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Afghan truckers on strike against Iranian officials

By Ramin

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Hundreds of transit truck drivers on both sides of the Afghan-Iran frontier in southwestern Nimroz province on Monday went on a strike against Iranian border guards.

Iranian border officials wanted the drivers to reduce the size of their fuel tanks from 300 liters to 50 liters, trucker Ghulam Sarwar said, alleging unnecessary searches and checks of trade goods.

While the goods were unloaded during searches at the border, drivers were ordered to pay the workers, claimed Sarwar, who said a 50-litre tank could not meet his requirements.

He said the truckers, despite paying fines to Iranian fuel companies for transporting extra oil, were teased one pretext or the other.

Another driver, Abdul Karim said, nearly 1,000 Afghan transit vehicles have been parked over the past three days at the border. Iranian border guards, police and other officials behaved rudely with them, he added.

Trader Haji Abdul Wahid said they purchased electronic goods from Chinese companies on credit. During searches, Iranian officials often damaged their merchandise and broke seals, causing them losses and damaging their credibility.

Ilhamuddin Mazhar, Nimroz customs director, confirmed the strike, blaming Iranian border officials for inappropriate and violent behaviour. He said they had shared the issue with the governor's office and the Ministry of Finance.

Mazhar said representatives of the two countries would discuss the issue on Tuesday. The department was suffering a daily loss of 12-15 million afghanis due to the strike, he concluded.