Aviation chief says Tehran files ICAO complaint over US restrictions

IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran has filed a formal complaint with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) over US restrictions on the country's aviation industry and is pursuing diplomatic efforts to restore suspended flight routes, the head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said on Monday.

"The Civil Aviation Organization is pursuing the necessary measures, using all legal instruments and in close coordination with the country's diplomatic apparatus, to remove obstacles and resume all flights on routes that were previously active," Abouzar Shiroudi told IRNA.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said last week that Iranian airlines would be "shut down" from Sept. 16 as Washington moved to tighten pressure on Iran's aviation sector.

On Sept. 8, the US Treasury Department sanctioned 27 Iranian airlines as part of a broader campaign announced on Aug. 24, warning that foreign companies supporting Iran's aviation industry could face sanctions and restrictions on access to the US financial system.

Shiroudi said Iran's formal protest had been submitted to ICAO as part of efforts to defend the rights of its aviation industry and challenge "the unlawful US restrictions." He said the complaint detailed Iran's objections and supporting documents concerning disruptions to flight operations.

Preventing flights amounted to a violation of bilateral agreements under which countries allow each other's airlines to use their airports, Shiroudi said. He added that Iran had also sent letters to countries where flights had been suspended, seeking explanations for the cancellations.

Regarding flights to Baghdad and Najaf, Shiroudi said the Iraqi government, parliament and Civil Aviation Authority were actively working to resume services. Flights to Najaf were expected to resume first, followed by Baghdad, he said.

Neighboring Iraq has joined several countries, including the United Arab Emirates, in enforcing US measures. China has rejected the Trump administration's sanctions targeting Iran's aviation sector, calling unilateral US sanctions "illegal."

Reports have emerged that Iraq had lifted its ban on Iranian airlines, but Shiroudi told ISNA that Iran's Civil Aviation Organization had not yet received an official directive confirming the move and that negotiations to restore flights were continuing.

"The organization is negotiating and following up on the resumption of flights to Iraq, but there is no specific timetable for this," Shiroudi said.

Shiroudi denied reports that flights to Najaf would resume on Wednesday, Sept. 30, saying no official directive had yet been issued to lift the ban on Iranian airlines. He said the reports had appeared in Iraqi media and that the Iraqi government had not yet responded to them.

The Iraqi government said on Saturday that Iraq was holding talks with the United States to secure an exemption from the ban on Iranian airlines, which has disrupted travel for patients, students and pilgrims.

Connecting Flights Remain in Use

Meanwhile, connecting flights through regional aviation hubs, including Istanbul, have been used as an alternative since restrictions were imposed on direct flights to Europe, Shiroudi said, adding that the arrangement remains in place.

He also said the organization was prioritizing efforts to reopen routes that had been temporarily suspended because of recent regional and wartime conditions following the 40-day US-Israeli strikes against Iran.

NIPC restores 60% of war-damaged petrochemical capacity

IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran has restored about 60% of its petrochemical production capacity damaged during the 40-day US-Israeli war, the head of the National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) said on Monday, as the industry rebuilds facilities in its main hubs.

NIPC CEO Omid Shakeri told reporters that the damage from the war, which began in late February, fell into two main categories: utility systems and specific process units. Reconstruction efforts in both areas are continuing, he said, according to IRNA.

"About 60% of the lost capacity has so far returned to production," Shakeri said.

Air strikes in April hit facilities in Mahshahr, Khuzestan province, and Asaluyeh, Bushehr province, as well as petrochemical plants in Tabriz and Marvdasht (Shiraz), according to official reports.

Iran's nominal petrochemical production capacity had reached 100 million tons per year, with actual output at around 80 million tons, according to figures previously reported by Iranian officials.

Shakeri said the Oil Ministry's management was seeking to restore most of the lost production capacity by the end of the year (March 21, 2027). He added, however, that the industry faced more difficult conditions this year because of gas supply constraints during the cold season and damage to the refining sector.

Shakeri did not give a figure for the amount of production capacity lost, but Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said earlier this month that the strikes had damaged utility units supplying steam, electricity and nitrogen to production units, as well as some processing units, initially causing a significant loss of capacity that affected parts of the supply chain.

Shakeri stressed that stable production depended on a reliable energy supply. In previous years, he said, rising household gas consumption during winter had led to involuntary restrictions on petrochemical plants.

This year, he added, a 230 million cubic meter reduction in refining capacity had made public cooperation in managing consumption even more important.

Shakeri's emphasis on reliable energy supply came as Iran was planning to import electricity from Turkey and Azerbaijan during the winter, with imports potentially reaching about 1,000 megawatts if petrochemical companies succeed in purchasing power from Turkey. Iran has begun negotiations with Turkey to secure electricity imports for its petrochemical industry after power plants serving the sector were damaged during the war.

Shakeri also said the industry had maintained stable exports despite war and sanctions, rejecting reports of problems with the repatriation of export earnings and saying all export procedures were monitored by the Central Bank. He added that companies return the remainder of their earnings after deducting permitted foreign-currency needs, with the sector's repatriation rate above 90%, and that petrochemical exports differ from oil exports because companies sell their products directly and return the resulting foreign currency.

Iran boosts border terminals, northern ports to keep goods flowing under maritime blockade

Essential goods discharges jump more than 90%, ports chief says

Economy Desk

Iran's roads minister said the country has strengthened rail and road border terminals and northern ports to keep goods entering and moving across the country after a US maritime blockade from the south, while the head of the Ports and Maritime Organization said essential goods discharges at northern ports rose more than 90%.

"With the cooperation of various agencies, increasing the transfer of goods through some rail borders was put on the agenda," Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq said, according to the Mehr news agency.

Sadeq said that when the maritime blockade was imposed, Iran had to find routes that could break the blockade and keep goods flowing into the country without disruption. She said this required special attention to Iran's territorial capacities, prompting the country to focus on rail and road border terminals as well as northern ports and to use those capacities to keep goods moving.

Sadeq noted the difference in capacity between Iran's northern and southern ports, saying the volume of goods entering through southern ports, particularly containerized cargo, is not comparable to the capacity of northern ports. However, she said, using northern port capacity became important once maritime routes were restricted.

Since late February, when a US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day war, Iran has been operating under wartime conditions as well as a US maritime blockade from the south.

Iran, already under decades of Western sanctions over its nuclear activities, has faced a new wave of US sanctions, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent saying last week that Iranian airlines would be shut down from Sept. 23 through secondary sanctions on foreign aviation service providers.

IRNA

Relatedly, the head of the Ports and Maritime Organization said on Monday that essential goods discharges at northern ports had risen more than 90%, pointing to 24-hour port and customs operations and a significant drop in the time needed to unload vessels and the dwell time of goods at port terminals and transit borders.

Mohammad Shakibi-Nasab, speaking to reporters on Monday, outlined the organization's latest steps to develop capacity and improve efficiency at Iranian ports, especially in the north, according to the IRNA.

"In the area of cargo storage, in addition to operational capacity inside the ports, more than 55% of storage capacity now exists in areas around the ports under customs supervision, and optimal use of these facilities has eased the process of warehousing and storing goods," he said.

"One of the main concerns of traders was the supply of strategic equipment at northern ports, and in this regard, part of the loading and unloading equipment was transferred from southern ports to the north of the country," he said.

The deputy roads minister, citing figures recorded this year, said that compared with the same period last year, northern ports saw a rise of more than 90% in essential goods discharges and a roughly 65% increase in the discharge and loading of other goods.

He said northern ports accounted for about 18% of the country's total essential goods discharges in previous years, but that share has now jumped to about 31%, a bright horizon that will become clearer with continued software and hardware programs and the equipping of northern ports.

Ship unloading time cut from 10 days to under 3

The ports chief also addressed concerns about cargo dwelling at port areas, saying transit warehousing is a technical process and a global standard. He said direct truck loading could take up to a week to unload a ship, while rapid transfer to port transit warehouses cuts that to about three days.

With mechanized grain terminals and improved methods, ships that once took 10 days to unload are now fully discharged in 2.5 to 3 days, he said, calling it a strategic achievement built on teamwork across the logistics chain.