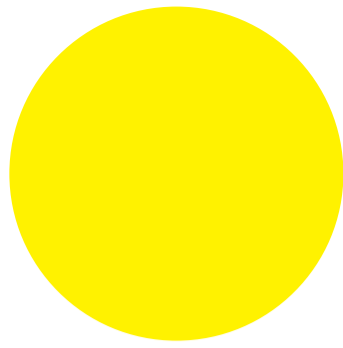


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SCO defense ministers pose for a group photo during a meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on April 28, 2026. AKIPRESS

How boundaries of performative madness collapsed in Trump-Iran case



By Sharareh Abdolhosseinzadeh
Political Science Researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the literature of international politics, the "Madman Theory" has been regarded as one of the most controversial tools of deterrence; a tool grounded in the assumption that a political leader can moderate an adversary's behavior by projecting a controlled image of instability, or even madness. The roots of this idea trace back to the Cold War, particularly to Henry Kissinger's interpretations of Richard Nixon's conduct, where unpredictability was defined as a strategic asset rather than a flaw. However, Donald Trump's experience — particularly in relation to Iran and in the context of the recent war — has pushed this theoretical framework into a stage of conceptual ambiguity. The issue is no longer merely the use of a performance of madness as an instrument, but rather the

gradual collapse of the distinction between performance and reality; a point at which what was meant to be a political role turns into a durable feature of political action itself.

In analyses published by the New York Review and similar commentaries, it has been highlighted that Trump, in deploying threatening rhetoric — from warnings about the "destruction of civilizations" to direct threats issued on his social media platform — is moving beyond the controlled boundaries of the classical theory. In Thomas Schelling's model, a threat is effective when it generates controlled risk; that is, when the opposing side rationally considers the possibility of a limited catastrophe. But in Trump's case, that risk has shifted from an instrument into a permanent perceptual environment.

As a result, instead of "strategic ambiguity," what emerges is a form of "structural ambiguity"; an ambiguity no longer subject to calibration, but one that has become a fixed feature of the decision-making environment. This is precisely the point Robert Jer-

vis warned about: when messages become excessively contradictory or emotionally charged, the opposing actor is no longer able to interpret strategic intent, and the entire logic of deterrence begins to erode. In the Iran case, this shift has had concrete implications. Throughout the recent war, Iran followed a relatively classical pattern of limited deterrence — namely controlled, phased and predictable responses. On the other side, however, US behavior at the discursive and media level has drifted away from the logic of classical deterrence and moved toward the continuous production of personalized uncertainty.

The crucial point is that in the classical Madman Theory, as Kissinger emphasized, madness must be believable yet bounded. The adversary must believe an explosion is possible, while at the same time understanding that such an explosion remains under relative control. But in Trump's conduct, particularly during his second term and amid the Iran crisis, that limitation has gradually faded.

Here, the concept of self-referential escalation

can be invoked: a condition in which repeated severe threats not only fail to generate deterrent effects, but also lead to the weakening of the threat's credibility. Even in Trump's own historical examples — from threatening North Korea with "fire and fury" to later declaring "mutual love" with Kim Jong Un — a pattern of diminishing returns in credibility can be observed.

But the deeper point is that Trump is not merely "playing a role." Accounts from former officials in his administration, including John Kelly, James Mattis and John Bolton, suggest that a significant part of this conduct is not performative but behavioral and personal. This is the point at which analysis shifts from the level of "strategic theory" to that of the "psycho-political structure of power."

Within this framework, the Madman Theory is inverted. What was meant to be a tool becomes a situation. And what was supposed to be an exceptional situation turns into the ordinary logic of political action.

This condition can also be explained through a Hobbesian reading of power. In

Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes describes rage and grandiosity as potential roots of political madness; a condition in which an individual substitutes belief in an inner truth for external constraints. Under such circumstances, reality is no longer an external reference point, but becomes a function of the will to power.

As a result, what is being observed in the case of Trump and Iran is not merely a diplomatic or military crisis, but a crisis in the perception of international politics itself. Deterrence is no longer shaped solely by military capability or official signaling; it is also being redefined through perceptions of the stability or instability of the political leader's personality.

In sum, the Madman Theory has undergone a fundamental transformation in the Trump experience: from a controlled strategy for managing enemy perceptions into a permanent condition of uncertainty. In this condition, the boundary between threat, performance and reality collapses — and that collapse itself becomes one of the principal variables of instability in US-Iran relations.



Iran: US-Israeli strikes erode core principles of int'l system

Washington suffering from 'maniacal hubris'

International Desk

The spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry said the recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran has seriously undermined the concept of trust, norms, and accepted principles in the international system.

Addressing a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Defense Ministers in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, on Tuesday, Brigadier General Reza Taleai-Nik warned that the consequence of such acts of aggressions would be chaos, insecurity, and the weakening of the foundations of global order.

"The world today is too complex to resolve issues through threats and force. The US government, in its current approach, has crossed all boundaries of humanity, ethics, and culture, and is speaking to other nations with the language of accusation, threat, and insult." Taleai-Nik said that Iran believes the US has become strangely and rapidly unbalanced and struggling with "maniacal hubris" to the point where its president openly speaks of seizing oth-

er countries' natural resources, wiping out civilizations, renaming geographic locations, claiming ownership over other countries' territories, and changing legal establishments in countries such as Venezuela and, more recently, Cuba. Unfortunately, the persistence of such an approach could push the world toward a dangerous, uncontrollable, and unpredictable situation, the Iranian official said. Taleai-Nik said that such approaches would impose major political and security costs on other countries and regional and international organizations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

International system's ineffectiveness

He said that recent developments have once again exposed the international system's ineffectiveness in implementing the UN Charter and confronting aggressors.

What is needed to resolve this situation is genuine commitment to dialogue, respect for national sovereignty, and avoidance of any unilateral action, adding that escalating tensions and con-



Spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry Brigadier General Reza Taleai-Nik (R) attends a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Defense Ministers in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, on April 28, 2026.

● IRNA

tinuous threats would undermine any legitimate efforts to establish peace in the world, the spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry said.

Strait of Hormuz

Regarding Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf following the aggression against Iran in February, he said the country would allow passage through the strait after the conclusion of the US-Israeli aggression under protocols that protect Iran's security. Taleai-Nik said Iran recognizes international concerns about the current restrictions it has imposed on passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

Taleai Nik said, however, that the restrictions are a response to the US-Israeli attacks on the country, which began in late February and halted with a



ceasefire on April 8.

"Allowing the smooth transit of commercial ships will be on the agenda after the end of the war, provided that protocols that do not jeopardize Iran's

security are observed," he said.

The comments come amid efforts in the Iranian government and parliament to introduce a new legal regime for transit in the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran scolds US 'outright legalization of piracy' on high seas

International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman condemned the United States for the outright legalization of piracy and armed robbery on the high seas, following the interception of Iranian oil tankers by US forces under the pretext of so-called "seizure warrants."

Esmaeil Baqaei issued a statement on Monday in response to announcements by US authorities claiming the interdiction of vessels such as the M/T Majestic (formerly M/T Phoenix) and M/T Tifani in the Indian Ocean.

These ships were reportedly carrying approximately 1.9 million barrels of Iranian oil each, seized under so-called federal warrants issued by US courts as part of Washington's unilateral sanctions regime.

"This is the outright legalization of piracy and armed robbery on the high seas," Baqaei stated.

"Welcome to the return of the pirates — only now, they operate with government-issued warrants, sail under official flags, and call their plunder 'law enforcement,'" he stated.

"The United States must be held fully accountable for this brazenly lawless behavior, which strikes



Esmaeil Baqaei
● IRNA

at the heart of international law and international free trade, and threatens the basic principles of maritime security," he added.

The US has imposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports and ships in response to Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have said the blockade is unlawful and a breach of a ceasefire that took effect on April 8 and was again unilaterally extended by US President Doland Trump hours before it was set to expire on April 22.

Iran has repeatedly warned that these provocative measures not only violate core principles of international law but also risk escalating tensions in critical maritime chokepoints.

Iran's military vowed to decisively retaliate the latest act of "piracy" by the US military forces against an Iranian commercial vessel and two oil tankers in the Sea of Oman.

US responsible for disruption in Hormuz: Envoy

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Amir Saeed Irvani, said on Monday that any disruption or obstruction in maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waters is the direct responsibility of the United States and its allies, whose reckless and illegal actions have turned a vital international waterway into a zone of heightened tension and danger.

He made the remarks during a United Nations Security Council high-level open debate on the safety and protection of waterways in the maritime domain.

The Iranian envoy emphasized that the Islamic Republic has always upheld freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman.

For decades, Iran has responsibly fulfilled its duties as a coastal state, guaranteeing the safety of sea lanes and the smooth flow of international shipping, he said.

Irvani pointed out that the current crisis stems from the widespread and unjustified war of aggression launched by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran since February 28.

Iraq president nominates Ali al-Zaidi as PM-designate

International Desk

Iraq's dominant parliamentary bloc on Monday nominated Ali al-Zaidi, a businessman and political newcomer, to be the country's prime minister.

The announcement by the Coordination Framework, a coalition of Shia parties, followed a meeting at the government palace. It came after weeks of internal debate among its member parties aimed at selecting a compromise candidate to lead the next government, AP reported.

President Nizar Amidi then tasked al-Zaidi with forming a government. Even with the backing of the dominant bloc, the new government is not assured of receiving the required number of votes.

The coalition had previously said it would back former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. US President Donald Trump publicly announced his opposition to Al-Maliki and threatened to cut off aid to Iraq if he was appointed.

While Al-Maliki remained defiant after Trump's intervention, the bloc decided to shift to a compromise candidate.

In a statement announcing Al-Zaidi's nomination, the Coordination Framework thanked Al-Maliki and incumbent Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani for their "historic and responsible positions"



Ali al-Zaidi
● AP

in withdrawing their candidacies to help overcome the political deadlock. Al-Sudani issued a statement congratulating Al-Zaidi. Al-Zaidi, who is chairman of Al-Janoob Islamic Bank, emerged in the final stages of discussions as one of the leading candidates, bolstered by his economic background and business and investment connections. He has not previously held political office.

Following his nomination, Al-Zaidi promised to focus on making Iraq "a balanced country, regionally and internationally."

"This appointment comes at a sensitive time that requires concerted efforts from all political and social forces," he said.

Under the constitution, the designated prime minister has 30 days to present a Cabinet lineup to the parliament, which requires 167 votes to secure a vote of confidence.

Global consensus on anti-Iran resolutions at UNSC 'gone': Grossi

International Desk

Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi said that there is no more consensus over resolutions against Iran at the UN Security Council.

"We have to be reminded of the fact that until 2016 or 2017, resolutions at the UN Security Council on Iran were adopted by consensus without a vote, all right? And I think this question allows us to be reminded that that consensus is gone. And I don't see it coming back, perhaps for a long, long time," Grossi said in an interview published by the Council on Foreign Relations.



Rafael Grossi
● cfr.org

Emphasizing the complexity of efforts to end tensions between Iran and the United States, Grossi said the diplomatic path must continue and that sufficient time should be allowed to reach political solutions. The IAEA chief also warned that any potential agreement on Iran's nuclear program would be essen-

tially incomplete without a clear and effective role for the agency in the monitoring process, adding that parties could fall into an "illusion of reaching a deal."

He further stressed the need for the IAEA's involvement from the outset of any agreement, saying any mechanism established without the agency's oversight would lack the necessary effectiveness.

Grossi, who is a candidate for the presidency of the UN secretary-general, also said the inability to find "common ground" is not limited to the Iran case but reflects a broader structural crisis in the UN Security Council.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran oil crunch months away despite Trump's claim, data shows

Economy Desk

Iran can continue producing and storing oil for roughly two more months, HFI Research said, citing tanker tracking data, in a finding that contrasts with US claims of imminent constraints.

According to the research firm, data from TankerTrackers indicates that 20 very large crude carriers (VLCCs), combined with onshore storage capacity equivalent to about 50 million barrels, would be sufficient for approximately 53 days at an export rate of 1.7 million barrels per day.

The estimate comes after US President Donald Trump has said Iran would only be able to sustain oil production and storage for another three days.

Iran is still moving oil — even under a US naval blockade — undercutting Washington's effort to choke off its energy lifeline and easing fears of an immediate global supply shock.

Tanker trackers and media reports say Tehran has loaded at least 4.6 million barrels of crude — amounting to nearly \$400 million worth — at its export terminals in recent



days, with another four million barrels appearing to have crossed the blockade line.

Satellite imagery cited by monitoring firms shows some vessels "going dark" — switching off transponders to slip past surveillance and deliver cargo beyond restricted zones. With Iran along the northern coast of the narrow Strait of Hormuz, its geo-

graphic position appears to facilitate such evasion.

The data points to a more resilient export network than markets had anticipated, even as the United States increases maritime pressure in and around the Strait of Hormuz, widely regarded as the world's most critical oil chokepoint, Gulf News reported.

For markets, the message

is simple: the feared supply shock is not here — yet.

Recent reports from TankerTrackers indicate that a supertanker with a capacity of up to two million barrels has not yet left Iranian waters, contrary to earlier expectations.

The data shows the tanker anchored farther west, suggesting a shift in the tactical positioning of

Iran's fleet amid rising international pressure.

Opposition to US approach

Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Al Busaidi called for sustained diplomacy to safeguard freedom of navigation, saying regional states share responsibility for keeping key shipping lanes open and securing the release of detained

seafarers.

Russia's envoy to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, also criticized Washington's approach, saying threats of force and tighter sanctions amount to "blackmail, ultimatums and deadlines."

In a post on X, Ulyanov said the United States often negotiates "from a position of strength," but argued that "this scheme doesn't work with Iran," urging Washington to drop coercive elements from its stance.

Trump has continued to warn that Iran could soon face critical bottlenecks if it fails to move oil into storage or onto tankers under ongoing restrictions.

However, the latest shipping data complicates that narrative.

As long as Iran can continue exporting even partial volumes, analysts say, the likelihood of a near-term price spike diminishes. For crude to surge toward record levels within days, markets would require a sharp escalation, such as direct attacks on infrastructure, a full closure of the Strait of Hormuz, or a breakdown in diplomatic efforts.

Technical, engineering exports soar 140% to \$3b: TPO



Economy Desk

Iran's exports of technical and engineering services rose 140% in the last fiscal year starting March 21, 2025, reaching about \$3 billion, a senior trade official said, according to Tasnim news agency.

Amir Roshanbakhsh, deputy at the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said Iran had recorded about \$790 million in technical and engineering services exports and roughly \$400 million in other service exports in the year earlier (starting March 21, 2024), but the figure surged last year with a focus on development programs.

He said exports included \$1.8 billion in technical and engineering services and \$1.2 billion in other services. Despite the sharp increase, Roshanbakhsh said assessments showed exports in the sector still lagged behind the country's capacities.

He added that with greater focus and planning, Iran could target \$5 billion in technical and engineering services exports.

"We are trying to enhance the value and credibility of technical and engineering services exports through revitalization efforts, as this sector does not face the same export constraints as other sectors, such as entry and exit points, and can generate significant foreign exchange earnings and employment for the country," he said.

India in talks with Iran, US as sanctions cloud Chabahar's future



Economy Desk

India's government is in continuing talks with both Iran and the United States over the future of the strategic Chabahar Port, with the expiry of a US sanctions waiver and the recent regional conflict adding complexity to the discussions, the Mana News Agency reported on Tuesday.

Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said the matter was being addressed with both Tehran and Washington.

"This issue is being reviewed with Iran and the United States. Obviously, the current conflict is also a complicating factor," he said.

Tensions have remained high since a joint US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28. US President Donald Trump on April 13 ordered a naval

blockade of the Strait of Hormuz to force Tehran to a peace agreement. India is heavily dependent on energy supplies routed through the strait, and has separately negotiated with Iran for safe passage of tankers.

New Delhi signed a 10-year contract with Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization in 2024 to develop Chabahar as an alternative gateway for goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing rival Pakistan.

The United States granted India a sanctions waiver to operate at the port in 2018. The waiver was revoked in September 2025, but extended through April 2026 following Indian lobbying. Bloomberg News reported earlier this month that officials had hoped for a further extension, but the escalation of tensions between Washington and

Tehran had become a complicating factor.

India was now considering a wide range of options. It had no plans to withdraw entirely from the port, given existing plans to expand connectivity through a rail link, the report said.

New Delhi is seeking to balance ties with Washington against its long-standing relationship with Tehran. The Trump administration's posture against Iran since February has added a new layer of complexity to US-India relations.

Chabahar is located on Iran's southeastern coast in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, outside the Persian Gulf and beyond the Strait of Hormuz. The port has been positioned as a key node in India's wider regional connectivity strategy, including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) linking India with Russia via Iran.

The port's commercial development has been complicated throughout its history by the layered effects of US sanctions on Iran, intermittent reductions in trade volumes, and tensions over the parallel development of Pakistan's Gwadar Port, which sits roughly 170 km away on the Arabian Sea coast.

Neka power plant sets record as 4th gas unit joins grid



Economy Desk

Iran has connected the fourth gas unit of its Neka power plant in northern Mazandaran Province, with a capacity of 183 megawatts, to the national electricity grid, completing installation and commissioning in a record 99 days, ISNA reported.

Azim Etemadi, CEO of the Thermal Power Plant Company, said Iranian engineers completed the work despite repeated enemy threats targeting the country's electricity infrastructure, setting a new national record for the fastest

installation of a gas-fired power unit. A US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day military campaign against Iran in late February, with threats and attacks on infrastructure targets prioritized.

The unit was connected to the grid 33 days ahead of the scheduled timeline, he said. The previous national record for installing and commissioning a gas power unit stood at 130 days, achieved during the first phase of the same project amid a 12-day conflict in June, he added.

According to the official, the Neka pow-

er plant expansion project comprises two 183-megawatt gas units and one 180-megawatt steam unit operating in combined cycle mode. With the goal of reducing electricity shortages in Mazandaran, two gas units have now been connected to the national grid.

Upon completion of the new combined-cycle project, the total capacity of the Neka power plant will reach 2,760 megawatts. The efficiency of the new units in combined-cycle operation is estimated at more than 53%, Etemadi said.

Iran's gas exports to Turkey jump 3.5-fold to nearly 1 bcm in early 2026

Economy Desk

Iran's natural gas exports to Turkey rose 3.5-fold in the first two months of 2026 to about 1 billion cubic meters, according to data cited by Tasnim.

The European Commission's statistics center reported that Iran exported 930 million cubic meters of gas to Turkey in January and February 2026, marking a 3.5-fold increase compared with the same period a year earlier. Iran had exported more than 270 million cubic meters of gas to Turkey in the first two months of 2025. Iran's total gas exports to Turkey reached 8.17 billion cubic meters in 2025, up 16% from the previous year.

The gas agreement with Iran, due to expire in July, provides for delivery of 9.6 billion cubic meters of gas a year, but actual flows have often fallen short.

Turkey's Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar has recently said that Ankara wants to extend its natural gas supply contract with Iran, but noted that negotiations have not yet begun due to the ongoing conflict between Iran and the United States, which is currently under a ceasefire. Turkey imported 7.6 billion cubic meters of gas from Iran last year, accounting for 13% of its total gas imports, according to Reuters.

Role of Iran's land borders in nullifying maritime blockades



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

These days, the presence of United States naval warships in the vicinity of the Sea of Oman, along with the imposition of a maritime blockade against Iran, is an endeavor to restrict Iran's access to global trade routes and to engender disruptions in supply chains, particularly within the sphere of oil sales revenues; a stratagem that seeks to amplify economic pressure on the country.

In recent years, concurrently with the intensification of geopolitical transformations and the escalation of tensions within strategic waterways, the concept of a "maritime blockade" has once again metamorphosed into one of the paramount instruments within international equations. Experiences

such as the United States' action in imposing restrictions upon the oil exports of certain nations indicate that such policies may, in the short term, exert an influence upon the flow of commerce and energy exports.

Nevertheless, the fundamental inquiry is whether Iran, endowed with a strategic position, extensive terrestrial and maritime frontiers, and numerous adjacent nations, is, in principle, a country susceptible to encirclement? And, should such conditions persist, what alternative passages and capacities does it possess for the continuation of commerce, the provision of public necessities, and the preservation of foreign currency revenue streams?

The following exclusive interview, conducted by Iran Daily with Jalal Ebrahimi, the president of Iran-Turkey Commercial Council, scrutinizes the extent to which Iran is vulnerable to such pressures and what passages it possesses to navigate through these circumstances.

Jalal Ebrahimi



The screenshot of a video posted by US Central Command (CENTCOM) shows a US Navy destroyer warning and then firing on an Iranian-flagged cargo ship in the Arabian Sea on April 19, 2026.

US CENTCOM

IRAN DAILY: Dr. Ebrahimi, in light of the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the imposition of a sort of maritime blockade by the US, does it appear that the adversary seeks, through this means, to constrict the economic arena for Iran?

EBRAHIMI: The truth is that perceiving Iran solely within the framework of a maritime blockade represents is incomplete. Iran, from long ago, due to its strategic position, has perpetually been exposed to greed and threats, both economically and militarily. Historically, from the Arab conquest to the invasion of Alexander of Macedonia, this territory has been an object of attention because of its abundant resources, verdure, and distinctive geographical location. Within our territory, diverse products are cultivated, and numerous mineral resources are extractable. All these matters have caused the greedy powers across the globe to cast covetous glances toward Iran. During the Qajar period, as a consequence of negligence, portions of Azerbaijan were severed from us (subsequent to the Treaty of Turkmenchay). The same occurrence transpired concerning Afghanistan. These were all territories of the Iranian Plateau. The Iranian Plateau possessed an expanse of 2,648,760 square kilometers, of which, due to these very incompetencies of the dynasties of that era and foreign aggressions, we lost one million square kilometers.

The recent war, too, was waged, to some extent, under the pretext of and in covetousness of our oil and other strategic and advantageous interests and benefits, and, ultimately, the adversary has resorted to a maritime blockade.

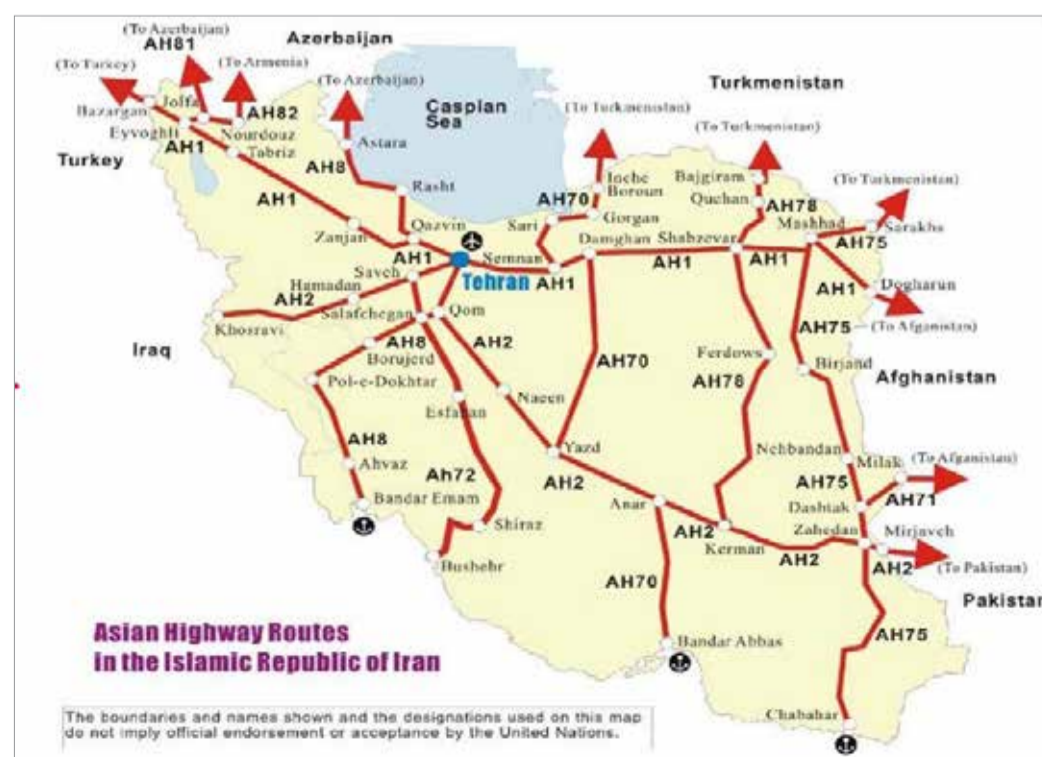
However, Iran is not a nation with only one resource, so if, for example, our oil sales are obstructed or the entry of goods into our ports is prevented, we would not experience a crisis in

terms of revenue and the provision of necessities. Every part of Iran possesses its own diverse products, and we possess numerous pathways for trade. Iran is a country with climatic diversity, abundant mineral resources, and fertile lands. Therefore, even if a portion of oil revenues is restricted, this does not signify economic collapse.

So, does Iran even constitute a country susceptible to en-

circlement?

As I've said, Iran, due to its vastness and abundant resources, possesses numerous products that are extractable and producible during different seasons of the year. On the other hand, because of its extensive maritime and terrestrial boundaries and numerous neighbors, Iran is not susceptible to encirclement. Numerous alternative transit and transport capacities exist for us. Observe, if you will: from the



The map shows Iran's highway routes and border crossings as of 2018.

unesap.org



Iran is not a nation with only one resource, so if, for example, our oil sales are obstructed or the entry of goods into our ports is prevented, we would not experience a crisis in terms of revenue and the provision of necessities. Every part of Iran possesses its own diverse products, and we possess numerous pathways for trade. Iran is a country with climatic diversity, abundant mineral resources, and fertile lands. Therefore, even if a portion of oil revenues is restricted, this does not signify economic collapse.

Persian Gulf or Bandar Gavater in southeastern Iran (a port along our border with Pakistan), then the borders of Afghanistan to the east, the Central Asian countries to the north, the Caspian Sea above which lies Russia, Republic of Azerbaijan to the northwest, and Turkey and Iraq to the west, we possess a multitude of neighbors and numerous, extensive borders. Many of these countries maintain extensive commercial exchanges with us, serving either as trade destinations or as hub for the procurement and distribution of goods. These countries open our trade pathways to Europe, vast regions of the East, Central Asian countries, China, and even Africa. Iran's borders with its neighbors are, in truth, where both Iran's economy and its neighbors' economies depend on, and they do not permit adversaries to impose an economic blockade.

What is the role of the southern seas and the Indian Ocean in Iran's commerce, and what portion of this sector's trade is allocated to essential commodities? Is this portion replaceable?

The majority of Iran's exports through its southern ports (Imam Khomeini Port, Bushehr Port, Bandar Abbas, Jask Port, Bandar Lengeh, etc.), consist of condensates or, so to speak, extractions derived from petroleum products; that is, mostly oil, gas, materials extracted from oil and gas, and petrochemical substances. A blockade does exert an effect upon trade in this sector, particularly given that some of our petrochemical production centers have also sustained damage. Of course, reports indicate that a number of our oil tankers continue to proceed toward other nations, such as China and India, unimpeded. On the other hand, the Iranian government has announced that, concerning essential commodities, our necessities are stockpiled for months, and the remaining needs we can meet through our neighbors. Even now, with Turkey, which is a very good trade partner of ours, we possess preferential trade agreements that can be expanded to encompass additional goods. We could even import petrochemical materials and other substances via Turkey, because this neighbor, via terrestrial routes and the Mediterranean Sea, maintains close commercial connections with every country in Europe. We have encountered no restrictions in the importation of foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, and

other items from this western region. We just have to expand our governmental and private sector's trade with neighboring countries and facilitate the work of economic attachés.

In this context, to what extent is the role of relations with neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, significant in neutralizing the impact of such sanctions?

Iran and Turkey share 500 kilometers of common border, consisting of the Bazargan border crossing, the Razi border crossing through which a railway line also passes and which constitutes the closest route to the city of Van from the city of Khoy, as well as the Sarv border crossing situated near the city

of Urmia. So, along the Turkish route, we possess four entry and exit crossings, both rail and road, a rarity globally.

In truth, Iran is Europe's chokepoint, and Europe's trade route to the East and the Far East passes through Iran. Via the terrestrial borders of Iran and Turkey, we have 500 trucks entering and 500 to 700 trailers exiting daily. If we multiply the numbers of trailers by 22 tons (the cargo capacity per trailer), we have 11,000 tons entering and 11,000 to 15,000 tons exiting daily. If these routes operate on a 24-hour basis and customs operations is maintained, we can satisfy many of our necessities via Europe, the Mediterranean Sea basin, and North Africa. On the other hand, in northern

Iran, we possess extremely extensive commercial relations with the Russian Federation both via sea (the Caspian Sea, the Port of Astrakhan, and the northern ports of Iran) and via land (through Nakhchivan). Furthermore, through Turkey and the Turkish Express railway line, which is near the Razi border, we can connect to Europe.

In northeastern Iran, via the Bagjiran border, the Lotfabad border crossing at the Turkmenistan border near Ashgabat, and the exits toward Central Asia, we can both supply and receive necessities, especially foodstuffs. In the Turkmenistan region, meat and livestock products are very prominent. From Turkey itself, we also possess latitude in the protein domain.

Additionally, from Afghanistan, we can procure livestock materials.

Are you saying that, in the realm of supplying essential commodities, even under conditions of a maritime blockade, no difficulty shall arise?

One must be realistic; a maritime blockade is not without effect. After all, we are a nation possessing the longest maritime lines along the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, which connect to global routes (via the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, or Bab-el-Mandeb). A maritime blockade will not be without effect, especially in domains such as the export of oil and petrochemical products, which is conducted predominantly from the south-

ern ports. However, the crucial point is that this effect is not of such magnitude as to drive the country into an impasse. Iran can, via terrestrial routes and engagement with neighbors, satisfy a substantial portion of its necessities, particularly essential commodities.

Moreover, commercial interconnections with nations such as Russia, China, and India also furnish diverse pathways for importation and exportation. Observe the map of Iran right now; everywhere, there are border crossings for exit and entry. In the oil domain, we may encounter issues in the sale or purchase of petroleum, but concerning public necessities, we can fulfill our needs from every region and border crossing of the country.

In the energy domain, particularly oil and gas condensates, does the possibility exist to circumvent maritime restrictions?

In the energy domain, restrictions are more severe, but, again, solutions exist. A portion of transport can be effectuated via pipelines or terrestrial and rail routes, although these methods are more complex and costly compared to maritime trade.

Furthermore, exploiting the capacity of countries such as Turkey for the transfer of energy to Europe, and utilizing alternative routes toward the East, are among the strategies that can be effective in this regard and can, to some extent, compensate for these restrictions.

Trump likes a naval siege

But Iran presents major differences from Venezuela, Cuba

By Ben Finley,
David Klepper
& Konstantin Toropin,
Staff at Associated Press

PERSPECTIVE

US President Donald Trump has turned to naval blockades to pressure the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and now Iran to meet his demands, but his preferred tactic is confronting a very different reality in the Middle East than in the Caribbean. Unlike Cuba or Venezuela, Iran choked off a crucial trade route for energy shipments, meaning the longer the standoff persists, the more the global economy will suffer. Tehran also poses a greater military threat than those two adversaries in America's own hemisphere and requires a sustained military presence far from US shores.

Iran's leverage over the Strait of Hormuz gives it power during a shaky cease-fire because the widening economic risks, especially higher US gas prices in an election year, could force the Republican president to end the blockade on Iran's ports and coastline, experts say.

"It's really a question now of which country, the US or Iran, has a greater pain tolerance," said Max Boot, a military historian and senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The effectiveness of Trump's use of the world's most powerful navy to block the trade of Iran's sanctioned oil and other goods is very much up for debate. But it certainly appears to be intensifying as the war grinds on.

The US military on Thursday announced the seizure of another tanker associated with the smuggling of Iranian oil, a day after Iran's Revolutionary Guards took control of two vessels in the crucial waterway.

Trump also announced he has ordered the US military to "shoot and kill" Iranian small boats laying sea mines in the strait.

But the situation in Iran is not exactly analogous to what is playing out with the US operations in Venezuela and Cuba.

Some experts say Trump's success in Venezuela likely had more to do with the US military raid that captured leader Nicolás Maduro than American warships seizing sanctioned oil tankers to enforce US control over the South American country.



Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodríguez (L) and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Padilla attend a ceremony honoring Venezuelan and Cuban military and security personnel who died during a US operation to capture Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, in Caracas, Venezuela, on January 8, 2026.
● FERNANDEZ VILORIA/REUTERS

A US oil embargo on Cuba, meanwhile, has caused the island's most severe economic crisis in decades. While US and Cuban officials have met recently on the island for rare talks, the financial strangulation has failed to produce the Trump administration's stated goal of leadership change.

"I do think that the success of the Maduro mission in Venezuela has probably emboldened the president," said Todd Huntley, director of Georgetown University's National Security Law Program. That does not make the situations in Venezuela and Iran similar — geographically, militarily or politically. "There are some

major differences," said Huntley, a retired Navy captain and judge advocate general.

While the blockade against Iran has delivered a severe blow to its economy, including stopping freighters from importing various supplies, the country has still been able to move some of its sanctioned oil, ship tracking companies say.

Iran has rejected Trump's demands to reopen the strait, where 20% of the world's oil normally flows, and it has fired on ships again. Stalled shipments through the strait have sent gasoline prices skyrocketing far beyond the region and raised the cost of food and a

wide array of other products, creating a political problem for Trump before the November's elections.

"Blockades are usually just one tool of a mechanism used in a conflict," said Salvatore Mercogliano, a maritime history professor at Campbell University in North Carolina. "They can be important. But it's only one element. And I don't think it's going to be enough to convince the Iranians."

Effectiveness of US blockade called into question

Adm. Brad Cooper, head of US Central Command, claimed last



Iranian ships have several ways to sneak through the blockade, including spoofing their location tracking data or traveling through Pakistani territorial waters, Mercogliano said. He also noted that the sheer volume of shipping traffic the military needs to screen is a challenging task.

week that "no ship has evaded US forces." The command overseeing the Middle East said it has directed 31 ships to turn around or return to port as of Wednesday.

Merchant shipping groups are skeptical.

Lloyd's List Intelligence said "a steady flow of shadow fleet traffic" has passed in and out of the Persian Gulf, including 11 tankers with Iranian cargo that have left the Gulf of Oman outside the strait since April 13.

The maritime intelligence firm Windward said last week that Iranian traffic continues to flow "via deception".

Iranian ships have several ways to sneak through the blockade, including spoofing their location tracking data or traveling through Pakistani territorial waters, Mercogliano said. He also noted that the sheer volume of shipping traffic the military needs to screen is a challenging task.

Blockades require patience to work

The last time the US mounted a blockade similar to the one focused on Iranian ships was during the Kennedy administration in the early 1960s, against Cuba, Huntley said.

"And it wasn't even called a blockade," he said. "We called it quarantine."

Some naval blockades over the course of history have had an impact, such as Britain's blockade on Germany during World War I. "But they tend to be very long-term impacts, whereas Trump is looking for short-term, quick results," according to Boot, the military historian.

He said Trump probably saw the blockade on sanctioned oil tankers tied to Venezuela as playing a large role in the success of leadership changes in that country. But Boot said it had more to do with the US ousting Maduro and the subsequent cooperation from his vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, who is now the acting president.

"There is no Delcy Rodríguez in Cuba or Iran," Boot said. "I think his success in Venezuela led him astray, thinking that this was a template that could be replicated elsewhere. He sees it as a huge success at little cost. And, in fact, it turns out to be a unique set of circumstances."

The article first appeared on Associated Press.



This US Navy handout photograph released on April 21, 2026, shows US forces patrolling the Arabian Sea near Touska, an Iranian-flagged cargo ship, on April 20, 2026.
● US NAVY

World Snooker Championship: Vafaei launches epic comeback to stun world No 1 Trump

Sports Desk

Iran's Hossein Vafaei caused the biggest shock of this year's World Snooker Championship as he beat the world No 1, Judd Trump, in a final frame decider on Monday. Hossein showed nerves of steel to rattle off a break of 91 in the 25th frame to claim a 13-12 victory and move through to the quarter-finals for the first time. Trump, aiming to add to his 2019 title, had led 10-7 and 12-11, but Vafaei would not be denied. The beaming Iranian was warmly congratulated by Trump at the end and received a standing ovation from the crowd. "He's such a tough opponent. I respect him on and off the table," Vafaei said. "Today I played better than yesterday and I managed it better than before. I said: 'If it's my tournament, it's going to happen.' I've been working on the mental side, I've wanted to be calmer and perform. It's better to sometimes shut your mouth and let the game come out."

Trump had looked in a strong position going into the final session as he held a 9-7 lead, but 31-year-old Vafaei, who came through two qualifying matches and was the only qualifier to win in the first round, fought back well. He won six of the nine frames in the final session, making breaks of 106 and 91 to rally from behind and win. Vafaei, the current world number 32, felt he could go all the way in Sheffield, the city he lives in. "I'm looking forward to playing anyone - I'm not scared of anyone and all of them know that," said Vafaei, who plays China's Wu Yize next. "There's no pressure, so why should I be worried? Some of us are different. When you see the line you get hungry or you get tired, it's up to you. I came to live in Sheffield to be beside the Crucible. The Crucible trophy is living in my head rent free. "It's one of the biggest wins of my career. I'm looking forward to it against Wu and fancy the job -

let's see how talented he is. I was not nervous, I enjoyed every moment. I was born for these kinds of situations." Trump, the 2019 champion, added: "It hurts but I had my chances. When you know you didn't play a good shot it's not like you've been unlucky. "I'm not angry about it, I just was not good enough." Meanwhile, Ronnie O'Sullivan admitted he got what he deserved after seeing his attempt for a record-breaking eighth Crucible crown shattered by a stunning comeback from John Higgins while Mark Selby branded the playing surface "horrific" after a 13-11 defeat by Wu. O'Sullivan twice led by five frames, but lost six in a row over the final two sessions and Higgins fired three centuries on Monday before holding his nerve to get over the line and complete a memorable 13-12 win to make the quarter-finals. BBC and The Guardian contributed to this report.



Hossein Vafaei plays a shot during his shock win against Judd Trump at the World Snooker Championship in Sheffield, Britain, on April 27, 2026.
● NIGEL FRENCH/PA

Asian Beach Games: Iranian pair into beach volleyball final



● volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

The Iranian duo of Abolhasan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenoee secured a place in the men's beach volleyball final at the Asian Beach Games on Tuesday, thanks to a 2-1 victory over the Omani pair in Sanya, China. The Iranian team won the first set 21-17 before Mazin Al Hashimi and Hood Rashid Al Jalaboubi - who had beaten Iran's Alireza Aghajani and Abbas Pourasgari in the quarter-finals - leveled the match with a 21-15 win in the second. The decisive set saw Khakizadeh and Qalenoee prevail 15-13, marking the Iranian pair's fifth victory in six outings at the Tianya Haijiao venue. "The conditions in today's semifinal were truly difficult. We faced a very strong Oman team in rainy weather. Yesterday, the Omanis eliminated another Iranian team - one of Asia's best - and I'm pleased that we were able to avenge that

loss and advance to the final," Qalenoee said after the last-four victory. "It was a high-pressure match. We managed to beat them in the first set, but in the second set, Oman, having nothing to lose, played with great strength to win. In the third set, although we stayed neck and neck until 12 points, thank God, thanks to our teamwork, we managed to emerge victorious," the Iranian added. Standing between the Iranian duo and the gold medal will be the high-profile pair of Cherif Samba and Ahmed Janko - a rematch of their Pool B encounter, which the Qatari duo won. Bronze medalists at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Samba and Janko continued their perfect run in Sanya with a straight-set victory over Thailand's Wachirawit Muadpha and Netitorn Muneekul in the other semifinal later on Tuesday. Iran will also compete for gold in the men's beach soccer final on Wednesday

after hammering Palestine 9-1 in the semifinals last Monday. Mohammadali Mokhtari scored a hat-trick, with Mohammad Masoumizadeh and Mahdi Shirmohammadi adding doubles, while Movahed Mohammadpour and Davoud Shokri were also on the scoresheet for Ali Naderi's side, which claimed a fourth successive victory at the Sanya Bay Yuhai Club venue. Oman edged out Saudi Arabia 5-4 in extra time to set up a final date with Iran. Represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports, the Iranian delegation has bagged two gold medals over eight days of action at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, which will conclude with the closing ceremony on Thursday. Hassan Ajami opened Iran's account by winning gold in the men's shot put on Sunday, before the men's kabaddi team stunned India 44-31 to claim the top prize on Monday.

Ex-Iran basketball coach, pundit Atashi dies at 80

Sports Desk

Iranian basketball veteran Enayatollah Atashi passed away at the age of 80 in Tehran on Tuesday after a long battle with cancer. A national team player in the 1960s, Atashi coached Iran over two spells, in 1983 and 1998, and worked as a prominent commentator and pundit for the country's IRIB TV for more than three decades. He was also a former player of Esteghlal Club - formerly known as Taj - and was credited with renaming the Tehran-based club after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali offered his condolences on the passing of the high-profile figure in the Iranian sport, writing in a message: "Iranian basketball has lost a man who lived every dimension of the sport with expertise and integrity.

"His unparalleled contributions across various facets of basketball - from wearing the jersey of the national team and coaching elite players to serving in leadership roles in

the federation - have etched the image of a true expert into the memory of the nation's sports community. "He was the 'clear voice of basketball,' who, with his warm and insightful commentary, brought this exciting and academic discipline into people's homes, leaving a lasting legacy in the development and popularity of the sport."



Iran's Banitalebi voted Taolu Athlete of the Year

Sports Desk

Iran's Shahin Banitalebi has been crowned the IWUF Male Taolu Athlete of 2025 following a public vote conducted by the International Wushu Federation. Banitalebi's nomination for the prize came after a performance review by the IWUF Athletes' Committee and despite fierce competition - particularly from Chinese athletes - the Iranian emerged victorious in the public vote to claim the prestigious honor. A national team member since 2013, Banitalebi claimed the nanquan-nangun combined gold at the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China, last August, before bagging bronze in the nandao event at the 17th World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil. "Throughout his career, Shahin has consistently showcased his abilities

on both the world and Asian stages, earning multiple medals at these prestigious levels," the official website of the sport's international govern-

erning body wrote of the Iranian. "His steady and reliable performances demonstrate his capacity to compete and succeed among the sport's elite. His professionalism, discipline, and relentless dedication to training have also made him an inspiration for younger athletes and a trusted representative of the federation on the international stage."



Iran's Shahin Banitalebi competes during the men's nanquan-nangun final of wushu event at the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China, on August 8, 2025.
● XU SUHUI/XINHUA

Iran launches emergency restoration of war-damaged historical sites

Iranica Desk

The director general of the Office for the Registration of Historical Sites at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has outlined details of urgent restoration efforts for historical monuments damaged in the war.

Alireza Izadi told ISNA about the emergency restoration of historical sites damaged during the war imposed by the United States and Israel against Iran. "In general, restoration is carried out in accordance with the responsibilities of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. In the first step, a restoration plan is prepared, then the matter of securing funding is placed on the agenda, and after that restoration operations begin."

He added, "Last week, Cultural Heritage Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri also held a meeting and instructed restoration teams, whether working through contracts or

directly administered arrangements, to begin their activities. Part of the restoration work has already been started by our own colleagues under directly administered arrangements, which are naturally easier to carry out. Another part will be implemented through contracts, which requires funding. In this regard, our colleagues are making preparations, and the technical councils are also reviewing the plans." He continued, "Part of the work is being carried out directly and includes minor works and fine details, which are currently underway. After the Technical Council approves the major restoration plans, contracts will be signed and those sections will also enter the implementation phase. Fortunately, we are now in a suitable season for carrying out field operations. We also hope that, with the positive commitment given by Hamid Pourmohammadi from the Planning and Budget Organization



nournews.ir

during a meeting held about two weeks ago in the presence of the minister, we will achieve favorable results regarding funding as well, and after final approval by the Technical Council, move the restoration operations forward as quickly as possible. At that same meeting, a detailed report on the extent of the damage was prepared, summarized, and sub-

mitted so that it could be placed on the agenda for funding allocations." Regarding whether the sites would directly enter the restoration phase or whether protective measures would first be considered for them, he explained, "Given the current conditions, which are neither a state of full war nor stable peace, emergency protection has been considered for

all complexes and is being implemented. Sites that showed greater sensitivity during monitoring, as well as those that have suffered damage, have been placed under initial protective measures so that the necessary preparedness exists should conditions worsen. These measures have included protective coverings, relocation of some objects—especially

in museums—as well as activities involving historic buildings and heritage urban areas."

Izadi added, "However, restoration itself is a separate phase and applies to sites that, unfortunately, have been damaged. Part of these measures has begun, while another part requires more detailed studies, especially in cases such as examining the underlying layers and mirrorwork of Golestan Palace or S'adabad Palace, which will naturally be time-consuming. It is necessary first to complete the technical studies and prepare the plans, and then, after funding is secured, these projects will be handed over to contractors and implemented."

He also responded to a question about whether, given that UNESCO has been asked to send international experts to prepare a report, the start of urgent restoration would interfere with that process. He explained, "We hope these experts will come, but we cannot de-

lay the implementation of our own measures while waiting for their arrival. At the same time, documentation is being carried out fully. It is clear what kind of damage each section has sustained, and all photographs and records have been registered. Therefore, even if restoration is carried out, it will be entirely in accordance with professional principles, and for experts it will be possible to distinguish restored sections from the original parts. This distinction is fully identifiable." Izadi also spoke about securing financial resources for carrying out the restoration work, saying, "Every year, in addition to internal credits, we also make use of the resources of the Management and Planning Organization. Negotiations have also been held with international organizations, and the Association of Benefactors is active as well. We hope these groups will also cooperate in this process and help provide resources."

Ancient qanats face modern water crisis in Khorasan Razavi

Iranica Desk

For centuries, the land of Iran — particularly Khorasan Razavi Province — demonstrated remarkable wisdom in linking water and soil. In an age when the scorching sun beat down on the plains and rainfall was scarce and irregular, the ancestors of this region found a solution through the qanat system.

A qanat was not merely a water channel or a tunnel dug into the earth. It symbolized a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, sustaining the lifelines of this land for thousands of years. Today, however, these historic systems appear to be losing their battle for survival, under pressure from costly technologies and unsustainable policies.

Across Iran, from Khorasan to Yazd and Kerman, the story of qanats has become one of decline and neglect. This valuable heritage, which used gravity rather than electricity or fuel to carry fresh and continuous water from mountains to thirsty farms, is now being overwhelmed by deep wells that use powerful pumps to drain underground water reserves at unsustainable rates.

Experts warn that the country has mistakenly replaced intelligent water-harvesting methods with excessive extraction of fossil groundwater resources. The qanat was not only a source of water, but also a mechanism that maintained groundwater balance and formed the



Qasabeh Qanat, Gonabad
alibaba.ir

backbone of national food security.

Iran is home to around 41,000 qanat lines and this reflects how the livelihoods of Iranians have historically depended on agriculture and livestock farming. Yet decades of recurring drought have severely damaged regional water resources. Springs have dried up entirely, and the limited water that remains is often insufficient even for wildlife and birds, let alone for irrigating farms and orchards. Ali-Akbar Kharazmi, a qanat researcher, criticized the short-term economic approach to water management in an interview with ISNA. "Unfortunately, in recent years, whenever even the

smallest water shortage has emerged, users have turned to uncontrolled drilling of deep wells instead of restoring and managing qanats," he said.

He added that this unscientific approach, combined with countless permits for wells and declining rainfall, has sharply reduced the output of qanats that sustained villages for centuries, leaving many completely abandoned.

He noted that qanats in Iran date back more than 2,000 years. "Our ancestors used the simplest tools to bring water from deep underground to the surface and make ecological sustainability possible," he said. "Yet today, weak technical studies and dependence on mechanical pumping have

pushed this indigenous knowledge to the margins, even though qanats such as Qasabeh Qanat Gonabad and Baladeh Qanat of Ferdows have received global recognition."

Kharazmi stressed that these vital lifelines, which represent agricultural identity and resilience in harsh climates, should not

be sacrificed to short-term thinking. Farmers and qanat users, he argued, should be supported within the legal framework.

Kharazmi further warned that drying agricultural land could threaten regional employment and economic security. Owners and users of qanats need government support



Baladeh Qanat, Ferdows
alibaba.ir

enforcement remains weak.

"The revival of qanats and the management of water resources based on accurate data is the only path back to the sustainable model our ancestors understood so well and which we are now rapidly losing," he said. He also warned that increased water extraction and industrial expansion along qanat routes have accelerated their gradual drying.

"The presence of factories and deep agricultural wells in these regions has caused a noticeable drop in qanat water levels, resulting in significant declines in farming activity," he said.

Referring to Iran's qanat protection law, passed in 1927, he said proper en-

forcement remains weak. Farmers and qanat users, he argued, should be supported within the legal framework.

Kharazmi further warned that drying agricultural land could threaten regional employment and economic security. Owners and users of qanats need government support

to keep these systems active and functioning — support that reduces maintenance costs while preventing deterioration and collapse. He emphasized that protecting qanats is a shared social responsibility and can only be achieved by safeguarding their boundaries and preventing further permits for agricultural wells.

The highest concentration of qanats is found in central, eastern, and southeastern Iran. Among the most important examples is the Qasabeh Qanat of Gonabad, regarded as one of the country's finest achievements in qanat engineering. He said qanats in Khorasan Razavi Province have deep historical roots and once

supplied drinking water and irrigation needs for many local communities. Many villages and even some cities across Iran were established alongside the development of qanats, he noted. Cities such as Gonabad, Qazvin, Yazd, Kerman, and Neyshabur grew through the creation and expansion of these water systems.

At a time when water shortages threaten the future of agriculture and settlement in Iran's desert regions, he said restoring qanats is not only a matter of preserving heritage, but also a necessity for food security and the survival of local communities.

He highlighted the unique advantages of qanats in balancing underground aquifers. Unlike deep wells, qanats require no fossil fuels or electricity and rely solely on gravity to provide sustainable and low-cost water for drinking and farming.

Ancient landmarks such as the Qasabeh Qanat of Gonabad, he said, stand as proof of the wisdom of earlier generations in water management — wisdom that enabled large desert cities such as Yazd, Kerman, and Neyshabur to flourish. Kharazmi also rejected short-term arguments against qanats, noting that the number of people benefiting from qanat systems is far greater than those dependent on other methods of water extraction. The livelihoods of large numbers of farmers depend on these clear under-

ground flows. Stabilizing qanat output, therefore, directly contributes to stabilizing employment and reducing rural migration. He attributed the collapse of many qanats to a combination of natural and human factors, including falling groundwater levels caused by negative water balances, drought linked to climate change, and excessive development of deep wells supported by energy subsidies.

In addition, the breakdown of traditional management systems and soaring repair costs have pushed many qanats toward abandonment. Kharazmi criticized the current funding model, saying that when restoration budgets are minimal and released in small amounts, the economic incentive for users to rehabilitate qanats disappears, leading to further destruction of ancient heritage.

To reverse the crisis, he called for legal reforms, public participation, watershed management, and tighter control over expansion.

He said revising well-permit regulations, strictly enforcing the quantitative and qualitative protection zones of qanats, involving local people and farmers more directly in restoration and maintenance, implementing upstream seasonal flood-control projects to recharge aquifers, and preventing unsustainable exploitation of rivers and tributaries that feed qanats are all essential steps toward recovery.

Minister calls for national, global recognition of Minab tragedy



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri stressed the importance of commemorating the Minab tragedy as a "historical crime" on par with events like Hiroshima and Vietnam. During a visit to the Art Bureau on April 28, he outlined a comprehensive cultural roadmap to ensure the disaster's recognition as a pivotal moment in history. "The Minab catastrophe should be enshrined as a global historical tragedy," Salehi-Amiri said, emphasizing the need for both national and international efforts to solidify the event's place in global consciousness. He proposed turning Minab's commemoration into an annual fixture with national film, music, and poetry festivals



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (3rd L) visits Tehran's Art Bureau on April 28, 2026.
● CHTN

dedicated to the martyrs of Minab, framing it as a "strategic necessity." The minister highlighted the essential role of cultural resilience as a cornerstone of Iranian identity, advocating for the integration of the Minab narrative into educational materials for future generations. He stressed that moving beyond mere mourning, the tragedy must offer lessons for posterity. In a bid to further solidify the event's cultural legacy, Salehi-Amiri suggested creating a "national symbol" for Minab, one that would resonate across Iranian society. The symbol would be designed to integrate into daily life, becoming a recognizable emblem of collective identity. The minister also proposed utilizing public spaces and national infrastructure for artistic representations. He suggested placing art installations along high-traffic areas, including pathways leading to Imam Khomeini International Airport, as a means to effectively communicate the Minab narrative to both domestic and international audiences.

Salehi-Amiri advocated for developing multimedia content, including textbooks, stories for various age groups, and digital platforms, to embed the Minab narrative into the national fabric. He emphasized the need for government support and professional coordination to ensure the success of this multi-layered cultural initiative. Addressing the role of the arts in preserving cultural memory, he proposed establishing an annual, nationwide celebration of Minab through specialized artistic festivals. These would encompass film, music, poetry, and visual arts, providing an enduring platform for the tragedy's memory. Salehi-Amiri stressed the importance of international cultural diplomacy, proposing the formation of a global task force to advocate for the event's recognition at international forums. He also emphasized the potential of modern technology and digital platforms in spreading the Minab narrative, particularly to engage younger generations.

Six-millennia civilization shields Iran from misjudgments, says heritage chief

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's head of the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Tuesday that foreign powers misjudge Iran's resilience by ignoring its 6,000-year civilizational depth, during a Tehran expert session on recent regional tensions. Mohammad Ebrahim Zarei said attackers who "bypass international law" and strike Iranian territory are operating under a "strategic miscalculation," assuming Iran resembles modern states with shallow historical roots, CHTN reported. "They think they are dealing with a country of 50 or 100 years, while Iran carries at least five to six millennia of administrative and civilizational continuity," he said. Zarei argued that external actors, lacking comparable civilizational foundations, mistakenly believe that destroying fortresses and heritage sites can erase Iran's identity. History, he said, has repeatedly disproved this logic, as invasions over millennia damaged monuments but failed to fracture societal continuity. Drawing historical parallels, he contrasted Iran's cultural endurance with empires such as the Assyrians, which relied on destruction and coercion and ultimately disappeared beyond name. By contrast, he cited Cyrus the Great's governance in Babylon as an example of a Persian tra-



dition rooted in tolerance, order and respect for local populations, which helped sustain Iranian cultural influence. Zarei also highlighted a newly announced restructuring of the "Architectural and Urban Heritage" division, framing it as more than an academic field and instead as a pillar of national identity and survival architecture. He acknowledged recent destruction of heritage sites in several cities as painful but said such losses cannot sever the civilizational roots of Iranian society. "These foundations are continuously regenerated even under pressure," he said. The session concluded with the launch of a special issue of a quarterly titled "War and Cultural Heritage," marking expanded research priorities in architectural and urban heritage as a strategic cultural asset.

Coordinated effort to safeguard Tehran's historic Sangelaj

Social Desk

Ali Darabi, deputy minister and head of cultural heritage at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, visited Tehran's District 12 and the historic Sangelaj quarter on Tuesday, stressing tighter institutional coordination to preserve the capital's core heritage fabric, the ministry said. Darabi conducted a field assessment of urban planning constraints and conservation needs, meeting municipal officials to review enforcement hurdles and regulatory limits shaping the district's historic texture, ILNA reported. He called Sangelaj a "strategic" identity hub and said integrated, heritage-led management is a prerequisite for safeguarding architectural authenticity and



Iran's Deputy Tourism Minister Ali Darabi walks with officials through a historic arched passage in Tehran's Sangelaj district during an on-site inspection on April 28, 2026.
● ILNA

sustaining cultural life. "Any urban intervention must align with protective regulations and a sustainable development approach," he said. The delegation inspected key sites, including Rajab Ali Mosque, Ardabiliha Mosque (which has recently received damage due to US-Israel war against Iran), Grand Bazaar of Tehran, Golubandak Crossroads, Armenian Street, Seyyed Esmail Bazaar and Chamran House, gauging structural conditions and urgent restoration requirements. Custodians of Ardabiliha Mosque

cited damage from recent US-Israeli attacks and sought specialized restoration teams. Darabi acknowledged the request and pressed for expedited conservation works and technical support, stressing the need to "step up" restoration capacity across the district. Tehran's District 12, home to layers of Qajar-era urban fabric and dense commercial arteries, faces mounting pressure from development controls and infrastructure demands, making coordinated governance central to preserving its historic continuity.

Iran keeps postal services running amid war damage

FEATURE REPORT

Iran's postal network maintained uninterrupted nationwide services during what officials call the "Third Imposed War," despite heavy damage to infrastructure and the deaths of three employees, Mohammad Ahmadi, Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Technology and chief executive of the National Post Company, said. Ahmadi said 56 post offices across more than 14 provinces were either destroyed or severely damaged in the early days of the conflict, requiring extensive reconstruction, but postal operations were never halted. He attributed the continuity of services to the resilience of the network's infrastructure, the use of domestic internet capabilities amid recent internet restrictions, and the round-the-clock efforts of postal workers who kept operations running under difficult conditions, including along urban and intercity routes and in remote and rural areas. During the war, three postal employees were killed, Ahmadi said, two at their workplace in Divandarreh and Azarshahr in East Azarbaijan Province, and one at his residence in Tehran. To manage disruptions caused by the suspension of flights, the National Post Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran Post) submitted a force majeure notice to the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to halt the dispatch of new international consignments to Iran. Customers



with outbound parcels were contacted to arrange returns, while inbound shipments continued to be delivered. The company also coordinated with countries where overland delivery was possible to establish ground transport routes. Ahmadi said the company took special measures to support businesses operating in the digital economy and ensure e-commerce activity continued without interruption during the crisis. He said Iran Post also tightened security controls across its network to prevent misuse for smuggling and other security-related offences, with continuous monitoring of consignments and several violations detected. Among new services introduced during the conflict was a door-to-door parcel pickup service in Tehran, allowing citizens and e-commerce retailers to arrange collection and dispatch by calling the company's 193 hotline without visiting post offices in person.

The company also launched a "Redelivery" service during the Nowruz holiday travel period, allowing customers to request electronic rerouting of parcels or update delivery addresses through postal centers. Ahmadi said Iran Post prioritized the daily dispatch of around 300 cases of specialized infant formula for sick infants across the country during the war, as part of efforts to support patients and ensure delivery of medicines and essential supplies. Iran Post's 24/7 customer care center handled 72,436 calls during the conflict, while the "Baleh" postal assistant support team responded to more than 240,000 online messages, he added. Separately, Ahmadi said three commemorative stamp designs, "Leader Martyr," "Minab School," and "Nowruz 1405," were approved at the first stamp council meeting of the year and, once issued, would be sent to 190 member states of the UPU.