

Economy official says crypto-based foreign investment to be authorized



Economy Desk

Foreign investment in Iran can be carried out through cryptocurrency, a senior Economy Ministry official said, citing legislation that allows both financing and foreign direct investment (FDI) to be executed using digital assets. Majid Karimi-Rizi, head of the National Financing Center at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance told ILNA that a new financing tool under the Production and Infrastructure Financing Law explicitly permits the registration of foreign capital in the form of cryptocurrency. He said the related by-

law must be drafted by the National Financing Council and approved by the government. Karimi-Rizi said the ministry had begun work on the regulation, but progress had stopped because the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has raised concerns. The bank, he noted, has already issued a crypto brokerage directive and has certain institutions and requirements in mind. "We should use this existing capacity and issue the necessary permits," he said. He added that Iran could apply the same model used for gold bullion imports, which currently allows foreign

investors to bring capital into the country in physical gold. Under a newly approved decision by the Foreign Investment Board, investors can import gold, then offer it on the Iran Mercantile Exchange or the Foreign Exchange and Gold Center. The move is expected to preserve asset value while enabling investors to enter production and export-oriented sectors. "The same method can be applied to cryptocurrency, enabling investors to transfer their capital into Iran in the form of digital assets," the official said. Karimi-Rizi said the legal provision applies

primarily to FDI projects, defined as investments made by a company or individual in another country, though the law also permits financing through cryptocurrency. Asked whether the law allows the use of all cryptocurrencies for investment and financing, he said rules must be established to define the limits. "Restrictions have to be considered in the regulatory framework; for example, measures are needed to ensure the security of Tether is not compromised. The Central Bank is expected to set these rules and act accordingly," he said.

Minister: Persian Gulf water transfer to Tehran 'very expensive' but necessary



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Transferring water from the Persian Gulf to Tehran is extremely costly and economically unviable, Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said in an exclusive interview with IRNA, adding, however, it may be necessary when human lives are at stake. Responding to questions about recent government statements that the project is Tehran's only reliable water source, Aliabadi said producing large volumes of freshwater along the Persian Gulf coast is a major priority for the Ministry of Energy. He noted that massive desalination plants are under construction in Chabahar, Bandar Abbas, and Khuzestan, with efforts underway to improve economic efficiency and attract private investment. "If water from southern regions is supplied this way, it could also support population settlement in southern provinces, shifting some of the demographic load away from Tehran," he said. Aliabadi added

that water currently transferred from upstream regions could instead be used to supply Tehran and northern areas, though all such plans require careful expert analysis. "Transporting water from the Persian Gulf to Tehran is very expensive and not cost-effective, but when human lives are at stake, we will do whatever is necessary," he said. "However, this water should not be used for agriculture or non-essential purposes." Aliabadi stressed that Tehran's water status is so critical that all possible measures must be considered, provided they are economically feasible. "Sometimes water is used to produce agricultural products that are not economically viable — it would be better not to produce or export those items, as the revenue is far lower than the costs," he said. The country has embarked on large-scale transfers of desalinated water from the Oman Sea and the Persian Gulf to eastern and southern region, part of a nationwide program launched in 2021 that includes five desalinated seawater transfer lines designed to ease water shortages. On Thursday, Aliabadi said the government is accelerating work on a large-scale seawater desalination program with a capacity of two billion cubic meters, describing the initiative as essential to coping with one of Iran's harshest multi-year droughts.

Afghanistan shifts transit to Iran after Pakistan border clashes

Landlocked Afghanistan is leaning more heavily on trade routes through Iran and Central Asia to reduce dependence on Pakistan, development officials highlighted amid rising tensions between the two neighbors and the weeks-long closure of their border. Reuters wrote in a brief report that Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan's ports has long given Islamabad leverage to press Kabul over Pakistani militants sheltering across the border. But, it added, Afghanistan is increasingly making use of Iran's concessions to shift freight to its Indian-backed port of Chabahar, bypassing Pakistan and avoiding recurring border and transit disruptions. "In the past six months, our trade with Iran has reached \$1.6 billion, higher than the \$1.1 billion exchanged with Pakistan," Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada, a spokesman for the Commerce Ministry, told Reuters. "The facilities at Chabahar have reduced delays and given traders confidence that shipments will not stop when borders close." Traders have three months to settle contracts in Pakistan and shift to other routes, said Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Afghanistan's deputy prime minister for economic affairs. Accusing Islamabad of using



"commercial and humanitarian matters as political leverage," he said Afghanistan would not mediate disputes after the deadline and ordered ministries to stop clearing Pakistani medicines, citing "low-quality" imports. The biggest shift is to Chabahar, used since 2017 under a transit pact with Iran and India. Afghan officials say incentives from tariff cuts and discounted storage to faster handling are drawing more cargo south. Iran has installed updated equipment and X-ray scanners, while offering Afghan cargo a 30% cut in port tariffs, 75% off storage fees and 55% off docking charges, said Akhundzada, the Commerce Ministry spokesman.

Pakistan sees no harm from Afghan decision Afghanistan's decision would cause no economic harm to Pakistan, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif told Geo News. "Afghanistan can trade through any port or country," he said. However, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan told Reuters, "We cannot compromise on security." India has stepped up engagement with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, hosting acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and broadening humanitarian assistance. The country runs key terminals at Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar, which it sees as a strategic link to Afghanistan and Central Asia. In October, the United States

gave New Delhi a six-month sanctions waiver to keep running the port. Afghanistan has boosted shipments through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, routes it says are growing faster than Pakistan's. As advantages Akhundzada cited new transit deals, lower border costs and offices at Milak and Zahedan, Iran's main border crossing points for Afghan trade. But Pakistan is still the fastest route to the sea, with trucks reaching its southern port of Karachi in three days. Its exports to Afghanistan neared \$1.5 billion in 2024. Islamabad says closures curb militant movement; Kabul denies providing safe haven to the militants.

Iran maps key waters as annual nautical chart drawing hits 120,000

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Iran makes about 120,000 specialized nautical charts each year and has completed extensive environmental, hydrologic and bathymetric studies in its three main marine domains, the head of the National Cartographic Center (NCC) said on Saturday. Speaking at a press briefing on the sidelines of the 5th Iran Geo International Exhibition, Eskandar Seydaei said the NCC's focus in coastal and littoral provinces was now the continuous monitoring of national water bodies, including the Persian Gulf, the

Sea of Oman and the Caspian Sea, IRNA reported. Seydaei said hydrographic services for international vessels were once provided exclusively by several European countries, including the United Kingdom, but that Iran could now deliver such services independently and domestically. "Findings, including alerts and scientific evidence, are shared annually with relevant government bodies," he added. According to the official, scientific teams stationed in coastal provinces also publish field-based research through reports, articles, books and

scientific infographics, aimed at improving decision-making for the sustainable management of the country's water resources. "Iran maintains an active presence in global scientific forums, and the NCC is a member of United Nations expert committees on data-driven governance," Seydaei said. He noted that during a recent UN meeting in South Korea, Iran presented its achievements and drew on international experience. The official highlighted the work of colleagues in the Armed Forces Geographical Organization, noting that teams

using aerial, terrestrial and marine capabilities produce accurate and transparent datasets to support informed decision-making by authorities. The Iran Geo International Exhibition opened on Thursday and runs through Sunday afternoon with universities, research institutes and private companies taking part. "This year, two joint unveilings of recent research projects will be carried out by the National Cartographic Center and the Armed Forces Geographical Organization," he said. Geospatial data plays a critical role across political, cultural, economic and



security domains, from crisis management to long-term development policy.