



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES  
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

# Iran

## *Digest*

December 2024

- **Iran's Foreign Minister makes regional diplomatic tour amid rebel offensive in Syria**
- **Iran and Turkey hold the 29th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission meeting in Tehran**
- **Iran successfully launches its first orbital transfer block**
- **Oman's Foreign Minister visits Tehran**
- **First rail transit shipment from China reaches Afghanistan via Iran**



## Iran's Foreign Minister makes regional diplomatic tour amid rebel offensive in Syria

On 1 December, as Sunni Islamist Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in a renewed offensive seized control of Syria's second-largest city Aleppo, Iranian Foreign Minister [Abbas Araghchi](#) arrived in Damascus for talks with President Bashar al-Assad. Araghchi said that the "sinister goals of these terrorists align with those of our enemies in perpetuating war and insecurity", indirectly referring to the US and Israel. In a media interview, Araghchi noted that Iran is prepared to consider sending military forces to Syria if an official request is made by the Syrian government. He also emphasised the importance of [dialogue with Turkey](#), particularly concerning their differences over Syria. "The expansion of terrorist groups in Syria may harm neighbouring countries like Iraq, Jordan, and Turkiye more than it harms Iran," he noted. While meeting his Turkish counterpart [Hakan Fidan](#) in Ankara, Araghchi stressed on safeguarding the achievements of the Astana peace talks involving Iran, Russia and Turkey. In a news conference after meeting Araghchi, Fidan stated that attributing the Aleppo offensive to foreign is "a mistake and a refuge for those unwilling to understand the realities in Syria." Fidan also reaffirmed Ankara's readiness to facilitate dialogue between Damascus and the Syrian opposition. In Baghdad, Araghchi attended a [trilateral meeting](#) with his Iraqi and Syrian counterparts Fuad Hussein and Bassam Sabbagh respectively. They released a joint press statement highlighting the current security challenges in Syria and their impact on the regional, while emphasizing the importance of regional and international collaboration to confront these challenges. The Astana format meeting in Doha called for the cessation of conflict and violence, and focusing on dialogue and political solutions to address the issues in Syria. After

rebels captured Damascus and Assad took asylum in Russia, Iranian [government spokesperson](#) called for "respect for Syria's territorial integrity" and said the Syrian people should decide their own fate. Hossein Salami, the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), told Iranian parliament on 10 December that no Iranian forces currently remain in Syria.

## Iran and Turkey hold the 29th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission meeting in Tehran

Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd and Turkey's Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat co-chaired the [29th Joint Economic Cooperation Commission](#) meeting in Tehran on 11 December. The two countries signed a comprehensive MoU on strengthening ties in various sectors, including trade, transport, customs, transit, investment, banking, electricity, agriculture, culture, tourism. They also discussed measures to increase their bilateral trade from current figure of US\$11.7 billion to US\$30 billion over the next five years. Bolat pointed to plans to modernise the four existing border crossings and establish two additional crossings to streamline customs operations and boost trade. He also called for revitalizing a preferential trade agreement from 2015 and concluding a comprehensive tourism pact between the two nations. President [Masoud Pezeshkian](#) in his talks with Bolat said that he has always emphasized the necessity and importance of strengthening relations between Islamic countries and that "we should solve the problems among us in a brotherly manner and strengthen the power of the Islamic world in a practical way."

## Iran successfully launches its first orbital transfer block

On 6 December, Iran successfully launched its [heaviest-ever payload](#) into space using the Simorgh rocket, a two-stage liquid-

fuelled launcher developed by the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics. The launch occurred at the Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal in southeast Semnan. Simorgh achieved injection speed of 7,754 meters per second, reinforcing its status as Iran's sole launcher capable of placing such payloads into low earth orbit. It carried approximately 300 kilograms of payloads, including the Saman-1 orbital transfer unit (OTU), Fakhr-1 CubeSat, into an elliptical orbit with an apogee of 410 km and a perigee of 300 km. The Saman-1 OTU aims to elevate satellites to higher orbits, thereby reducing costs and the dependency on larger, fuel-intensive launch vehicles. The Fakhr-1 cubesat is a [technology demonstration mission](#), intended to verify the ability of the Simorgh rocket's second stage to deploy multiple satellites. Upon achieving orbit, Fakhr-1 transmitted its initial signals to ground stations, confirming its stabilization and operational status. Earlier in September, Iran placed Chamran-1 research satellite, weighing 60 kilograms into a 550-km orbit using [Qaem-100 rocket](#), a solid-fuel, three-stage vehicle developed by the Aerospace Force of the IRGC.

### Oman's Foreign Minister visits Tehran

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi received his Omani counterpart [Said Badr al-Busaidi](#) in Tehran. At a joint press conference, Araghchi said regional countries including Iran have “consensus on maintenance of territorial integrity and unity, respect for all ethnics and religions and the formation of an inclusive government in Syria.” Pointing to the constant consultations between Iran and Oman on regional matters, Araqhchi said the two countries stress the need to establish an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and send aid to the war-ravaged Strip. He also stated that Tehran and Muscat condemn the joint attacks by the United States and Israel on the

Yemeni territory. Araghchi also clarified that Busaidi carried no American message for Iran and that Tehran will continue to exchange necessary messages with the American side at the appropriate time through the Swiss embassy. Busaidi noted that Oman is a supporter of the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and also stressed the importance of preserving Syria's independence and territorial integrity.

### First rail transit shipment from China reaches Afghanistan via Iran

On 30 December, the first rail transit shipment from China reached [Afghanistan](#) via Iran. The shipment including 1,000 tons of iron coils, arrived via Iran's railway to Rozanak station in Herat province. Rozanak is on the 225km-long cross-border Khaf-Herat railway linking eastern Iran to western Afghanistan. The railway, which has 6 mn tons of annual cargo capacity, facilitates trade between Iran and Afghanistan and also forms part of a major 2,000 km [East-West railroad](#) that spans China, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Turkey to connect to Europe. The railway was launched in December 2020, but during the phase when Taliban ousted the Western-backed government in Kabul, parts of the routes and Rozanak Station incurred damages. After Iran assisted repair works the railway was relaunched in July 2023. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Public Works of Taliban stated that “with the completion of the Khaf-Herat railway project, new opportunities for Afghanistan's economy will be created, and a suitable foundation for expanding trade and transit in the region will be established.” On 30 December, the head of Iran's Customs Administration said that Afghanistan has become [Iran's fifth-largest export destination](#), with non-oil exports to its eastern neighbour reaching US\$1.6 billion during March-December period.