Digital Silk Road: Iran's Telecoms Minister Courts Armenia as Tehran's Digital Transit Role Erodes

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Sophie Rieckmann



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Tehran defends its last connectivity lever as Yerevan diversifies westward

On 23 November, Armenian outlet Tert.am reported that Armenia's Minister of High-Tech Industry and AI, Davit Tadevosyan, received a delegation led by Iran's Communications Minister, Sattar Hashemi. They discussed cooperation in high technology, telecommunications, IT and innovation, and reviewed agreements on high-tech, telecoms and postal services reached at the 19th Armenia-Iran intergovernmental commission in Yerevan on 9–10 November. No memoranda or projects were announced. The visit follows Hashemi's "initial agreement" with Turkmen and Kazakh counterparts in

Doha on 10 November on a joint digital corridor linking Central Asia to the Persian Gulf, which is not yet operational.

The visit is less about technology than about protecting a shrinking asset: Iran's role as an internet transit hub for the South Caucasus. Tehran has earned transit fees and political leverage by routing regional data, including Iraqi traffic into Armenia. That position is weakening. In June, Telecom Armenia and AzerTelecom agreed to build a fibre link to Nakhchivan across Armenian territory, reducing both countries' need for Iranian routes. Connected to the Azerbaijani-Kazakh Trans-Caspian cable, this east–west route creates a digital parallel to TRIPP. Hashemi's Doha project is Tehran's north-south counter-offer; Kazakhstan is party to both, demonstrating that regional states are hedging rather than choosing sides.

Wartime raises the stakes. With undersea cables in the Persian Gulf vulnerable to disruption, overland fibre through Armenia also gives Iran a crucial backup connection to the global internet.

But Armenia has little room to manoeuvre. Tadevosyan's ministry oversees an AI push built around Firebird's US-licensed Nvidia chips any sign that Iran could access that computing power would threaten those licences. So, real cooperation is likely to stay limited to basic telecoms transit, leaving "AI" strictly in press releases.

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