

Gov't moves to restore Internet access after wartime blackout

Economy Desk

A specialized Iranian government body overseeing cyberspace approved a plan to reconnect the country to the global Internet, the semi-official Fars news agency reported on Monday, after months of severe restrictions imposed over the recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

The fourth meeting of the Special Cyberspace Management Headquarters was held under the chairmanship of First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and attended by members of the body, according to the government's official information portal.

The portal said the meeting approved "important measures regarding the country's Internet situation" that would be sent to President Masoud Pezeshkian for final approval before being communicated to the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology for implementation.

No official details of the measures were released, but Fars reported that a proposal to reconnect

international Internet access was approved by nine votes and sent to Pezeshkian's office for final approval.

Since the start of the recent US-Israeli war against Iran on Feb. 28, access to the global Internet has largely been unavailable to ordinary citizens except for those with "pro Internet," special "white" SIM cards, or access to Starlink.

The shutdown of international Internet access in Iran has become the longest widespread outage in the history of the Internet.

Over the past year, Iran's Internet has been disrupted for more than 100 days, including a record 88 consecutive days of outage during the conflict, according to available data.

Iran ICT Guild Organization blockchain commission head Abbas Ashtiani estimated that the digital blackout has imposed between \$30 million and \$35 million per day in direct, indirect and opportunity costs on the country.

Ehsan Chitsaz, deputy minister for policymak-



The fourth meeting of the Special Cyberspace Management Headquarters is held under First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c), with members of the body in attendance, on May 25, 2026. **IRNA**

ing, planning and digital economy at the Communications Ministry, wrote in a note published on the government's official website that those who still believed society, the digital economy and younger generations could be managed through prolonged Internet shutdowns "have not understood the reality of today's world."

"The big mistake is that some still see the Internet merely as a media threat, while widespread Internet shutdowns create a chain of security, economic, social and technological crises that can even weaken national security," he wrote.

Chitsaz added that neither the political establishment nor the government would allow "some people, with this naive and anti-development mindset contrary



to the long-term interests of national security, to push the country toward prolonged internet shutdowns and digital isolation."

Speaking at Monday's meeting, Aref criticized Internet restrictions, saying dealing with the Internet in such a way was like closing an entire highway to all vehicles instead of confronting a single offending driver.

Aref said the president had used his legal authority as head of government, chairman of the Supreme National Security Council, chairman of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace and chairman of the Supreme Council of

the Cultural Revolution to establish the body.

He said it was the first time a president had explicitly invoked both the presidency and the chairmanship of the Supreme National Security Council in such a decree, making the body both a government body and a Supreme National Security Council body.

Criticizing what he described as arbitrary and personal approaches toward cyberspace and internet policy, Aref said Iran's young talent and human resources were capable of driving scientific and technological progress, but that restrictive internet policies had

hindered development.

"Now that the enemy is attacking our science and knowledge, should we also damage the country's scientific and technological growth by shutting down the Internet?" Aref said.

During the conflict, 32 research centers across the country had been damaged.

"Do we fundamentally have the right to take this right away from the people because of personal preferences or shortcomings in different sectors? I know that some opposition to reopening the Internet stems from personal preferences and corporate interests."

Iranian delegation in Qatar for peace talks, frozen funds

Economy Desk

A high-level Iranian delegation headed by the country's top negotiator arrived in Doha, Qatar on Monday in a surprise visit as part of ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the war with the United States and secure the release of frozen Iranian funds.

"The trip is part of the diplomatic process that began in recent weeks through Pakistan's mediation to end the conflict," official news agency IRNA said.

According to Tasnim and Fars news agencies, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was accompanied by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati.

Fars reported that Hemmati travelled to Qatar to "review the release of frozen assets." IRNA said the delegation would confer about "certain aspects related to negotiations to end the war" with senior Qatari officials.

The Iranian visit came after a Qatari delegation flew to Tehran last week to discuss mediation efforts between Iran and the US.

One of Tehran's demands in negotiations with Washington to end the war launched by the United States and Israel on February 28 is the release of its frozen financial assets.

According to Fars, Washington agreed to free part of Tehran's blocked overseas assets and its lift the naval blockade on vessels travelling to and from Iranian ports in return for reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

In 2023, \$6 billion in Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks was transferred to Qatar pending the release of five US citizens detained by Iran, according to AFP.

The funds were never released after relations between Washington and Tehran deteriorated following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

Pakistan has so far served as the main mediator in peace negotiations between the United States and Iran.

The talks, which have continued since the implementation of a ceasefire on April 8, are aimed at reaching a comprehensive deal to end to the war.

In recent weeks, Qatar, which has previously mediated between Iran and the US, appears to have been stepping up its role in advancing negotiations.

Earlier this month, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met senior US officials including Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in the United States to push forward diplomacy.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz since early March, through which around one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas normally flows, has also halted vital Persian Gulf maritime exports, including Qatar's LNG shipments.

Mazandaran's ICTP opens as national push for AI ranking gains traction



Economy Desk

A new Information and Communications Technology Park (ICTP) was inaugurated in the northern province of Mazandaran on Monday, as part of a national initiative aimed at positioning the country among the world's top 10 in Artificial Intelligence (AI). The latest ICTP, under the name of Digital Economy Growth and Development Center, was launched in the city of Sari, state news agency IRNA reported.

Mostafa Mafi, head of Iran's ICTP organization, said the establishment of provincial technology parks aligns with the country's Seventh Development Plan as eight ICTPs have been estab-

lished to date.

"Provincial parks operate independently, and technology companies and digital firms based in these centers will benefit from various exemptions," Mafi said during a meeting with technology firm managers and startup representatives following the inauguration.

Mafi noted that government support for the digital economy is prioritized for less-developed provinces. He emphasized the strategic importance of digital technology development in Mazandaran, given the millions of tourists visiting the northern region annually.

"With the presence of millions of tourists and travelers in the north-

ern region, especially Mazandaran, the development of digital technology in this area is very important and necessary," he said.

He added that technology companies could now present smartification projects across various provincial development sectors.

"With the creation of this center, technology companies can present smartification projects in various development sectors of the province, which will definitely receive serious financial support from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology," Mafi said.

Esmail Aezi, Mazandaran's director-general of communications and information technology, said at the inauguration ceremony that ICTPs would provide comprehensive support to knowledge-based companies, startups, accelerators and technology incubators.

"ICTPs, as one of the special technology branches of the Ministry of Communications, will provide full-scale support to knowledge-based companies, startups, accelerators and technology cores," Aezi said.

CAO says 20 airports resume flights after US-Israeli attacks



Economy Desk

Iranian civil aviation authorities said 20 airports across the country have successfully resumed operations following the recent US-Israeli aggression.

Speaking to Fars news agency on Monday, Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) spokesman Majid Akhavan said 20 airports, representing 40% of the country's airports, have resumed operations following the US-Israeli war, which began on February 28.

Akhavan added that Iran's third-busiest international airport in the northwestern city of Tabriz is expected to resume operations within

the next few days.

Tabriz International Airport serves nine foreign destinations, including Istanbul, Baghdad, Dubai, Baku and Hamburg.

Seven Iranian airports were targeted during the 40-day war, with attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities, according to Iranian media.

Following the ceasefire reached on April 8 between Washington and Tehran, Iran Air resumed domestic flights on April 25 after a 55-day suspension, with its first service operating between Tehran and Mashhad.

International flights also resumed in late April, beginning with an Iran Air Hajj flight to the holy Saudi city of Medina from Imam Khomeini International Airport, with flights to three destinations operating on the first day.

China leans toward ...

Threatening to reduce or halt these purchases would amount to maximum pressure on Tehran. Likewise, China provides arms-related support to Iran, and cutting off that support would exert additional pressure.

At the same time, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China can back international guarantees in the form of resolutions. It can also cut deals with the United States. Regardless of geopolitical rivalry, Beijing and Washington remain economically interdependent and vulnerable to one another in key areas.

If China declines to act as guarantor or opts for a limited role, how

would that affect the trajectory of negotiations and the balance among the actors involved?

This scenario appears more likely—that China would manage the process from behind the scenes rather than stepping in directly. In any case, the parties to the conflict in West Asia will continue along their path under pressure from regional actors who have been affected by the war.

At the same time, China's absence from a direct role in Iran's peace equation would not hinder Tehran-Beijing relations. Bilateral ties are already moving along their natural trajectory toward becoming strategic. Should conflict flare up again, China could still step in and play a significant role on the ground.