

Oman’s exports to Iran surge amid trade restrictions

Economy Desk

Oman’s direct exports to Iran more than tripled and re-exports nearly doubled in the first half of 2026, according to Oman’s National Centre for Statistics and Information, as Tehran pivots trade flows toward alternative regional hubs amid mounting restrictions on its southern maritime access. According to Oman’s National Centre for Statistics and Information, total trade between Oman and Iran reached \$832 million in the January-to-June period, a 17% increase compared with the same stretch in 2025, Eqtesad-e Moaser reported.

Direct Omani exports to Iran amounted to \$13 million in the first half of the year, placing Iran 64th among destinations for Omani-made goods. That figure represented a 225% rise from a year earlier.



At the same time, Omani re-exports to Iran surged 96% to \$666 million, up from \$338 million in the first half of 2025. Iran, which in recent years had ranked as Oman’s second-largest re-export destination after the United Arab Emirates, moved into first place during the period. By contrast, Oman’s re-exports to the UAE fell 36% to \$580 million.

The sharp uptick in Omani trade with Iran comes as US naval restrictions continue to affect Iran’s southern ports. Washington imposed the blockade as part of a pressure campaign following a 40-day US-Israeli conflict that began in late February. The naval siege has constrained Tehran’s trade options. In response, Iran has been

working to diversify its logistics corridors, redirecting cargo flows toward northern ports as well as to hubs in Pakistan, India, and Oman. Against that backdrop, Iranian exports to Oman dropped 58% in the first half of 2026 to \$153 million, down from \$365 million in the same period a year earlier, as hostilities and disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz weighed on regional shipping. Despite that decline in Iranian outbound trade to Oman, the notable rise in Oman’s direct and re-export shipments to Iran underscores the Sultanate’s growing role as a transit and intermediary hub for goods destined for the Iranian market. The trend suggests that Omani trade channels are helping alleviate some of the logistical pressure created by the maritime restrictions on Iran’s southern coastline.

From barrel to qubit: How center of global power is shifting

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O P I N I O N

For more than a century, the geography of global power largely overlapped with the geography of energy. Oil-rich countries became arenas for competition among powerful states, while oil and gas were not only the fuel of industrial civilization but also among the most important forces shaping the global economy, politics and geopolitics. The oil barrel became a symbol of wealth, authority and bargaining power. But a major transformation is underway. The center of power is gradually shifting from ownership of resources to the ability to turn those resources into technology. This does not mean energy is becoming less important. Future civilization will need more energy than ever, as data centers, artificial intelligence, robotics, electric vehicles, communications networks, advanced industries and computing infrastructure all depend on it. What is changing is the relationship between energy and power. Energy remains a necessary condition for civilization, but technology is becoming the multiplier that determines how much wealth, knowledge, productivity and influence each unit of energy can generate. The evolution can be summed up in three words: barrel, bit and qubit. The barrel represents the industrial age, when matter and energy were the foundation of production. The bit represents the information revolution, when data and processing power became an increasingly important component of power. The qubit may represent the next frontier of computational civilization, where quantum mechanics challenges our understanding of information processing and computing capacity. In the industrial economy, competitive advantage depended largely on natural resources, physical capital and production capacity. The digital economy, however, revealed a fundamental truth: value does not necessarily scale with physical mass or energy consumption. A small semiconductor chip, a quantum computer capable of solving complex algorithms, an AI model or a database can create value with no linear relationship to its physical size. This is where the bit stands alongside the barrel. The barrel represents an economy deriving much of its power from matter and energy; the bit represents one drawing an increasing share of its power from information and processing capability. Now the bit itself is approaching a new frontier: the qubit. A qubit should not be viewed simply as a faster bit. That interpretation is fundamentally misleading. Classical bits exist in one of two states, 0 or 1, while qubits use superposition, entanglement and interference to create a different space for processing information. In some problems, the significance of quantum computing lies not simply in greater speed but in changing how problems are formulated and solved. Quantum computing remains under development and is not about to replace classical computers. Nor should the technology’s potential be exaggerated. But strategically, a technology’s importance cannot be measured only by its current maturity. Strategic technologies can reshape the architecture of competition before reaching commercial

maturity, as countries and companies must position themselves early across their value chains — from education and fundamental research to chips, algorithms, advanced materials, computing infrastructure, energy and human capital. Artificial intelligence is a clear example. It will be a massive consumer of energy, but it can also optimize power grids, industrial processes, transportation, buildings, supply chains and energy production and distribution systems. Technology is therefore not merely an energy consumer; it can increase the efficiency with which energy is converted into products and value. The relationship is not simple substitution but synergy and feedback. Technology needs energy, while more advanced technology can make energy use more efficient. More energy can expand computing and production capacity, while better technology can increase the value extracted from the same amount of energy. In the 20th century, access to abundant and cheap natural resources could provide a major advantage. In the 21st century, the more important question is what a country does with its resources. Two countries may have similar energy reserves, but the one with strong universities, human capital, semiconductors, AI, robotics, advanced materials, storage technology and computing infrastructure can generate far greater economic and strategic value from the same unit of energy. This is the distinction between a source of power and a multiplier of power. Energy is a source; technology is a multiplier. For countries with vast energy reserves, the distinction is particularly important. Oil and gas remain strategic assets, but if they are merely extracted and exported, much of the value added is created beyond their borders. The question is no longer simply how much oil and gas a country possesses, but how much knowledge, technology and advanced industry it can apply to those resources. The recent conflict involving Iran offered a clear illustration. It was not the country’s oil reserves that sustained its resilience under pressure, but its reliance on domestic technology. Despite extensive damage, repairs in the country’s industries were carried out rapidly, highlighting the role of technology as a power multiplier. That is the quiet but profound shift taking place. A country with oil has a natural advantage; a country with technology can redefine its natural advantages. Future competition will not necessarily be about who has more energy, but who can convert energy more efficiently into computing, computing into knowledge, knowledge into human capital, human capital into technology, and technology into power. The barrel was a symbol of power in the industrial age; the bit represents power in the information age; and the qubit points toward the frontier of computational civilization. The great question of the new century is no longer simply who controls more energy. It is who will command the highest conversion ratio of energy into technology, and technology into power. The answer will shape much of the global geography of power in the decades ahead.

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Tehran-Tunis flights resumed after months-long hiatus

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Iran has resumed direct flights between Tehran and Tunis after a months-long halt, as part of efforts to expand its international air network and boost tourism and economic ties with Tunisia, the managing director of Imam Khomeini International Airport City said on Saturday. Ramin Kashef-Azar announced on Saturday that the Tehran-Tunis route has been placed back into operational planning, with flights now operating from Imam Khomeini International Airport City, IRNA reported. The first flight departed for Tunis at 8 a.m. on Saturday, and the service is currently scheduled weekly on Saturdays. “Expanding flight destinations and strengthening air connectivity with various



countries is among the airport city’s priorities,” he said. “The resumption of this route can facilitate passenger travel and enhance tourism and economic exchanges between Iran and Tunisia.” “Imam Khomeini International Airport City, leveraging its existing capacities and infrastructure, is pursuing the expansion of its

international flight network and increasing passengers’ access to various destinations worldwide,” he added. In a related development, Kashef-Azar announced on Tuesday that Mahan Air, Iran’s first private airline, had also launched new direct flights to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, as the country continues to rebuild and expand its international air connectivity following the April 8 ceasefire that halted a 40-day conflict with the United States. Iran Air resumed domestic flights on April 25 after a 55-day suspension, with its first service between Tehran and Mashhad. International operations restarted later that month, beginning with a Hajj flight to Medina, with flights to three destinations available on the first day.

Iran needs to ...

A brief look at US President Donald Trump’s 2025 National Security Strategy, shows that much of its provisions concern the Western Hemisphere. The Americans have made a very clear shift in their approach toward Latin America, which many say is perhaps rooted in the convictions of Marco Rubio. They have made a very fundamental shift gears in their approach to the region, and began their first project with Venezuela. During Trump’s first administration, the view was that this region was an area that exported crime, drugs and terrorism, and his border wall became well known in this context. In his second term, the cabinet was put together on the basis of being able to fully control the region and bring it back to the Monroe Doctrine. This was because the Americans felt a very serious threat from Chinese and Russian influence, as well as from the Islamic Republic’s influence in the region. The Americans are now carrying out an economic isolation campaign. Under an announcement issued by the Treasury Department, the highest level of warning has been issued to all countries to immediately and systematically cut off trade with

Iran. On this basis, some countries have responded positively to the call, and countries that are aligned with US policy have taken up the call. **What message do these developments send about the trajectory of Iran’s relations with Latin American countries?** Peru and Chile have not had particularly extensive economic relations with Iran in terms of exports and imports, so the impact is not particularly significant. What is important, however, is the symbolic aspect of the issue. In other words, the more countries that join in reducing their relations with Iran, the more the Americans will regard it as a kind of victory, because they believe they have further isolated the Islamic Republic. In reality, the message behind this move is directed at all countries. The Americans view the issue from the perspective of influencing all countries in one way or another so that they essentially reduce and cut their use of the US dollar system in dealings with Iran, thereby placing comprehensive economic pressure on the Islamic Republic. **Given the importance of Iran’s relations with Latin American**

countries in the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy, what political and diplomatic measures could Tehran put on the agenda to prevent this trend from spreading and preserve its relations with countries in that region? Could consultations with independent governments and those opposed to US unilateralism be effective in this regard? The countries that remain close to Iran do not have much influence. Cuba is currently in a very unfavorable economic situation and facing severe economic problems. Nicaragua also does not have much economic capacity. As for Mexico, given its participation in the former NAFTA and the current USMCA with the United States and Canada, it is unlikely to have much room for maneuver. Venezuela, too, has now reportedly entered into a very important oil agreement with the United States, described as a 100-year agreement involving 17 oil fields. That leaves Brazil, but because it operates within the dollar-based system, it is also unlikely to have that much room for maneuver. Some of these countries may nevertheless be willing to work out barter arrangements. Overall, however, given Iran’s current confrontation on multiple fronts, there is little scope for it to tap into the

region’s full potential. At certain points Iran pursued its relations with Latin America and reached the highest level of relations. There were even efforts to establish a joint bank, extraterritorial cultivation projects, and cooperation in universities and oil facilities. However, apart from some areas of cooperation with Venezuela in the refinery sector, many of these initiatives did not produce results. One of the advantages of the longstanding democracies in Latin America is precisely their electoral system. They have a highly cyclical electoral system in which a shift toward the right and the left is repeatedly played out, with the exception of certain countries such as Cuba or Venezuela. Iran, however, has not made the right calculations in this regard. For example, when countries such as Chile, Bolivia or Peru had left-wing governments at certain points, Iran welcomed them very warmly and entered into discussions that even involved investment. Then, in the next elections, those governments handed over power, and the investments failed to bear fruit. Iran needs to have a proper understanding of Latin American governments so that its relations do not suffer when power changes hands.