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Pakistan and Uzbekistan Reaffirm Commitment to Cross-Border Rail Project

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Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone discussion with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov on Sunday, reaffirming both countries' commitment to advancing the long-planned Uzbekistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan (UAP) Railway project. The call comes amid broader regional developments and persistent questions over Afghanistan's internal stability and infrastructure reliability.

According to a statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Office, the two ministers reviewed progress on the UAP Railway Framework Agreement and agreed to schedule a follow-up meeting. That session is expected to take place on the sidelines of the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers summit in Tianjin, China. The UAP Railway, which aims to connect Central Asia with South Asia via Afghanistan, is envisioned as a key corridor for trade, transport, and regional connectivity.

Despite ambitious timelines touted in earlier phases, the project has faced hurdles stemming from Afghanistan's security situation and a lack of clear governance structures since the Taliban's return to power. While Islamabad has sought to maintain open dialogue with Kabul's current rulers, many in the region and abroad remain skeptical of the regime's capacity to manage and protect international infrastructure projects. Critics also note that Pakistan's current government, marked by appointments lacking public electoral backing, has struggled to deliver results on several regional commitments.

The renewed conversation between Dar and Saidov reflects both countries' desire to keep the railway plan alive, though practical progress remains limited. The UAP route is expected to span nearly 760 kilometers (472 miles) and reduce cargo transport time between Pakistan and Central Asia from 30 days to just 5. However, the project's reliance on stable passage through Afghanistan continues to pose serious logistical and geopolitical concerns.

The planned follow-up discussions at the SCO summit will likely focus on next steps in implementation and financing, with hopes of garnering broader support among member states. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional bloc comprising China, Russia, and several Central and South Asian countries, has frequently served as a forum for such multilateral projects.