

# Mobarakeh Steel granted hot-roll import permit to ease post-war shortages

## Smart overhaul of damaged production lines, power units under review

### Economy Desk

Iran's Industry, Mine and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak announced Monday that Mobarakeh Steel Company has been granted a permit to import hot-rolled steel sheets to address market shortages and ensure uninterrupted supply to downstream industries, following damage to the facility's production lines during the American-Israeli war on Iran that began February 28. Speaking during a visit to the Isfahan-based steel complex alongside the provincial governor, Atabak emphasized the government's commitment to supporting the steel production chain and preventing disruptions, ISNA reported.

"Due to specific conditions that have arisen in Mobarakeh Steel's production lines, and the current inability to produce certain hot-rolled sheets domestically, the ministry has granted the necessary permit to the company to import

this product," Atabak said. "The aim of this decision is to ensure the timely supply of industries dependent on these sheets. The allocation and distribution of these imported products will be carried out strictly based on previous records and in line with past procedures for producers who had previously met their needs through Mobarakeh Steel."

Atabak addressed recent supply challenges affecting certain steel products, noting that extensive planning is underway to secure a significant portion of the slabs required by the complex through increased capacity at other domestic plants.

"These slabs, once sourced from various suppliers, will be delivered to sheet-producing units to ensure that production in this sector does not stop," he said.

Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) and Khuzestan Steel Company in southwestern Khuzestan Province were hit



Iran's Industry, Mine and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak chairs a meeting to review the smart reconstruction project for production and power plant units at Mobarakeh Steel Company in Isfahan, on April 20, 2026.

● ILNA

multiple times during the American-Zionist war. MSC is currently working to restore stable production after parts of its production lines sustained damage during the hostilities.

On the sidelines of the visit, Atabak toured various sections of the Mobarakeh Steel complex, inspecting damaged areas and receiving briefings on recent measures taken to secure and clear those sites.

Later Monday evening, a meeting was held at Mobarakeh Steel to review a smart reconstruction project for its production and power plant units. The session was attended by Atabak and



Masoud Saminnejad, deputy minister and head of IMIDRO, the state organization responsible for overseeing Iran's mines and mining industries. According to ILNA, the meeting fo-

cused on strategies for the intelligent modernization of production lines and power facilities, as well as planning for the upgrade of the complex's key infrastructure.

## Passenger flights resumed in Tehran; more airports to reopen



he added, noting that operations have already restarted at six airports including Mashhad, Gorgan, Birjand, Zahedan, Mehrabad and Imam Khomeini.

Iran on Saturday reopened the eastern section of its airspace for international overflights following a security and safety review, after a closure imposed during the Israeli-American aggression that began on February 28.

Maqsood Asadi Samani, secretary of the Association of Iranian Airlines, said on Saturday that six airports have resumed operations.

"Since the start of the war on February 28, around 90 cargo flights have been carried out to transport medicines and raw materials for pharmaceutical production, and these flights are continuing," Sanaei said. "Ticket sales for passenger flights are also gradually resuming, taking into account flight safety and security," he added.

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Iran has authorized the resumption of passenger flights at Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport and Mehrabad Airport from Monday, a senior aviation official said, as the country gradually restores air travel following recent security disruptions.

Hamid Reza Sanaei, deputy head for aviation and international affairs at the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAO), said passenger flights would also be allowed at airports in Urmia, Kermanshah, Abadan,

Shiraz, Kerman, Rasht, Yazd, Zahedan, Gorgan and Birjand starting Saturday (April 25), IRNA reported.

"We have tried by opening the airspace over central and western regions of the country to ensure that all areas have access to flights in the first phase, and in particular to make Haj flights possible. With coordination from military sectors, other regions will also gradually become operational," he said.

Flights from Mashhad International Airport in northeast of the country are gradually resuming,

## Iran-ECO trade soars 82% as Tehran backs regional economic ties

### Economy Desk

Iran's trade with members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has grown by 82% over the past five years, a senior official from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran said at the first meeting of the ECO Trade Agreement Technical Committee (ECOTA).

According to IRNA, Elham Haji Karimi, head of the Office for Reviving Trade Agreements and International Organizations at the TPO, reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to strengthening regional trade cooperation.

Haji Karimi said the ECO region holds significant potential for economic and trade growth, adding that all member states — beyond the current ECOTA participants — could move toward a more comprehensive agreement using the existing ECOTA framework, in a way that reflects current needs and anticipates future ones.

"Despite unjust sanctions and the imposed war against the country, and damage to some trade and economic infrastructure during the war that has created limitations, the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to actively participate in



the ECO and in drafting a new trade agreement," she said.

The United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 8, which were halted by a 15-day ceasefire announced on April 8. Iran has also faced Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program, with measures primarily targeting its oil and energy sectors.

Haji Karimi also stressed the need for cooperation among all members to achieve the ECO Vision 2035, adding that Iran has focused its

economic and trade diplomacy on maximum engagement with friendly countries, including ECO members. The Economic Cooperation Organization is a regional body comprising 10 member states: Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. ECO aims to promote economic, trade, scientific, technical, cultural and infrastructure cooperation among its members. Its permanent secretariat is based in Tehran.

## Naval blockade of ...

**How did the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the imposition of a form of naval blockade by the United States affect China's interests and relations?**

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In this regard, China's defense minister stated that Chinese vessels would continue to pass through the Strait of Hormuz and that the United States had no right to obstruct the implementation of China's energy contracts with Iran. During the blockade, some Chinese supertankers entered Iranian waters, loaded cargo, and then moved out toward their destinations via routes close to Iranian waters, such as near Jask and Chabahar.

It appears that part of this passage occurred either with a degree of US acquiescence or due to Chinese warnings, or alternatively because routes were selected to remain within safer zones. At the same time, some reports indicated that certain Iranian vessels were seized or turned back.

**Under conditions of naval blockade, what alternative routes does Iran have to maintain ex-**

**changes with China?**

One of the most important alternatives is the overland route. Even before the war—and afterward—a railway line has operated from Shanghai, passing through Xinjiang and Turkmenistan into Iran, eventually reaching the Aprin dry port west of Tehran. This route is mainly used for non-oil goods, although the transport of oil products is also possible, but in smaller volumes compared to maritime shipping.

The advantage of this route is its shorter transit time—around 12 to 15 days—compared to 40 to 50 days by sea. It could develop into a transit and even energy hub.

**How can the petro-yuan project and its potential replacement of the petrodollar in China's Persian Gulf oil transactions play a role in relation to the war and Iran?**

China's main objective is the internationalization of the yuan and reducing dependence on the dollar. This is part of broader economic competition

between China and the United States and is not necessarily limited to Iran or wartime conditions in the region. China is seeking to advance this policy with various countries, particularly in the Persian Gulf.

However, due to these countries' close ties with the United States, China proceeds cautiously. In Iran's case as well, because of sanctions and the high risks associated with economic engagement, China seeks to keep its level of interaction with Iran managed and maintains a conservative approach.

**How could increased alignment between China and Iran possibly happen under these conditions?**

China already demonstrates a degree of alignment, even if not publicly acknowledged. Iran could leverage the Strait of Hormuz as a bargaining tool—meaning that in exchange for reopening or facilitating passage, it could call on China to play a role in pressuring the United States to ease sanc-

tions and release blocked assets.

Additionally, mediation through countries such as Pakistan—which maintains relations with China, the United States, and Arab states—could serve as an important diplomatic channel.

**Ultimately, could the continuation of the naval blockade draw China into a more serious confrontation with the United States?**

In practice, yes. However, China does not want to enter into direct confrontation with the United States, yet it will not back down from its interests either. The relatively smooth passage of some Chinese tankers through the region suggests that China opposes a full-scale restriction and is seeking to preserve its own energy supply routes.

In reality, the naval blockade is primarily directed at Iran, while other countries continue to enjoy greater freedom. Nonetheless, China is using its influence to work around or reduce these constraints, as Iran remains one of its key partners in oil supply.