

Iran circumventing maritime blockade through Afghanistan: **Businessman**

2.5-fold surge in truck crossings at eastern border



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Political and security developments along Iran's eastern periphery — particularly in Afghanistan — have consistently constituted one of the pivotal variables influencing bilateral commercial and transit relations. Following the ascendancy of the Taliban in Afghanistan during 2021 and the consequent transformation of the governance structure in Kabul, numerous economic observers felt profound skepticism regarding the future of Iran-Afghanistan exchanges. Nevertheless, the passage of nearly five years has demonstrated that border trade and economic relations have not only not failed to cease but have, in certain domains, been accompanied by growth and novel facilitations.

In this context, Iran's eastern borders — especially the Dogharoun Border Crossing in the Khorasan Razavi Province — play a central role in bilateral trade, serving as one of the most crucial conduits for land commerce with Afghanistan. The Khorasan Razavi Province, through the Dogharoun Free Zone's infrastructures and provincial collaborations with Afghanistan's Herat Province, has successfully handled a considerable volume of re-exports, transit operations, and even imports of essential commodities from Afghanistan.

To ascertain the most recent state of Iran-Afghanistan exchanges, border cooperations, matters pertaining to tolls, trade balance, strategies for circumventing maritime sanctions, and also transit capacities through Afghanistan toward Central Asia and China, Iran Daily has conducted an exclusive interview with the Vice President of the Joint Chamber of Commerce of Iran and Afghanistan Kazem Shirdel, the full text of which you will read below:

Kazem Shirdel



IRAN DAILY: Given the recent developments related to the US-Israeli war on Iran, what trajectory has the state of commercial exchanges between Iran and Afghanistan taken?

SHIRDEL: Our Afghan counterparts, at present, exhibit commendable cooperation with us regarding trade. In the past, within the mechanism of the transport fleet traversing between Iran and Afghanistan, both countries had imposed fees under designations such as “road

pass” and “soil money” for revenue generation; however, during the recent journey of the Governor of Khorasan Razavi Province Qolamreza Mozaffari to Herat and his meeting with the provincial governor there, these fees have been abolished. Currently, the Afghan side no longer collects money from that side, and soon the Iranian side shall also cease collecting this amount to take reciprocal action — a favorable development for augmenting commercial interactions between the two countries.

Another matter is the Dogharoun Free Zone, which is now working quite well. The Board of Directors has exerted substantial effort in this domain, and, at present, conditions along the Dogharoun transit route have improved considerably compared to the past. Previously,



Trucks move through a border crossing between Iran and Afghanistan, seen from the Afghan side.
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from Iran's side, there existed merely a single route for the passage of freight and passengers toward Afghanistan; now, however, three lanes have been established, and operations proceed in an orderly fashion. Consequently, the velocity of operations and the progression of exports, imports, and transit at this border have been accompanied by commendable facilitation.

If the Afghan side does the same within its own territory and prepares the environment and infrastructure, the speed of trade and exchanges will further in-

crease. The Iranian side has completed leveling, road construction, and asphalt-ing within the Free Zone; and, should the Afghan side perform similarly in the future, this will exert a significant influence upon accelerating exchanges.

With these facilitations and arrangements instituted, it is anticipated that truck crossings across the shared border will reach 2,000 vehicles per day. Before the recent war, daily crossings amounted to 600 to 800 trucks, which, given the country's needs during wartime, increased to approximately 1,400 crossings per day. Now, with the cooperation of provincial administrators from both countries and the preparation of infrastructures, it is hoped that crossings will reach 2,000 trucks per day, and the problems arising from truck halts at borders will be resolved completely.

Given the maritime blockade and the economic pressure exerted by the United States within the Persian Gulf and international waters, to what extent can the increase in exchanges with neighbors such as Afghanistan, or through Afghan territory with other nations, prove efficacious in neutralizing these pressures?

At present, the development of exchanges with the Afghan market, Central Asia, and the East is exceedingly critical because, in these regions, those restrictions that we encounter in the South and the maritime sector do not exist. Through the follow-ups undertaken by the governor of Khorasan Razavi and the directives of the presidency, the private sector has been activated to develop trade across these borders. The Afghan side possesses great merchants across various domains who operate with diverse countries, and this can unlock our trade routes to multiple nations.

One of our objectives within the Joint Chamber of Iran and Afghanistan is to negotiate with Afghan counterparts regarding the expansion of exchange capacity, circumvention of sanctions, and provision of essential commodities for both parties. Furthermore, negotiations have occurred concerning offshore cultivation within Afghan territory for water-intensive commodities, and we have achieved favorable results in the agricultural sector. Successful follow-ups have also been conducted for the importation of live livestock and meat from Afghanistan so that meat may enter the country at a more appropriate price. In totality, the prevailing circumstances represent an auspicious opportunity to tap the capacity of East Asia, Central Asia, and Afghanistan for exports, transit, and imports.

At present, what is the state of the trade balance and the volume of imports and exports between the two countries?

We must expand imports from Afghanistan to equilibrate the trade balance. Through Afghanistan, we must supply the country's needs — since our eastern neighbor possesses commendable



Through Afghanistan, we can trade with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. However, the primary objective is the opening of a trade route with China. In the past, the majority of Iran's trade with China and East Asia was conducted via maritime routes and Southern ports such as Bandar Abbas. Under prevailing conditions, however, it can be executed through a hybrid rail-and-sea route via neighboring countries such as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan.



The Governor of Iran's Khorasan Razavi Province Qolamreza Mozaffari meets with the Governor of Afghanistan's Herat Sheikh Noor Ahmad Islamjar at the Dogharoun border between the two countries on January 27, 2026.
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