

Chabahar-Karachi ferry service to promote people-to-people contact

Iran and Pakistan plan to launch Chabahar-Karachi ferry service which will not only promote people-to-people contact but would also boost tourism and generate economic activity in the region.

The decision was taken during a recent visit by a high ranking Iranian delegation to Pakistan led by Minister of Road and Urban Development Abbas Akhoundi, IRNA reported.

Iran and Pakistan are two neighboring states with strong brotherly ties but despite the fact that large number of Pakistanis travel to Iran for religious and commercial purposes, there is no ferry service between the two countries and the people have to use road and air routes to travel which is quite expensive.

It is said that following the launch of the ferry service, best transport facilities would be available to people of both countries who regularly travel on these routes, however, the Iranian side hopes that ferry service would be extended to other areas.

Karachi-Chabahar ferry service is the top priority of the Pakistani government in view of its economic viability. More than 200,000 Pakistani pilgrims visited Iran last year and the ferry service would provide them better and faster traveling facility.

Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) is finalizing the project and its arrangements including acquisition of ferries.

The ferry service would prove to be a major step to enhance people-to-people contact and generate economic activities in the region. Iran and Pakistan share the same culture, religion, values and they have so many other things in common which no other two countries of the world have.

The ferry service will also promote tourism as Iran is a one of the major tourist destinations with lots of tourist attraction from ancient cities and beach resorts, to its modern capital and skiing destinations.

During his visit to Karachi port, Akhoundi also proposed trans-shipment business by linking Karachi

Port and Bandar Abbas as there was ample space of 204,000 hectares available at Bandar Abbas for promoting trans-shipment cargo handling facility.

The Iranian side has also called for the early launch of the railway project between Gwadar and Chabahar which will help enhance cooperation and development of the two ports.

Iran and Pakistan plan to enhance trade exchanges to \$5 billion and steps such as the ferry service connecting Chabahar to Gwadar by rail and road would open more avenues of cooperation between the two states to achieve this target.

