

Iraqi Airways resumes flights to Iran after months-long suspension



Economy Desk

Iraqi Airways resumed direct flights to Iran on Thursday after a months-long suspension triggered by the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran in late

February, Iraq's state news agency INA reported. The airline will operate regular daily flights from Najaf International Airport to Tehran, Mashhad and Isfahan, the Iraqi national carrier said, adding

that the resumption followed the completion of required legal and technical procedures, ISNA reported. The airline said the restart was made possible through the efforts of Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi and Trans-

port Minister Wahab al-Hassani. The renewed services are intended to facilitate passenger travel and expand regional air links, particularly for religious pilgrimages, medical treatment and education. According to Anadolu Agency, Iraqi Airways suspended flights to Iran in early March as a precaution after the US-Israeli war against Iran began on February 28. Iraq also closed its airspace as military tensions escalated across the region. Flights on the Najaf-Tehran-Najaf route resumed on Thursday after a suspension of about eight months, while the return of the Iraqi carrier marks another step toward restoring international air services to Iran. Iran's Civil Aviation Organization chief said in recent weeks that flights to many destinations previously served by Iranian airlines would resume following consultations. Iraq had also closed Baghdad and Najaf airports to Iranian airlines following a new round of US sanctions targeting Iran's aviation sector. Iraq joined several countries, including the UAE, in enforcing restrictions on Iranian airlines after US Treasury Secre-

tary Scott Bessent said Iranian airlines would be "shut down" from September 16. Iraq secured a waiver from US sanctions after its government held talks with Washington to seek an exemption from restrictions on Iran's aviation sector. Javad Salehi Artimani, deputy for operations at Imam Khomeini International Airport City, told ISNA that flights to and from Najaf had been suspended on September 25 because of US sanctions. Iranian airlines resumed flights to Najaf on October 4 following consultations, and Iraqi Airways returned to Iran on Thursday, he said. Iraqi Airways plans to operate seven weekly flights on the Najaf-Tehran-Najaf route, Salehi Artimani said, adding that the schedule would bring the number of daily aircraft movements to and from Najaf to more than 10. The airport currently serves 30 destinations, he said, describing Iraqi Airways' return as a step toward the gradual restoration and expansion of international flights. "Consultations are underway in this regard, and we will soon see other airlines return to the country," he said.

Iran's wheat output rises 18% to 16m tons, USDA estimates

Economy Desk

Iran's wheat production rose 18% to an estimated 16 million metric tons in the 2025/26 crop year, making it the world's 14th-largest producer, according to a US Department of Agriculture report on global grain production, Eqtasad-e Moaser reported. The estimate compares with 13.5 million tons produced in the 2024/25 crop year, which ended in September/October 2025. China ranked first globally with 141 million tons, followed by the European Union with 133 million tons and India with 121 million tons, the USDA data showed. Global wheat production was estimated at 822 million tons in 2025/26, down more than 2% from the previous crop



year. The report also estimated that Iran's barley production rose 16% to 3.5 million tons in 2025/26, up from 3 million tons a year earlier. Rice production, meanwhile, remained unchanged at 2 million tons. In August, Iran's deputy agriculture minister, Majid Anjafi, said the country had produced a record 14.1 million tons of wheat in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21. "So far this year, for the

first time in history, we achieved wheat production of 14.1 million tons in the country, which is a significant figure," Anjafi said. He described the agricultural sector's performance in producing essential commodities as highly successful. According to Agriculture Ministry data, Iran produced nearly 11.7 million tons of wheat in the previous Iranian calendar year, of which the government purchased about 7.8 million tons under its guaranteed procurement program.

Tehran, Ashgabat seek to broaden regional electricity cooperation

Economy Desk

Iran and Turkmenistan have discussed extending their electricity import agreement, increasing power exchanges and developing transmission lines as Tehran seeks to expand regional energy cooperation, the head of Iran's Power Generation, Distribution and Transmission Company (Tavanir) said on Friday. The talks took place during an Iranian delegation's visit to Turkmenistan, where President Masoud Pezeshkian attended a summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Mohammad Allahdad said, according to the Energy Ministry's news service Paven. The Iranian delegation, led by Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq and including the heads of the country's electricity and gas companies, met Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov to discuss bilateral energy cooperation, Allahdad said. The main issues included extending the electricity import contract with



Turkmenistan, increasing power exchanges, developing the third and fourth electricity interconnection lines, and exploring the possibility of transmitting electricity through Turkmenistan to third countries. The two sides reached preliminary agreements to continue examining the proposals, Allahdad said, adding that technical teams would assess their technical, economic and operational aspects. He said the cooperation could create opportunities to increase electricity exchange capacity and strengthen regional energy ties, subject to the findings of expert assessments and the fulfillment of implementation requirements.

Iran has also opened the way for private companies to import electricity from neighboring countries to meet their energy needs. Coordination has been completed for electricity imports from Iran's northern neighbors. Under existing contracts, Iran imports about 320 megawatts from Turkmenistan, equivalent to roughly 2 billion kilowatt-hours a year, and around 300 to 350 megawatts from Armenia, power industry spokesman Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said in September. He described electricity imports as an important step toward meeting the country's energy needs. Iran has also been negotiating with Turkey to secure electricity imports for its petrochemical industry after power plants supplying the sector were damaged during the 40-day war that began in late February. The push to secure additional electricity supplies comes as Iran, which has faced energy shortages under decades of Western sanctions, seeks to address disruptions worsened by the conflict.

Russia better positioned ...

Recent remarks by Dmitry Medvedev about Moscow's readiness to mediate, along with his emphasis that Russia will not sacrifice its strategic relations with Iran for any other actor, reinforce this message. Putin has also kept on the table the proposal to transfer Iran's enriched uranium to Russia. However, there is a serious limitation: Russia itself is involved in the war in Ukraine, and its credibility as a neutral party is in question. The main obstacle to the current deadlock is also the structural mistrust between Tehran and Washington, rather than the absence of a mediator. The US even distrusts Russia's role as a custodian of Iran's uranium. Therefore, this meeting will not lead to immediate progress on the nuclear issue, but it will likely cement Russia's role as a key player in the Iran dossier.

Given that Russia is currently involved in the Ukraine war and faces

a range of security and political challenges with the West, what role can Moscow play in managing the crisis between Iran and the United States? To what extent should Moscow's capacity and tools for influencing this process be taken seriously? Under the circumstances of the Ukraine war, Russia can be more of a "communication channel," or at most an "actor influencing calculations," than an effective mediator. Moscow's capacity should be taken seriously, but not as that of a neutral mediator. Russia's main tools are several: its strategic relationship with Iran and access to decision-makers in Tehran; its permanent membership of the UN Security Council and veto power; proposals such as transferring Iran's enriched uranium to Russia; and its capacity to coordinate with China. But the limitations are also serious. The Ukraine war has turned Moscow into a party to the confrontation with the West and undermined its credibil-

ity as a neutral actor. There may therefore be concerns that Russia itself is under extensive sanctions and has an incentive to use the Iran dossier as leverage against the West, rather than necessarily seeking to resolve it. Thus, Moscow can carry messages, open up space for back-channel consultations and influence Tehran's calculations, but it is unlikely to emerge as an effective mediator in the short term. Given Russia's role in nuclear developments and negotiations related to Iran in recent years, could Moscow, if any understanding is reached between Tehran and Washington, play a role in facilitating the implementation of the parties' commitments or establishing mechanisms to ease Iran's concerns about the other side's compliance? Moscow can play a key role in the technical details of a nuclear agreement, particularly drawing on the

experience of Rosatom. However, the limitations are serious. Trump has explicitly said that until the Ukraine war ends, he does not welcome Russia's assistance on the Iran dossier. Russia itself is also engaged in a confrontation with the West, and its credibility as a neutral actor is in question. Moscow had previously even officially stated that it was not seeking to impose a mediating role on the parties. To what extent can deepening Iran-Russia strategic cooperation and establishing more practical mechanisms to counter US pressure and sanctions help increase Iran's bargaining power? Deepening strategic cooperation with Russia can increase Iran's bargaining power to some extent in the short term, but this increase is primarily tactical rather than strategic. The 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, which took effect in October 2025, provides a framework

for cooperation in the energy, transportation, banking and military sectors. The most important practical benefit is sanctions-evasion mechanisms: linking the Shetab payment systems, trade in national currencies, and the North-South Corridor, which can help steer Iran's trade routes away from Western bottlenecks. In the military sphere, intelligence and drone-technology cooperation raises the cost of any military adventurism against Iran. However, important considerations must be taken into account. The treaty is not a defense pact and does not contain a "mutual defense" clause. Therefore, Iran cannot count on automatic Russian military support in the event of a conflict. On the other hand, Russia has important shared interests with parties involved in tensions with Iran, including Israel and the Persian Gulf states, and these considerations effectively limit Moscow's room for maneuver.