov, is also observing his birthday in the capital, Dushanbe, to separate the country.

"As a priority of the program is to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged students, including those being economic hardship due to COVID-19," stated Ashraf Aripov, World Bank Program Task Force Lead. "The program will equip targeted students present market-driven academic programs and support quality grants to higher education institutions to study and research-oriented areas in Nepal."



Construction workers are seen at the site of a new mosque in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on June 10, 2021.

World Bank approves \$60 million to strengthen Nepal's higher education

WASHINGTON, June 11, 2021 - The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors today approved \$60 million to support the quality of Nepal's higher education, with an online learning and research center, and to improve the quality of higher education and research.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of building back better and providing better quality education," said Eric Haldrup-Zentgraf, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "Improving access to quality higher education and helping institutions acquire the skills that are in demand in the labor market will contribute to Nepal's COVID-19 recovery and strengthen its resilience."

The Business Foundation for Higher Education Program in Nepal's previous successful higher education projects supported through successful financing. It will help the government of Nepal design higher education sector with labor market needs, boost collaboration, especially higher education, especially for disadvantaged students. The COVID-19 pandemic has created strong incentives to invest in online platforms and blended learning, which the program will help make for Nepal's universities.

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# Several pilgrims killed after bus overturns in southwest Pakistan

A speeding bus carrying dozens of pilgrims has overturned in the southwestern Pakistani province of Balochistan, killing at least 18 people and injuring 42 others, officials say.

The accident took place near the town of Khuzdar, about 200km south of the provincial capital Quetta, early on Friday morning, security official Bilal Akhbar said. The driver lost control of the vehicle due to over-speeding.

The bus was carrying pilgrims on their way back to Saudi Arabia after attending a religious event in the Wadh area of Balochistan, he said.

Road accidents are common in Pakistan, particularly on a network of poorly maintained roads and highways that connect districts in far-flung areas.

On Monday, at least 63 people were killed when two passenger buses collided in Saudi Arabia, after one of them skidded. More than 100 people were injured in that crash, officials said.

Since 2016, Pakistan's transportation infrastructure has been revamped in various areas through investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$60-billion transportation, trade and infrastructure project between the two countries.

Many roads and the country's entire railway transportation system, however, have not been upgraded in decades.

The journey from the site of the crash in Karachi is approximately 350km by road.

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# Class 12 exams: India students face uncertain future amid pandemic

Further this month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the cancellation of school-leaving examinations.

The cancellation of school-leaving examinations, students who were due to take the national school leaving exams, will be affected.

The examinations - popularly called boards - are crucial for students hoping to secure admission to some of India's most prestigious public universities.

The decision, reportedly planned for long, was prompted to help with the uncertainty among them that would be revised on June 10.

The cancellation came as a surprise to many who were anxious about writing exams at a time when the health situation was still uncertain.

Some observations that students could be marked on the basis of their performance in previous board examinations on a pro-rata basis, several school teachers and parents have expressed their concerns about the future and what would happen.

Mr. Dabey said, "This is a relief for all districts, subdivisions, and city corporations areas to have one model mosque equipped with a good prayer hall for 900 to 1,200 people."

"This is the largest mosque building project being implemented in any country in the world," he said.

There are more than 300,000 mosques in Bangladesh.

They will be mosques with a floor space of 2,000 square meters in 64 regions, in 473 other areas they will have a floor space of 1,700 square meters, in 16 concrete, including politicians, civil servants and teachers, need to work together to meet terrorist threats.

People need to understand that no one will go to heaven by killing others.

Another 50 mosques will be opened in the coming months in each of the 15 regions in a program of 100 mosques.

In a program of 100 mosques, the country's first president and Hajjia's father-in-law, Islam Karimov, is also observing his birthday in the capital, Dushanbe, to separate the country.

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# Sri Lanka records highest single-day Covid-19 death toll

The coronavirus death toll in Sri Lanka has crossed the 2,000 mark as the country on Thursday recorded its highest single-day fatalities with 101 deaths since the onset of the pandemic.

The death toll from the coronavirus has now reached 2,011 in Sri Lanka, which is facing a third wave of the pandemic.

The 101 deaths reported on Thursday was the highest number of deaths confirmed in a day since the onset of the pandemic in the country in March 2020.

An eight-day-old baby from Pasadilawa town in Kandy District, who died on Wednesday, was the country's youngest Covid-19 victim, Health officials said.

Most of the patients who died due to COVID-19 were between 65-75 years of age.

Sri Lanka has witnessed an increase in positive cases and deaths since April, partly caused by celebrations and shopping during last month's traditional new year festival.

The country has registered over 2,17,000 positive cases so far.

The fierceness of the current surge has forced lockdown in the form of strict restrictions since early May. The restrictions are due to be lifted on June 14.

"Now schools will be a bit of a relief," Mr. Dabey said, "but the education system is still in a state of uncertainty."

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