Iran pushes for smoother trade, transit with Turkey, Pakistan



Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh (L) meets with Pakistani Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) in Istanbul, Turkey on November 3, 2026.
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Economy Desk

Iran's economy minister met separately with Turkish and Pakistani trade minsters on Tuesday to push for faster cross-border commerce, focusing on truck movement, customs coordination and transit bottlenecks, according to the Economy Ministry's website.

Ali Madanizadeh held the talks with Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat and Pakistani Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) in Istanbul.

In his meeting with Bolat, Madanizadeh called for stronger customs and border cooperation. The two sides agreed to form a joint working group and hold regular meetings between border customs officials to resolve operational problems.

They also discussed facilitating truck movements, drawing up a timetable for the transit of goods and services, and keeping border customs offices open around the clock to increase trade capacity, cut truck waiting times and speed up commercial procedures.

The Bazargan border crossing, a major trade gateway between the two countries, was a particular focus. The officials also discussed Turkey's plans to modernize its customs facilities and the impact of those upgrades on cross-border traffic and cargo transit.

Other issues included making better use of alternative border crossings for trucks and passengers, coordinating the movement of sensitive cargo, and establishing a joint working group on the two countries' free trade and industrial zones. They also discussed obstacles facing Turkish companies operating in Iran and the need to resolve them to support continued business and investment.

Transport bottlenecks with Pakistan

In talks with Khan, Madanizadeh called for stronger economic and trade ties and more efficient transport and cargo transit between the neighboring countries.

The discussions focused on practical measures to remove trade and transport barriers, including truck movement problems at the Rimdan border crossing and making better use of the Mirjaveh crossing.

The talks come as thousands of Iranian shipping containers remain stranded in Pakistan and Oman amid transit restrictions and disruptions following the 40-day US-Israeli war against Iran, which began in late February.

Masoud Daneshmand, a board member of Iran's Association of Transport Companies, told ILNA on Tuesday that an estimated 15,000 to 18,000 Iranian containers were stuck in Karachi, while the total number at three locations could reach 25,000.

He identified the three accumulation points as Karachi, Sohar Port and Khor Fakkan, saying Iranian containers had been redirected to Pakistan and Oman after the United Arab Emirates stopped accepting them. The containers had been sent along alternative routes after encountering difficulties in the UAE amid the conflict and subsequent restrictions, but their transfer into Iran had also proved difficult, Daneshmand said.

Against that backdrop, the Iranian and Pakistani ministers discussed strengthening border infrastructure and expanding the capacity of free trade zones and border regions to facilitate commerce.

They stressed the importance of better coordination between customs authorities and more efficient procedures at border entry and exit points to reduce the time and cost of clearing and transporting goods.

The two sides also called for expanding trade, particularly in agricultural products, food and other goods needed by both countries, and highlighted the potential for greater economic activity in border regions to create jobs, strengthen bilateral economic ties and support development in border cities.

Both ministers agreed to continue consultations and follow up on the issues discussed to translate their agreements into practical measures to expand economic, trade and transit cooperation.

Trade shift drives 76% increase in imports through northern ports

Economy Desk

Iran has shifted much of its foreign trade to northern ports and land and rail crossings following a US naval blockade of its southern ports, with imports through northern ports rising 76% in the first six months of the Iranian year, Transport Minister Farzaneh Sadeq told Parliament on Tuesday.

Sadeq said more than 85% of the cargo previously handled through southern ports had been redirected to other border crossings under special instructions from the president. "Not even an hour of goods movement was halted," she said, IRNA reported.

During the same period, imports through road crossings increased by 41%, while imports by rail also recorded a significant rise. Exports through northern ports grew 10%, while exports through road crossings and rail networks increased by 9% and 53%, respectively.

The United States imposed the naval blockade after a 40-day war that began in late February, as part of efforts to pressure Tehran into accepting Washington's terms for an agreement. The restrictions have targeted Iran's oil exports and maritime trade.

Sadeq said the transport ministry was working on plans to improve procedures, upgrade infrastructure and strengthen transport diplomacy.

Restrictions at neighboring borders

The minister also identified restrictions on the other side of border crossings as a major obstacle to the movement of goods.

She said assessments showed that Iran's customs services were operating around the clock at many border terminals, but Iranian trucks faced restrictions on admission in neighboring countries.

Truck entry at northern, western and southern border crossings remained subject to limitations, Sadeq said, adding that despite the full operation of Iran's road and rail terminals, the restrictions had led to long queues.

The Foreign Ministry was holding ongoing talks to resolve the problem, she said, adding that most of the queues were caused by admission restrictions and quotas imposed by countries on the other side of the borders.

The border restrictions highlighted by Sadeq come as Iraq has said trade with Iran continues through other crossings despite the closure of al-Shaib crossing.

The Iraqi government has no plans to close additional border crossings with Iran, government spokesman Haider al-Aboudi said on Monday night, according to the Fars news agency.

Al-Aboudi said the al-Shaib crossing had been closed for technical and logistical reasons and that the government was working to resolve the problems.

Speaking to Iraq's Dijlah TV, he said no decision had been made to close any other border crossings.

Al-Aboudi had previously said that trade between Iraq and Iran continued smoothly through several other crossings.

The closure followed an earlier suspension of activity at the al-Shaib, Shalamcheh and Mandali crossings on September 12, after a drone attack on Saudi oil infrastructure was alleged to have originated from Iraqi territory.

Trade resumed at most crossings following security reviews, including at



Farzaneh Sadeq
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al-Shaib on September 17, but Iraq ordered the crossing closed again on October 20, with the closure taking effect the following day.

Al-Shaib, known as Chazabeh on the Iranian side, is an important land trade route between Iran and Iraq. Local officials in Iraq's Maysan province say about 4,000 people depend on the crossing directly or indirectly for their livelihoods.

China's chances of ...

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First, the strategic intentions of the United States and Israel are centered on the systematic destruction of Iran's missile and drone networks, the seizure of its nuclear materials, and applying sufficient pressure to bring about Iran's collapse or surrender. Assessments indicate that these intentions have not changed. We are witnessing changes in their behavior and rhetoric, but their strategic intentions remain intact.

(It should be noted that changes in behavior and rhetoric can happen relatively easily, whereas changes in intentions are much more difficult, because it takes a considerable amount of time for an intention to take shape and eventually become a strategic objective.)

Second, the United States and the Israeli regime view Iran's current situation as a "window of opportunity." From their perspective, the Gaza war, Iran's inability to maintain the balance of the Axis of Resistance, the 12-day war and the developments that followed have led to the successive breaking of red lines, creating what they see as a historic opportunity — or, in their own words, a window of opportunity — to alter the regional balance of power. Abandoning this window of opportunity is something they would never accept.

Third, historical patterns show that conflicts of this magnitude, both in terms of the geography involved and their consequences, are highly unlikely to end without a tangible outcome. A confrontation of this nature must produce a concrete result.

Given the absence of any signs that these three underlying assumptions among American policymakers are changing, I do not see much chance of China, or any other country, succeeding in intervening. This is also one of the reasons previous mediation efforts have failed. It is not that the mediators lack the necessary power, but rather that the underlying assumptions shaping the Americans' approach to the war have not changed.

Nevertheless, taking all these factors into account, I believe that diplomatic engagement by all potential mediators should be actively pursued, because a surprise that could bring the war to an end might emerge from these interactions. The likelihood of such an outcome is very low, but if it does materialize, its impact will be far-reaching.

There is a fourth point, which may be more important than all the preceding ones. There are two ways to analyze the war waged by the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran:

1. From a narrow perspective, we can view this war simply as a confrontation between the United States and Iran over the nuclear issue.

2. From a broader strategic perspective, we can interpret this war as part of a grand game in which China is the ultimate target.

The United States backed down in the tariff war with China because Beijing held a stronger bargaining card in the form of rare earth minerals. However, in an energy war, if Washington manages to gain control of energy chokepoints, China will have no stronger card to play against the United States.

This is why American strategists believe that, following Venezuela and the establishment of control over energy resources in South America, Iran is the only remaining obstacle to using the energy card against China. If they manage to defeat Iran, the energy lifeline will fall into American hands, making the United States the undisputed dominant power in this domain. In such circumstances, China would be forced to concede the game to its rival in their strategic competition.

Now, if we look at the issue from this second perspective, why should the United States have any interest in allowing its rival to enter the final round of the war? My assessment is that Chinese strategists and policymakers understand this perspective and are designing the various components of their engagement strategy accordingly.

How would you assess the current state of our foreign policy in terms of cooperation with China?

Another important point is that our foreign policy needs to be redesigned in terms of its model of engagement. I believe that this type of engagement, in which a representative of the Supreme National Security Council, the Foreign Ministry or another institution travels to China on a particular occasion and expects to secure major achievements through one or two visits within a short period, falls somewhat short of what should be the desired model of engagement for the Islamic Revolution.

If we were to give this approach a name, we could call it "hurry-up diplomacy." It is a type of diplomacy that the Chinese simply do not understand.

The point is that we have not yet reached an agreement on the issues at hand, yet we already want to reap the benefits of our visit. Well, that is simply not how things work.

We will only succeed in our diplomacy, at least in our relations with China, when we devote a considerable amount of time to building networks and holding discussions on issues of mutual concern to the two countries.

Unless these discussions take place at a strategic level and are characterized by continuity and sustainability, the outcome we are seeking will not materialize. Sensitive issues require a great deal of time and investment. We have to put in the hard work before we can achieve the desired results.

Therefore, in our diplomacy with other countries, we need a paradigm shift from "hurry-up diplomacy" to "commitment-based diplomacy."