

The National Leader of Turkmenistan and the Head of Halk Maslahaty, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov traveled to Iran on 28 August 2024. This is the first high-level visit of a foreign dignitary to Iran since the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, known by his title Arkadag, had a meeting with the Iranian president. Four documents were signed on conclusion of the meeting. Both the leaders addressed a press conference.

Later, Arkadag and the Iranian president were received by the spiritual leader of Iran, The Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei.

Arkadag was accompanied by a delegation comprised of several deputy prime ministers and other senior officials.

Meeting with President of Iran

Narrow Format

During the meeting, the National Leader of the Turkmen people noted the significant contribution to strengthening the interstate dialogue of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, who tragically died in May of this year. In a short period of time, he had done a great job to develop bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas, Hero-Arkadag said, expressing confidence that all the planned plans and projects will be implemented.

During the exchange of opinions on the current state and prospects for further strengthening of the fruitful partnership, the interlocutors identified the trade and economic sphere as one of the key vectors.

The gas industry was named among the key vectors. In particular, Turkmen natural gas is supplied to Iran and through it to other countries under the SWAP scheme, the National Leader of the Turkmen people said, confirming Turkmenistan's readiness to expand the scale of these works. Continuing with the topic, it was noted that in the near future, Turkmen natural gas will be exported to the Republic of Iraq under this scheme. Having emphasized that measures are being taken to increase the volume of "blue" fuel supplies to Iran to 40 billion cubic meters per year, the Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty proposed implementing a number of projects jointly with Iranian companies specializing in this area.

Another important area was named the electric power industry. As noted, our countries are

currently productively cooperating in this area. A striking example of this is the export of Turkmen electricity to Iran via the Balkanabat-Gonbat and Shatlyk-Sarakhs routes. Along with this, preliminary work was noted with Iranian companies regarding the project of the Turkmen section of the Mary-Mashhad power transmission line.

The third key vector was the transport sector. In this context, the parties confirmed their readiness to intensify partnership in this area. Having expressed their intention to cooperate in the road construction sector, Hero-Arkadag emphasized that this concerns the construction of a highway from the Turkmen-Iranian border to the cities of Etrek and Gumdag in Turkmenistan. In this regard, it was noted that preliminary work is currently underway based on the relevant Memorandum on the implementation of this project.

Having proposed to begin joint activities in the near future, the National Leader of the Turkmen people noted the existence of all the opportunities and conditions for this.

Chairman of the Khalk Maslakhaty Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov also spoke in favor of carrying out relevant work to organize the official visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Turkmenistan, which will allow discussing issues related to the implementation of new projects.

The discussion also focused on current issues of regional and international politics of mutual interest.

Expanded Format

[In continuation of conversation in the narrow format]

Iranian media

During the meeting the President of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, called the deep-rooted and historical relations between the two countries a suitable ground for the development of cooperation and said: while adhering to the agreements made between the two countries, we are fully prepared to remove the obstacles and challenges facing the development of relations.

He called the agreements made between Iran and Turkmenistan in the gas sector a strategic step to turn Iran into a gas hub in the region and within the framework of securing the interests of the two countries and added: I will personally follow up on the implementation of the agreements between the two countries and I hope that in the next meeting which will be done in Ashgabat, we will witness the realization and full

implementation of these agreements.

In the meeting, Abbas Araghchi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his remarks, referring to the very good relations and the common positions of Iran and Turkmenistan regarding regional and international issues, mentioned the border between the two countries as one of the safest border points of the Islamic Republic of Iran and emphasized the necessity of using the capacity of borders for the benefit of two countries and two nations.

Araghchi also emphasized the need for cooperation between the two countries in helping Afghanistan overcome its challenges and problems.

Expanding cooperation in the energy, transit, and electricity sectors, cooperation between the two countries in the gas and petrochemical sectors, issuing technical and engineering services, targeting the transit of 20 million tons of goods between the two countries, facilitating the issuance of visas, developing cooperation in the sectors of ports and shipping, corridors, road and rail transportation was one of the most important axes of the speeches of the ministers of energy, oil and road and urban development of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the meeting of the high-ranking delegations of Iran and Turkmenistan.

Arkadag said that the development of relations between the two countries is very important for Turkmenistan

He emphasized the importance of the development of relations between the two countries for Turkmenistan and expressed his satisfaction with the very good level of regional and international cooperation between Tehran and Ashgabat, and emphasized the country's determination to support Iran's international initiatives.

Referring to the country's efforts to establish peace and stability in the region, the national leader of Turkmenistan emphasized his country's interest in developing security cooperation between the two countries and said: Turkmenistan is also interested in developing trade and economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and increasing cooperation in the Caspian Sea area.

Turkmen media

In political terms, the National Leader of the Turkmen people continued, we express gratitude to the Iranian side for its support for the status of permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan and the international initiatives put forward. To date, the Islamic Republic of Iran has supported the adoption of 26 resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly

based on our country's proposals and has co-authored many of them.

As part of the exchange of views on current issues of our time, the parties confirmed their intention to continue to cooperate jointly on international issues.

As noted, today global security is one of the key topics of world politics. In this regard, it was emphasized that Turkmenistan is making great efforts to ensure peace and security on the planet. In particular, emphasis was placed on the importance of the initiative put forward by our country to develop a Global Security Strategy at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly.

In this context, the Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty expressed confidence that the Iranian side will support the practical implementation of this proposal. In turn, the Turkmen side provides and intends to continue to provide support to important international initiatives of the IRI, the National Leader of the Turkmen people emphasized.

Turning to trade and economic cooperation, the National Leader of the Turkmen people noted with satisfaction the progressive dynamics of bilateral trade turnover. Compared to the same period last year, a high figure was achieved in January-June 2024.

In order to increase the volume of mutual trade, the advisability of taking appropriate measures was expressed and it was proposed to increase the range of goods and products on a bilateral basis, as well as to involve private companies in this work.

The gas sector was identified as one of the main areas of economic cooperation. As the Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty emphasized, the Turkmen side plans to increase the volume of gas supplies to Iran to 40 billion cubic meters per year. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to modernize the gas pipeline infrastructure, build new facilities and attract investments.

In this context, it was noted that it is planned to build two gas compressor stations and a 125-kilometer gas pipeline on the territory of Turkmenistan. This will allow additional volumes of Turkmen natural gas to be supplied to Iran to the Çaloýuk gas metering station.

Continuing the topic, it was emphasized that in the near future, the SWAP scheme envisages exporting Turkmen natural gas to the Republic of Iraq and further to Turkey.

According to the mutual opinion of the parties, cooperation in the electric power industry, where many years of positive experience have been accumulated, gives a great impetus to the development of bilateral relations.

Turkmenistan is making efforts to further strengthen cooperation in the energy sector, the Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty said, noting that a significant project in this area is the construction of the Turkmen section of the Mary-Mashhad power transmission line with a capacity of 500/400 kV and a length of 155 kilometers, which will be laid from the city of Mary to the city of Sarakhs and from there to the Turkmen-Iranian border.

One of the priority vectors, according to the mutual opinion of the parties, is the transport sector. At the same time, it was emphasized that Turkmenistan and Iran attach great importance to strengthening cooperation in this area, in particular, they consider the key task to be increasing cargo transportation.

Having noted with satisfaction that our countries have accumulated positive experience of cooperation in the field of road construction, Hero-Arkadag and the head of the IRI spoke in favor of strengthening partnership in this area. In this context, it was noted that within the framework of the official visit of the National Leader of the Turkmen people to Iran in May last year, an agreement was reached on the construction of a road from the Turkmen-Iranian border to the city of Gumdag in Turkmenistan, with a length of 242 kilometers, and Iranian companies were invited to participate in this project. In addition, in November last year, a Memorandum of Cooperation on the construction of this highway was signed between the relevant structures of the two countries in Ashgabat.

Along with this, the Chairman of the Khalk Maslakhaty noted the importance of increasing bilateral rail and road freight transportation. Having proposed increasing the volume of goods transported through the railway checkpoints of Serakhs and Incheburun, Hero-Arkadag confirmed his readiness to work together in this direction with the Iranian side. In order to increase the intensification of transportation along the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway and increase the volume of road freight transportation along this route, the National Leader of the Turkmen people put forward an initiative to cooperate on a trilateral basis, noting the advisability of involving companies from three countries in this work, Hero-Arkadag said.

Continuing the topic of cooperation in the transport sector, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran voiced proposals related to cargo transportation along the Armenia-Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan transport and transit corridor and the effective use of this route.

The parties also emphasized the importance of intensifying the activities of the Intergovernmental Turkmen-Iranian Commission on Economic Cooperation, which serves as an effective mechanism for the practical implementation of the designated strategically significant projects.

Particular attention was paid to the expansion of cultural and humanitarian partnership. It was noted that great importance is attached to holding mutual days of culture. As was emphasized, in November of last year, the Days of Culture of Turkmenistan were held in the city of Isfahan. Various joint cultural events are regularly organized in our country.

Hero Arkadag also expressed deep gratitude to the Iranian side for the cultural and mass events held in May of this year on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the great son of the Turkmen people, the famous poet and thinker of the East Makhtumkuli Fragi. As noted, celebrations are being organized in Turkmenistan and abroad in honor of this significant date. In this regard, the National Leader of the Turkmen people, on his own behalf and on behalf of the President of Turkmenistan, invited the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to take part in the International Forum of Heads of State and Government in honor of the 300th anniversary of Makhtumkuli Fragi, which will be held in Ashgabat on October 11, 2024.

The invitation was accepted with gratitude.

Documents Signed

The signing ceremony for cooperation documents between Iran and Turkmenistan was held with the presence of President Pezeshkian and Berdimuhamedow, during which four documents were signed to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The documents signed at the ceremony included a cooperation plan for 2024 to 2026 between the Foreign Ministries of Iran and Turkmenistan that was signed by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Meredov.

Also, a sisterhood agreement was signed between Iran's Amirabad Port and Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi Port by Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, and Mohammad Khan, CEO of the Turkmenistan Company.

Additionally, a document on enhancing natural gas collaboration was signed by Majid Chegini, Iran's Deputy Oil Minister, and the CEO of Turkmen Gas Company.

Officials from both countries have signed a joint action plan aimed at enhancing and expanding customs cooperation between the two countries from 2024 to 2026.

Meeting with Spiritual Leader of Iran

The account of the meeting with the Spiritual Leader of Iran, as posted on the official website of Imam Khamenei:

Imam Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has met with Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the National Leader of Turkmenistan and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, which was held on Wednesday afternoon, August 28, 2024, Imam Khamenei underscored the importance of expanding relations between the two countries as a top priority. He emphasized that, while Iran and Turkmenistan have experienced significant growth in their bilateral relations in recent years, there remain numerous untapped opportunities for further cooperation that must be explored.

Imam Khamenei emphasized that expanding relations based on mutual interests is advantageous for both Tehran and Ashgabat. "We hope that with the presence of the newly elected government of Dr. Pezeshkian, the matters related to expanding relations between the two countries will continue with increased vigor and strength," he said.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution pointed to the strong motivation of Mr. Pezeshkian to expand relations with Turkmenistan and noted that Ms. Farzaneh Sadegh, the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, will also work to advance the agreements between the two countries in her role as head of the joint commission to achieve favorable outcomes.

Imam Khamenei highlighted the comments made by the National Leader of Turkmenistan concerning collaborative projects between the two countries, particularly the North-South Transport Corridor and the development of the Turkmenistan gas pipeline. He emphasized the significance of these initiatives, noting that their successful implementation, with the involvement of Iranian experts and specialists, will further reinforce the strong bonds between Iran and Turkmenistan.

During the meeting, which was also attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian, Mr. Berdymukhamedov characterized Iran and Turkmenistan as being akin to relatives. "I had good, constructive negotiations with the President in Tehran, and I am hopeful that the agreements we signed will yield positive results," he stated.

The National Leader of Turkmenistan commemorated the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, recognizing his significant contributions to strengthening relations between the two countries. He added that, "the long and shared border between Turkmenistan and Iran has always been and will continue to be a border of peace and friendship, and we are prepared

to expand relations in all areas.”

Book of Arkadag translated into Farsi

During the meeting, President Masoud Pezeshkian presented the National Leader of the Turkmen people with a book translated into Farsi, “Worship of the Mother – Worship of the Holy One.”

This is the book by Arkadag about the life path of his mother, Ogulabat eje, and it talks about the enduring values embedded in the mentality of the Turkmen and playing an important role in the education of patriotic and worthy citizens.

/// nCa, 29 August 2024 (with input from Iranian and Turkmen media, pictures credit Iranian media and official website of Imam Khamenei)

Here are some pictures from the visit:

