

Iran airports traffic rises gradually after ceasefire, official says

Economy Desk

Passenger traffic at Iran's main airports has risen steadily following an April 8 ceasefire, with more than 57,000 travelers handled across domestic and international flights in late April and early May.

At Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport, more than 36,000 passengers were dispatched and received between April 25 and May 2, airport chief Ramin Azari said, according to IRNA on Monday. Flights have increased gradually since the ceasefire, he added, following a 40-day US-Israeli war on Iran that broke out in late February.

Azari said over 357 flights operated during the period, serving destinations including Mashhad, Shiraz, Kerman, Zahedan, Abadan, Gorgan and Urmia between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

"These flights were carried out

thanks to the coordination and sustained efforts of airport staff across different sectors," he said. Seven Iranian airports were targeted during the aggression, with attacks focused more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities.

Iran Air, the national carrier of the Islamic Republic of Iran, resumed domestic flights on April 25 after a 55-day suspension, with its first service operating between Tehran and Mashhad. International flights also resumed late last month, beginning with an Iran Air Hajj flight to Medina, Saudi Arabia with services to three destinations on the first day.

At Imam Khomeini Airport City, more than 21,549 passengers were transported on 202 inbound and outbound flights between April 25 and May 1, deputy airport operations head Javad

Salehi told ILNA.

Of the total flights, 100 were departures and 102 arrivals, with 11,427 outbound and 10,122 inbound passengers recorded, he said, citing the latest weekly operational data.

The busiest day during the period was May 1, with 38 flights, while peak hourly traffic occurred between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. with 22 flights, reflecting operational readiness during high-demand periods.

A total of 11 airlines operated flights to 25 international destinations during the week. Mahan Air accounted for 77 flights, or 38% of total traffic, while Iran Air carried 6,159 passengers, representing a 29% market share.

Istanbul remained the top destination, with 59 flights and more than 12,000 passengers, followed by Muscat, Najaf and Medina.



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TPO: Trade pacts in place with five nations, three blocs

Economy Desk

Iran is currently implementing a network of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, including preferential deals with five countries and three blocs, with efforts underway to sign new such deals, a senior official at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization said.

Elham Hajikarimi, head of the Revival Office of Trade Agreements and International Organizations at the TPO, said preferential bilateral trade agreements are in effect with Pakistan, Tunisia, Cuba, Turkey and Bosnia, according to IRNA.

Hajikarimi added that Iran's trade agreements are being pursued in both bilateral and multilateral formats, with a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in force since May 2025. Preferential multilateral agreements are also being implemented with



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the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

"The product lists of these agreements are published annually in the annexes to Iran's export and import regulations, allowing exporters and importers to benefit from tariff discounts and related advantages," she said. A free trade pact with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

Under preferential trade frameworks, the official said, tariff reductions apply to selected goods traded between Iran and partner countries, while in free trade agreements more than 80% of goods

are typically covered by zero tariffs. "A limited list of items remains subject to existing tariffs, special conditions or quotas."

In the case of Iran's agreement with the Eurasian bloc, 87% of tariff lines are subject to zero tariffs on both sides, with remaining items listed under negative lists in official regulations, Hajikarimi said. Iran and the EAEU member states — comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Armenia — launched a zero-tariff free trade agreement on May 15, 2025, following seven years of negotiations,

and it is now being fully implemented.

Hajikarimi also said additional bilateral agreements have been signed and finalized, with legal procedures underway for implementation, including preferential trade deals with Oman, Uzbekistan and Indonesia.

She said the Eurasian agreement could serve as a model for future trade deals, adding that a key feature of such agreements is the establishment of a clear legal framework governing economic relations, helping ensure trade continuity even during emergencies or crises.

The official added that joint working groups have been formed between Iran and EAEU member states, with cooperation planned in customs, standards and transport. Infrastructure developed in recent years could help sustain and strengthen trade ties during periods of disruption, she said.

Industry official says red meat supply stable despite wartime conditions

Economy Desk

Iran's livestock sector is in a "favorable" condition and domestic meat supply remains sufficient despite wartime pressures, an industry official said on Monday, rejecting a claim by US President Donald Trump that the country's food reserves could run out within three months.

Mansour Pourian, head of Iran's Livestock Supply Council, said red meat production has risen by about 25% due to favorable rainfall and increased seasonal births, according to IRNA.

The country remains under wartime conditions following a recent US-Israeli war. Tehran and Washington agreed to a temporary ceasefire on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, though tensions persist. Washington imposed a naval blockade on April 13 targeting vessels entering or leaving Iranian waters, later extending the measure to all Iranian-flagged ships on the high seas. Pourian said around 80% of the country's meat needs are met domestically, limiting the impact of any disruption to imports.

"A significant share of frozen meat imports is sourced through non-maritime routes," he said, adding that only about 20% of supply depends on sea-based

imports, which could also be substituted through alternative channels.

Efforts have been made to meet part of domestic demand through frozen meat imports, but current production and import levels are sufficient to meet consumption needs in the coming months, he said.

"The livestock sector is in a notably favorable condition this year, with significant growth in live animal and meat production, reflected in supply levels," Pourian said. According to data from Iran Veterinary Organization, more than 1.8 million head of livestock were slaughtered over the past two months, with meat production — particularly lamb — rising compared to last year, easing concerns about food shortages.

Improved pasture conditions due to favorable rainfall and seasonal breeding have helped fresh domestic meat supply cover more than 85% of the market, indicating stable conditions in the red meat sector, he added.

A decline in frozen meat distribution compared to last year reflects a 25% increase in domestic supply during peak seasonal breeding periods in winter and spring. Pourian said fewer animals left the country in the past three months in major livestock-pro-



ISNA

ducing regions such as the southwest and west, leaving larger herds domestically. In previous years, significant numbers of animals exited through smuggling and illegal exports.

He attributed the decline in smuggling partly to wartime conditions and said strong production levels could lead to lower meat prices in the near future.

Light livestock population rises

Iran's light livestock population has also increased to more than 73 million head, up from last year, supporting domestic supply and helping stabilize the market, he said.

"Daily slaughter stands at about 30,000 head of light livestock and 5,000 head of heavy livestock."

Under plans by the Agriculture Ministry, Iran's red meat production is expected to reach between 980,000 and 1 million tons this year, indicating a substantial increase in domestic output and no anticipated shortages, Pourian said.

A win-win opening ...

Some analyses attribute the primary mediation role to China and view Pakistan as acting within that framework. Given the perspective that Pakistan is operating more in line with the United States, how can the role of China-Pakistan relations be explained?

This proposition is partly valid, but it does not carry decisive weight. Pakistan has traditionally sought to calibrate its positions in a way that does not alienate any of the main pillars of the equation. Evidence suggests that Islamabad engaged in regional consultations before formal exchanges between Iran and the United States began, including hosting meetings attended by foreign ministers of key regional countries such as Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

Following these consultations, Pakistani officials traveled to China and put forward proposals that were ultimately not accepted by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This process shows that Pakistan is trying to maintain an

active role while not losing China's support, thereby striking a balance across its foreign policy orientations.

However, under current conditions, the operational role Pakistan is pursuing appears to be defined primarily within the framework of US expectations and demands. Statements by the US president further reinforce this perception. Overall, Pakistan appears to be playing a multilayered role, seeking to keep both the United States and China satisfied simultaneously, although its current trajectory seems more aligned with Washington.

How has Pakistan managed to maintain its balance in the recent crisis while preserving relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia?

This issue relates to the legal and security dimensions of regional relations. In its interactions with Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently sought to keep tensions under control. Even in cases

where actions have been taken against US bases in the region, such measures are not legally interpreted as targeting the territory of host countries, including Saudi Arabia, but rather as actions against US facilities and interests.

This distinction is significant because Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are bound by a defense pact under which an attack on one is considered an attack on the other. The absence of a response from Pakistan, or the lack of a request for one from Saudi Arabia, may indicate an understanding that the actions in question did not constitute a violation of Saudi territorial sovereignty.

Given Pakistan's energy dependence and the history of projects such as the Peace Pipeline, why has the country not shown serious willingness to cooperate so far? Under current conditions and with Pakistan's mediating role, can a new approach in Iran-Pakistan relations be expected, or will the situation revert to the

status quo after the crisis?

If the Peace Pipeline project were implemented and Iran's commitment to export approximately 30 million cubic meters of gas per day were fulfilled, a significant portion of Pakistan's energy shortfall would be addressed. By contrast, alternative methods such as ad hoc LPG imports by truck or LNG shipments by sea are neither comparable in stability nor in economic terms to a long-term, integrated pipeline. Such a pipeline could provide relatively stable energy security for Pakistan for at least two decades. However, Pakistan has faced two major constraints. First, the inability to finance the project domestically and the failure to attract foreign investment, largely due to prevailing political and economic conditions in the international environment. Second, geopolitical considerations and pressure from certain regional and extra-regional actors, which have led Islamabad to act cautiously—and at times hesitate—in advancing the project.

In practice, Pakistan has sought to maintain a balance between Iran and other players—a strategy that may offer short-term advantages but, in this specific case, has come at the expense of its national interests. Beyond its economic dimension, the project also carries significant geostrategic importance for Pakistan and could strengthen its position as an energy corridor, both in relation to India and within the framework of cooperation with China.

From a broader perspective, Pakistan's integration into Iran's transit corridors—including the North-South and East-West routes—could prove mutually beneficial. In this regard, an agreement signed in 2008 established transit on the basis of reciprocity, meaning two-way movement.

Overall, there is optimism that once the current crisis subsides, a new environment may take shape in which Pakistan, with a sharper focus on its national interests, adopts a more active and pragmatic approach toward energy cooperation with Iran.