Chamber chief urges Pakistan to set up special mechanism to speed up customs at Karachi

Economy Desk

President of the Chamber of Commerce Samad Hassanzadeh on Monday voiced dismay at the prolonged period of Iranian containers being stuck at Pakistan's Karachi port, calling for a mechanism to be established to speed up the process.

Karachi has become as a key gateway for sustaining Iranian imports after a US naval blockade of Iranian ports and a decline in Iran's trade with the United Arab Emirates following a war the United States and Israel waged against Iran in late February.

However, Iranian officials, according to IRNA, say thousands of containers belonging to Iranian businesspeople have remained stranded in Karachi customs for nearly three months without being cleared.

During a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Hassanzadeh urged Islamabad to help remove the obstacle, saying the backlog had "slowed" trade between the two neighbors.

"The accumulation of containers and the prolonged customs clearance process at Karachi port, alongside restrictions on rail and road transport, have caused financial losses for Iranian businesses," Hassanzadeh said.

He also complained about the large number of inspection procedures, repeated testing requirements, inadequate logistics infrastructure at some border crossings and surprise changes to Pakistani customs regulations, saying the issues were preventing bilateral trade from picking up.

Hassanzadeh also called for the establishment of a designated authority in Pakistan to handle disputes arising during bilateral trade.

The Iranian business leader further proposed the creation of what he called a "green border corridor" to enable the electronic transfer of customs documents and accelerate customs procedures at Karachi.

A green corridor is a fast-track customs process that allows goods to clear through border checkpoints more quickly, with fewer physical inspections and less paperwork. It typically relies on electronic document exchange to speed up the process, helping to cut clearance times from months to just days or even hours.

President of the Chamber of Commerce Samad Hassanzadeh (R) meets Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, in Tehran on July 27, 2026.
IRNA

At the meeting, held at the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Siddiqui said Pakistan planned to set up the green corridor and a joint customs mechanism with Iran to address the container backlog.

The envoy said uncertainty had long surrounded commercial activities between the two countries, creating obstacles to stronger trade ties, but added that the Pakistani embassy was working to eliminate uncertainties.

Siddiqui said resolving some issues, including banking relations and transit, required "special measures" that were beyond the powers of the embassy and even governments.

He was likely referring to international and unilateral US sanctions against Iran, which have complicated trade ties and scared away investors and merchants from engaging with the Islamic Republic.

The ambassador added, however, that some shortcomings could be addressed, including extending the operating hours of border crossings to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing the private sectors of both countries to foster cooperation.

Siddiqui also said Pakistan had proposed a barter arrangement as a partial solution to the existing difficulties and was awaiting Iran's response to implement the mechanism between the two countries.

Annual trade between Iran and Pakistan stands at about $3 billion, with officials from both countries repeatedly reaffirming their commitment to increase the figure to $10 billion by 2028.

Red Sea shipping slows following Yemen's blockage on Saudi Arabia

Economy Desk

Ship traffic through Bab el-Mandeb fell on Sunday after Yemeni Armed Forces attacked Saudi oil installations along the Red Sea coast in response to Saudi attacks on Yemen, shipping data from Kpler showed on Monday.

Eleven commodity vessels passed through the Bab el-Mandeb strait on Sunday, the lowest level in months, the data showed.

The shipping disruption caused prices of physical crude cargoes in the Middle East, Europe and Africa to jump to two-month highs last week, Reuters reported.

Seven of the vessels that passed through Bab el-Mandeb were oil tankers with three of them entering the Red Sea, two of them were very large crude carriers (VLCCs) heading to the port of Yanbu to load Saudi crude while the third is a Russian-linked ship, the data showed.

The four vessels that exited the Red Sea on Sunday included the Hong Kong-flagged VLCC New Explorer carrying 2 million barrels of Saudi and Emirati crude for eastern China's Ningbo port, a tanker carrying 1 million barrels of Russian crude for China and a tanker with about 750,000 barrels of Saudi crude onboard for Pakistan, the data showed.

Another Hong Kong-flagged VLCC New Pearl carrying 2 million barrels of Saudi crude is exiting the Red Sea via Bab el-Mandeb strait for eastern China's Zhoushan port, the fourth Chinese supertanker to leave since Yemen declared a naval blockade.

The Yemeni military launched missile and drone strikes on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities and a major airbase on Saturday in retaliation for the latest Saudi military aggression as hostilities between the two neighboring countries resumed after four-year lull.

Saudi fighter jets launched air raids against telecommunications facilities and oil depots in Yemen's strategic coastal province of Hudaydah on Friday.

The developments followed a missile strike by Yemen against Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of bombing an airport in Yemen on the pretext of breaking the blockade on Yemen by an Iranian plane. Yemen's Armed Forces on Monday said they were declaring "a maritime embargo against the criminal Saudi enemy, based on the equation of 'an eye for an eye', effective immediately".

Yemen said the blockade was in response to a "continued Saudi siege" on Yemen, and that the country's Armed Forces were ready to meet any Saudi retaliation with "a total and harsh escalation".

A full closure of the Bab el-Mandeb strait, the southern gateway to the Red Sea, would halt Saudi oil exports to Asia and could reduce global oil supply by 7%.

Saudi Arabia has diverted 70 percent of its energy exports through the Red Sea. A disruption of the path of transit could become a larger issue for the global energy crisis sparked by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

Iran plans Turkish power imports for petrochemical sector

Energy Desk

Iran plans to import 450 megawatts (MW) of electricity from Turkey to supply petrochemical companies as part of efforts to strengthen power supplies for large industries, Deputy Energy Minister Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said.

Rajabi Mashhadi said Iran already imports about 500 MW of electricity annually from Turkmenistan and Armenia and that the Energy Ministry was working to secure an additional 450 MW from Turkey for petrochemical companies.

He said contracts for the planned imports had been prepared for the petrochemical companies and were awaiting action by the firms.

"At present, about 500 MW of electricity is imported annually from Turkmenistan and Armenia. This not only helps maintain the stability of electricity supply but also reduces domestic fuel consumption," he said.

The push for imports comes after power plants supplying electricity and steam to petrochemical complexes were targeted during the 40-day war that began in late February. Some ancillary facilities were directly hit, while production units at multiple petrochemical companies were struck and taken out of operation, according to previous statements by industry officials.

IRNA

According to Hassan Abbaszadeh, managing director of the National Iranian Petrochemical Company, speaking in mid-June, about 38% of the production capacity knocked out during the conflict has since been restored. The deputy oil minister said polymer and plastics markets had also stabilized.

Rajabi Mashhadi said importing electricity would help meet part of the country's power demand without using domestic fuel at power plants.

"This measure will not only help meet the country's electricity needs but will also reduce fuel consumption at domestic power plants, because part of the demand will be supplied through imported electricity instead of domestic fuel," he said.

"Making use of electricity exchanges and imports is one of the Energy Ministry's key strategies for strengthening grid stability and supporting electricity supplies for industry, particularly energy-intensive sectors," he said.

Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Monday that stable electricity supplies for all sectors could be achieved if electricity consumption was reduced by just 5%.

Iran is facing electricity shortages, a situation exacerbated by peak summer demand and the ongoing U.S. war, which began in late February and has paused only for several weeks under a ceasefire agreed on April 8. A U.S.-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country on Feb. 28, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure.

Responding to a question from IRNA about plans to end rolling power outages in southern Iran, Mohajerani said the government had adopted special measures to manage the electricity grid in the country's southern regions.

"The government's approach is to minimize energy restrictions in hot-climate regions, particularly areas affected by the war, and as supply conditions improve and demand declines, electricity allocation to those regions will be prioritized," she said.

"The Energy Ministry's policy is that if restrictions become necessary, southern and hot-climate regions should receive special consideration and face fewer limitations than other parts of the country," she said.

"The government's planning is such that as soon as electricity supply conditions improve and demand on the national grid declines, priority in energy allocation will be given to hot-climate regions and areas affected by the war," she said.

"The Energy Ministry is making every effort to manage demand and navigate this period of electricity constraints," she said.

India's trade with Iran jumps 66% as crude oil imports resume after seven-year hiatus

An Indian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carrier, Shivalik, arrives at Mundra Port via the Strait of Hormuz, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Gujarat, India, March 16, 2026.
AMIT DAVE/REUTERS

Economy Desk

India's trade with Iran rose 66% year-on-year in the first five months of 2026, driven by the resumption of Iranian crude oil imports that exceeded $700 million, according to data from India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry reported by Tasnim news agency.

Total bilateral trade reached $1.42 billion in the January-May period, up from $851 million a year earlier.

India's exports to Iran fell 18% year-on-year to $471 million during the five-month period, from $574 million a year earlier.

Imports from Iran, however, surged 342% to $949 million from $277 million in the corresponding period of 2025, largely due to purchases of Iranian crude oil.

India imported a $430 million cargo of Iranian crude in April and another cargo worth $276 million in May, bringing its total crude oil purchases from Iran to $706 million in the first five months of 2026.

India, which was once forced to abandon Iranian oil under US sanctions, turned back to Tehran in April, with an oil tanker carrying Iranian crude heading to the Asian country for the first time since May 2019. After the US-Israeli aggression on Iran began on Feb. 28 and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was disrupted, Washington issued a waiver allowing India to purchase oil and gas from Russia and Iran, both under US sanctions.

While New Delhi has also returned to discounted Russian crude, a move that previously prompted tariffs from US President Donald Trump, its renewed purchases of Iranian oil mark a significant shift in India's energy supply.

Rice was India's largest export to Iran during the January-May period, with shipments valued at $342 million.