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Uzbekistan's Restored Naibabad Station: A Boost to Central-South Asia Connectivity



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The reopening of the Naibabad railway station on the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif line is a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity between Central and

South Asia. Spearheaded by Uzbekistan Railways, this restoration underscores Uzbekistan's vital role in fostering regional cooperation and economic integration.



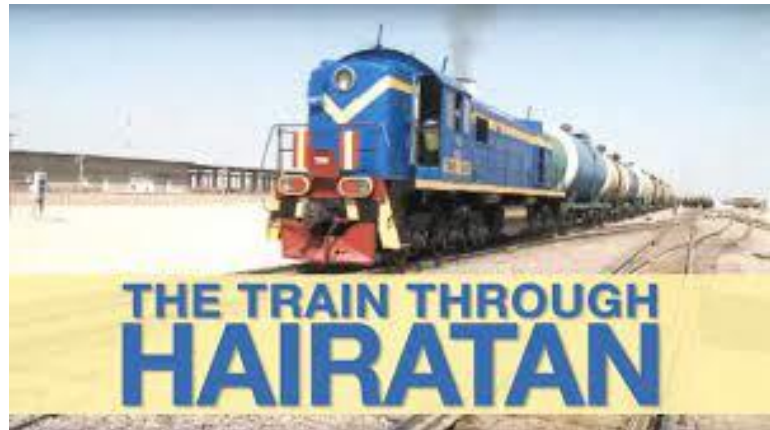
Projects like the Hairatan-

Mazar-e-Sharif railway are playing a central role in the South-Central Asia connectivity transformation, broadening Afghanistan as a critical transit hub and fulfilling the ambition to strengthen regional trade networks.

The Naibabad station, part of the 75-kilometre Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway, serves as a key logistical hub in the region. The railway, originally constructed in 2010 by Uzbekistan Railways, was designed to facilitate trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, providing a direct route for the transport of goods. After several years of inactivity, the reactivation of the Naibabad station, completed at a cost of \$6.3 million, marks a renewed commitment to enhancing this vital trade route. This project was executed by Uzbekistan Railways in collaboration with the Termez Regional Railway Junction and Sogdiana Trans, under a contract with the Afghan Railway Authority. This railway can significantly reduce transportation costs and times for goods moving through

the region. For instance, the Trans-Afghan Railway project, which envisions a 573-kilometre railway link from Mazar-e-Sharif to Kabul and further to Peshawar in Pakistan, is expected to cut transportation time from Uzbekistan to Pakistan from 30-35 days to just 10-15 days.

This restoration is part of a larger strategy to transform the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway into a regional crossroads for the transport of commercial goods. The station's reopening is expected to boost trade between Central Asia and South Asia by facilitating the



smooth flow of goods from countries like Russia, Kazakhstan, and China through Afghanistan to Pakistan, India, and other South Asian nations. The railway provides an alternative route to seaports in Pakistan, reducing reliance on more expensive and time-consuming routes through Iran. For Pakistan, the railway offers direct access to Central Asian markets, positioning the country as a key player in regional trade and economic cooperation.

In this context, an agreement was signed in February 2021 between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan for the construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway to broaden the transportation corridor, which is seen as a turning point in the history of regional integration and trade between Central and South Asia.

Broader Implications for Regional Connectivity

The reopening of the Naibabad station is a significant component of a broader, ambitious vision aimed at creating a vast transport network that interconnects Central Asia with South Asia, thereby fostering greater regional connectivity and integration. Central to this vision is the Trans-Afghan Railway Project, a monumental initiative that seeks to revolutionize the region's connectivity.

This project, with its 573-kilometre corridor linking Mazar-e-Sharif with Kabul and extending to Peshawar, is poised to become a transformative force in regional trade dynamics. Estimated at a cost of \$5 billion and slated for completion by 2027, this railway is more than just infrastructure—it is a catalyst for



regional economic integration. The Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway project is expected to draw substantial foreign direct investment (FDI), thereby spurring economic growth across the region. Moreover, this enhanced connectivity is anticipated to play a pivotal role in promoting peace and stability, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan, by fostering economic cooperation. These initiatives are part of a larger, strategic effort to develop integrated multimodal transport corridors that not only strengthen intra-regional

connectivity but also contribute to the broader goals of economic development and regional stability.

Uzbekistan's Role in Enhancing Regional Connectivity

Uzbekistan has emerged as a key player in promoting regional connectivity in Central and South Asia. The country's active participation in various infrastructure projects, including the restoration of the Naibabad station, reflects its strategic interest in fostering economic cooperation across the region.



The reactivation of the Naibabad station is a component of Uzbekistan's comprehensive strategy aimed at bolstering trade links and economic integration throughout Central and South Asia, aligning with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's broader vision to transform the region into a hub of security, stability, and sustainable development that is fully integrated into the global economy. This initiative encompasses significant projects such as the reconstruction of the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway and the Trans-Afghan Railway, with Uzbekistan playing a leading role in these transformative efforts. These projects not only demonstrate Uzbekistan's dedication to enhancing trade links but also reflect its broader goal of promoting regional economic cooperation and integration.



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President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's leadership in this project underscores its commitment to promoting regional economic cooperation and integration. As transportation network projects continue to progress and enhance, they hold the promise of transforming Central and South Asia into a more interconnected and prosperous region.