

Iran-China freight train was relaunched at Aprin dry port, in Eslamshahr county, southwest of Tehran city, on Sunday (21 Jul).

Relaunching this train was simultaneous with launching first phase of the China-Europe rail corridor, in a ceremony attended by Miad Salehi, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI), as well as chargé d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in Teheran, Kazakh ambassador, and Turkmen attaché to Iran.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the Rai head said that Iran-China cargo train will go from Iran to China after passing through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and will come from China to Iran.

The train carrying minerals will leave Tehran's dry port for China today, and about 10 days ago, the train carrying car parts left China, he explained.

This train can be an important infrastructure for increasing exchanges between Iran and China and make Iran a safe gateway for China to move to Europe and vice versa.

Salehi stated: "The friendly countries of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan cooperated well to launch this train, and these measures were carried out following the efforts to expand cooperation with other countries and expand diplomacy."

He added: "Today, the first phase of the China-Iran-Europe rail corridor will also be launched."

The official continued: "In the 13th government, efforts have been made to develop rail transport diplomacy and we hope to be able to fully launch this corridor in the near future."

"The China-Iran-Europe rail corridor has high security and will take less time than sea transportation. In addition, using the China-Iran-Europe rail corridor will cost less for freight owners", the RAI head further highlighted.

Addressing the same ceremony, the RAI deputy head for commerce and operation said that in the first phase, Iran's train to China was launched, and last week, the China-Iran train started moving, which will reach Iran in two days, and the trains will be exchange in Incheh-Borun (in northeast of Iran).

"Our plan is that in the first phase, one train will run between the two sides every week, in a way that it will run from both sides", Morteza Jafari stated.

The travel time of this train is almost half of the time in marine shipment, and it is competitive with sea transport in terms of tariff, he noted.

Addressing the same ceremony, Fu Lihua, chargé d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in Teheran, said the bilateral cooperation between Iran and China has had good results in the past years.

The launch of this container train, while connecting China to Central and Western Asia, is a channel for the development of cooperation between China and Iran and an opportunity for commercial, industrial and cultural cooperation between the two countries, she further stated.

"It is hoped that in the near future, we will see the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in the form of the "One Belt - One Road" plan, the diplomat further noted.

Also, the ambassador of Kazakhstan to Iran expressed his hope that this rail route will be connected to Turkey and the European Union in the future.

Askhat Orazbay noted: "Kazakhstan is a neighbor of Iran through the Caspian Sea and is pursuing infrastructure projects in Anzali, Amirabad and Caspian ports."

The diplomat expressed his hope that the newly launched train, which is a sign of the long-standing cooperation and friendship of these countries, will bring a bright future for the countries and governments of the region, and that the relations and cooperation of these friendly countries in the region will expand and become stronger every day.

### **A cheap route for China's access to destination markets**

Considering the very long and not very safe route of China's sea access to West Asia and Europe, the rail route is the most suitable, closest, safest and cheapest option for China's access to the destination markets in West Asia and Europe.

Using the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route saves time and money.

In the near future, Iran will significantly increase cargo transportation through the neighboring country of Turkmenistan. For this, Iran will use the capabilities of the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway. The total travel time of the trains is about two weeks.

The China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor is the first logistics solution for fast

delivery of goods from the eastern coast of China to the markets of the Persian Gulf.

During an international summit held in Tajikistan in early June, Iran's deputy minister of roads and urban development explained the advantages of Iran for the transit of goods between China and Europe.

While emphasizing the importance of China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey to Europe, Kamal Hadianfar explained the geographical advantages of his own country for transportation within the framework of the North-South and East-West corridors.

In his speech, the Iranian official also discussed Iran's role in the development of transportation in landlocked regional countries.