

TPO launches new cargo corridors, economic war command

Economy Desk

Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced the selection and operational testing of new cargo transit corridors while reviving previously closed routes, as the country implements measures to maintain trade flows amid ongoing regional tensions following a 40-day US-Israeli war on the country.

Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, head of the TPO, also announced the establishment of an economic war management headquarters at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. "The Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has taken various measures to prevent disruption in the export and import cycle, including expediting customs clearance, extending deadlines for currency commitments, and renewing trade cards," he said, according to Mehr news agency. "This committee emphasizes the private sector's role in maintaining the supply chain of basic goods," the deputy minister added.

During the Ramadan War that began on February 28, efforts were made to create alternative routes for goods to enter the country, Dehnavi said.

Some previously closed corridors have been revived to facilitate cargo movement, utilizing rail, road, and northern port capacities, according to the official.

Alongside efforts to expand cargo transit routes, regulatory provisions have been reassessed, he said. Foreign exchange earnings, production sustainability, and meeting

consumer needs remain the country's core priorities, with export restrictions on certain products imposed to safeguard domestic supply, he added.

Dehnavi attributed concerns about raw material shortages in warehouses to psychological market tensions, stating that no supply problems are expected for certain raw materials in the coming months. He also highlighted the use of foreign exchange earnings from exports to import essential raw materials, noting that the mechanism helps secure critical supplies amid ongoing trade disruptions.

Synergy between government and the private sector, reform of commodity exchange allocations, and market competition control are among the measures implemented to navigate the current crisis, Dehnavi said. According to the TPO chief, due to incomplete and precise data on damages inflicted on industries, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade is revising processes based on feedback from economic actors, with priorities being reviewed amid uncertainties.

Iran remains in wartime conditions. Tehran and Washington agreed to a temporary ceasefire on April 8 with Pakistan's mediation. Tensions remain high. The US imposed a blockade on April 13 on vessels entering or leaving Iranian coastal waters to force Iran into a peace agreement after the 40-day war. The measure was later expanded to all Iranian vessels on the high seas. Also, under new conditions set by Tehran, only pre-authorized commercial vessels may

transit the Strait of Hormuz, while ships linked to the US, Israel and other "hostile states" are barred.

Transit routes, neighbors remain strategic

Meanwhile, Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi, the secretary-general of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, told ISNA that Iran's access to 15 neighbors makes transit capacities at its western and northern borders a key strategic advantage for regional trade, capable of sustaining cargo flows even under international restrictions.

"Even assuming an unlikely complete siege in the south, a total blockade of Iran is practically impossible," he said, noting that many of Iran's neighboring countries have access to open waters.

Sanjabi Shirazi noted that cargo supply is feasible through transit mechanisms via these countries' ports, as well as by road, rail, and shared land borders. "I believe that regarding western neighboring countries, especially Iraq, a historical opportunity has emerged for them since February 28," he said. "They can pursue port development to activate part of their capacities."

He added that this opportunity could conversely attract Iranian companies previously based in the United Arab Emirates toward Iraq. The new conditions could also reduce costs, as the transit distance for cargo unloading to Iranian territory is less than five kilometers, with minimal distance for small cargo boat operations.

"And in the north, Americans have no ac-



MEHR

cess and cannot prevent cargo ships from docking at northern ports, especially since Russia in the north produces a relatively large portion of our imported food items," he added.

Transshipment alternatives

Kambiz Etemadi, head of the container committee at the Iranian Shipping Association, told IRNA that Iranian goods currently held at UAE ports could be transferred to the country through transshipment or via other regional ports, though government follow-up is needed to resolve traders' car-

go entry challenges.

"Today, despite problems arising from the war, activities at Shahid Rajaei Port in south are proceeding under normal conditions," Etemadi said.

He noted that the main challenge is that commercial vessels from UAE ports are not entering Iran. Transferring cargo from UAE ports to alternative ports such as Hamad, Sohar, and Muscat in Oman, as well as Qatar, is under consideration as an option, though it increases final costs, he added, noting it remains preferable to a complete halt of operations.

Iran resumes int'l flights to Istanbul, Medina, Muscat after war hiatus



Passengers queue for check-in at Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran on April 25, 2026 following the resumption of flights after a 56-day pause caused by the war.

WANA

Economy Desk

Iran launched its first international flights on Saturday following a 56-day war and ceasefire, with services departing for Istanbul, Medina and Muscat, as authorities began a phased reopening of the country's airspace.

Four flights to Istanbul in Turkey, one flight to Medina in Saudi Arabia for (Haji pilgrimage), and one flight to Muscat in Oman were operated on Saturday.

Iran Air, Iran Airtour, Mahan and Meraj airlines operated flights from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport to Istanbul, while Sepehran Airlines flew to Muscat.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Airlines said its first international flight on Saturday departed Imam Khomeini International Airport for Medina, marking the launch of its second international route in the new Iranian year that began on March 21.

The carrier said that flights on the Istanbul route will operate daily until May 1, adding that the service resumed after obtaining the necessary permits from the Civil Aviation Organization. Additional routes, including Baku, Doha, Najaf and Baghdad, are also planned.

The airline also operated its first scheduled passenger flight on the Tehran-Mashhad-Tehran route on Saturday after the 56-

day suspension caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran that began in late February.

With the gradual reopening of the country's airspace and the resumption of flights, the Iran Airlines has restarted scheduled services on the route from Saturday, IRNA reported. It added that the airline's first passenger flight in the new year took place on Wednesday on the Tehran-Mashhad route. Separately, Airports Company CEO Mohammad Amirani said that, under operational planning, the eastern parts of the country have been prioritized for domestic and overflight operations starting Saturday. Provincial airports including Mashhad, Zahedan, Kerman, Yazd and Birjand will serve as key hubs for managing air traffic, with full navigation services available.

Amirani said airports in western and central regions — including Tabriz, Kermanshah, Ahvaz, Urmia, Ilam, Abadan, Isfahan, Shiraz and Rasht, as well as Tehran's Mehrabad airport — will resume operations with specific limits on flight numbers and operating hours, in line with current technical capacity and to ensure the highest level of safety in air traffic control.

RAI plans transit capacity boost with Turkey, eyes \$30b trade target

Economy Desk

Iran's railway chief said the country is working to raise annual transit rail capacity to Turkey to 15 million tons in coming years, as part of efforts to develop foreign trade and achieve a \$30 billion annual trade volume with its neighbor.

"We are working to increase the transit rail capacity to Turkey to 15 million tons annually in the coming years," said Jabbar Ali Zakeri, managing director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI). "Our target is to create the necessary infrastructure for developing foreign trade, particularly achieving \$30 billion in annual trade with Turkey."

Zakeri also told reporters that the current transit rail capacity to Turkey has doubled compared to last year, stopping short of providing any numerical details. According to IRNA, connecting the Marand rail line in Iran's East Azarbaijan Province, in the country's northwest, to Cheshm-e Soraya ranks among Iran Railways' most significant national



projects. The route is positioned to become the most economical and secure corridor for cargo transfers between China and Europe in both directions. Cheshm-e Soraya is a border station on the Iran-Turkey frontier, with the planned Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway transit line extending approximately 200 kilometers from Marand in northwestern Iran toward Turkey's Aralik border region in Igdir Province.

The location, named after the Cheshmeh Soraya River, sits at a strategic junction intended to link Iran's rail network with Turkey's, creating an uninterrupted passage for China-Europe freight via Iranian territory. Phase-one studies for the national project have been completed, Zakeri said, adding that executive operations are set to begin within the next two months. Studies for subsequent phases are also underway.

How Tehran enters ...

The Omanis, however, play an important role regarding the Strait of Hormuz, as Iran and Oman form the two sides of the strait at its narrowest point. Part of the consultations and discussions could be tied to that issue, which remains one of the key matters on the table.

Russia, meanwhile, is a member of the United Nations Security Council and holds veto power, so its role can carry weight in that arena. Consultations with Russia may also reflect a strategic balancing approach. It should also not be for-

gotten that Russia was among the countries that played a role in past negotiations related to the nuclear agreement known as the JCPOA, and it could again contribute to addressing some of the major outstanding disputes as a party sufficiently familiar with these issues. One possibility raised regarding Russia concerns the transfer of Iran's enriched uranium. Russia previously did this under the JCPOA and has now signaled readiness to receive the material again. Yet such an arrangement is now open to doubt, because for Tehran, more important than to whom

these stockpiles would be handed over is whether the material should leave the country at all.

One of the considerations at play is the uncertainty and lack of trust associated with the American side. That is why Iran sees it as a risk to transfer enriched uranium stockpiles abroad all at once or in full. Instead, Iran has announced that it has no objection to diluting the material in several stages, so that both the concerns of the other side are addressed and Iran's own considerations are preserved. But Washington appears to view enriched material in symbolic terms,

as something that could be used to declare victory. The United States may be driven less by a technical concern than by a political consideration.

What explains the deliberate information blackout Pakistan has referred to? Does it signal the talks are entering a more sensitive and detailed phase, or, on the contrary, is it meant to manage the fragility of the negotiations? Lately, too many issues have been pushed into the open and publicized in the media. Rather than being pursued confidentially behind

the scenes, they have been played out in the media, especially by the United States. The more public diplomacy of this kind becomes, the more it can suffer damage. This can create obstacles and conditions in which dialogue, interaction, and sometimes flexibility diminish, causing the process to move slower than expected and, in some cases, grind to a halt.

For that reason, issues now need to be pursued away from the media, rather than in the form of political and propaganda maneuvering aimed at pressuring the other side. But the American side has gener-

ally not shown such an approach in the past, and even now, during negotiations, it is taking positions not entirely aligned with that principle. It remains to be seen how the Pakistanis can manage this moving forward. More confidentiality helps the talks; less confidentiality hardens the environment for negotiators and their capitals alike. This is unlikely to signal entry into the detailed phase of negotiations, because the parties have not yet reached an understanding even on the frameworks. At this stage, it may be more a phase requiring major decisions.