



Taliban's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi (left) and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran (December 2023)

## Taliban Calls For Collaboration With Iran Amid Tension

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Diplomacy - Foreign Relations   Afghanistan   Iran

The Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, advocated for enhanced economic collaboration during his visit to Iran.

Muttaqi engaged in discussions with economic activists from both Iran and Afghanistan on Tuesday, encouraging Iranian traders "to seize the opportunities present in the Afghan market."

Muttaqi emphasized Afghanistan's agricultural potential, fertile soil, clean water, and valuable mines, highlighting the mutual benefits of investments from neighboring countries like Iran.

Claiming that the Islamic Emirate swiftly improved security, Muttaqi cited a local trader's observation that before the Taliban, 20% of benefits were spent on security, which has significantly reduced under the new administration.

Expressing determination to transform Afghanistan into a regional transit hub, Muttaqi underscored the country's evolving role in transit and its growing economic centrality.

He also claimed that the government has an impartial stance on religious matters, asserting respect for all individuals, irrespective of Sunni or Shiite affiliations.

**However, tensions persist between Iran and the Taliban**, particularly regarding water issues. An Iranian parliamentary delegation visited Kabul in August to address concerns about the Taliban obstructing the Helmand River flow, impacting Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan region. The Taliban denies the allegations, intensifying the water crisis dispute.

Recently, critics of the Iranian government have cautioned against its open borders policy, expressing concerns about a potential hidden agenda. In response, hardliners accuse critics of fueling "Afghanophobia" amidst rising anti-Afghan sentiments on social media and instances of violence against immigrants.

Some critics speculate that authorities might be encouraging illegal Afghan immigration to address population decline or even to bolster the military by recruiting young Shiite Hazara Afghans. The situation reflects the complexities and challenges arising from the evolving relationship between Iran and Afghanistan.

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