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# Iranian Maglev Will Link Tehran to Land-Bridge City

Political and industrial circles in Iran have taken the first small, but important step towards introducing the revolutionary technology of the Transrapid's magnetic levitation trains into the Islamic Republic. What this will unleash among hostile circles in the West, who are bent on blocking Iran's nuclear program—also on grounds of technological apartheid—is as yet unknown.

The news broke April 14, when Iranian media outlets reported on an agreement, struck at the Mashhad International Fair site, between Germany and Iran on the idea of a maglev train link between the capital city of Tehran and the holy city of Mashhad.

The Tehran-Mashhad link is crucial in the broader Eurasian Land-Bridge, transcontinental rail network stretching from China to Europe. In 1996, the Iranians succeeded in finishing a link between Mashhad and Sarakhs, filling in the “missing link” in the chain from Iran to China, through the Central Asian Republics. The Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan stretch completed that year, established this link between Iran and Turkmenistan; from there, the line

should proceed all the way to China, as outlined in the Eurasian Land-Bridge report issued by EIR. That report, published in 1997, contained the speech by then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, who announced completion of the link, and the implications for Eurasian transportation.

Later reports specified that the agreement was a Memorandum of Understanding, for a feasibility study, the first step towards launching such a project. The agreement was signed between the Iranian Ministry of Roads and Transportation, and a German company—left unnamed. The fact that Iran's First Vice-President Parviz Davoudi was also in attendance, was a sign, according to Iranian sources who spoke to *EIR*, that it was quite official.

According to the Governor General of Khorasan Razavi province, Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi-Zadeh, who spoke at the ceremony, the maglev would reduce travel time between Tehran and Mashhad to 2½ to 3 hours. It now takes about 14 hours, to make the 560-mile trip. He added that Germany would invest 6.7 billion euros in the project under a base operations support contract, according to which Iran would repay the loan within a 15- to 25-year period.

The maglev project has been under discussion in Iran for some time. On Aug. 29, 2006, the English language *Iran Daily* reported government plans to invest some \$1.5

billion in the project. *Iran Daily* referred to a Persian-language report that said that the total budget for the State Transportation Infrastructures Development Company was \$260 million a year through March 2007. Expert estimates suggested that the maglev project would cost more than \$15 billion. The *Iran Daily* also reported that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the government would finance the project from its Foreign Exchange Reserves Account. This is the Oil Fund, which is a fund of oil revenues earmarked for investment projects of this type.

According to the same account, Hossein Tehrani, deputy head of rail, airport, and port development, said that the Mellat Bank Investment Company, together with an unnamed German firm, would invest in the project, adding that such BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer) projects had to have the participation of a partner from an advanced sector nation. According to a report posted on the International Maglev Board Forum on April 19, such a BOT would mean that the investors would operate the line for a certain period of time, estimated to be 10-25 years, during which they would get a return on their investment plus a profit. Thereafter, the entire operation would come under Iranian control.

Another 5.2 billion euros, according to this source, would be put up by Germans, that is, Iranian investors living in Germany.—*Muriel Mirak-Weissbach*