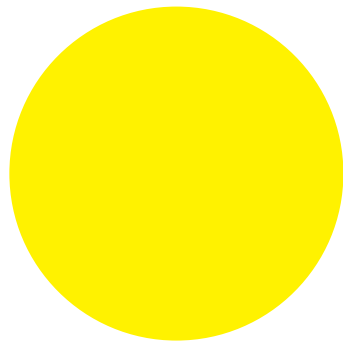


Iran holds leading position
in stem cell research
across region, Asia:
Royan Institute chief

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Iran batters US bases in Jordan, UAE in retaliation for strike on isle

2 >

Unmasking US inhumane policy toward Iran



By Amir Dabiri-Mehr
Political affairs expert

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For years, the United States claimed that its sanctions and economic pressure policies targeted only the Islamic Republic's political system and that Washington had no intention of harming the Iranian people. This claim was never accepted by Iranian public opinion. Yet American officials—both Democrats and Republicans—sought over the years to deceive public opinion, reverse this reality, and justify their anti-human and oppressive sanctions and economic pressures against the Iranian people. In practice, the unilateral and coercive US sanctions not only covered Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, defensive equipment, and oil and gas exports, but gradually extended to the domains of medicine and foodstuffs. This expansion intensified the Iranian people's sense of hostility toward the American government and Washington's anti-human rights policies. For years, many Iranian elites raised a simple question: If the US government is hostile only to the Islamic Republic, why does it impose restrictions and bans on Iranian youth studying in the United States, and why has obtaining even a tourist visa become nearly impossible for Iranian citizens? Recent statements by US President Donald Trump and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, announcing a new round of economic sanctions against the Iranian people, have stripped away the White House's anti-popular policy. These remarks reveal that, in the minds of American officials, no distinction exists between the Iranian people and the Iranian government. When they speak of Iran's economic collapse, they do not mean merely weakening the political system; they oppose a powerful, independent, and developing Iran. For years they have tried to conceal this bitter reality behind verbal rhetoric and false propaganda. They know better than any other country that the new sanctions targeting digital financial transactions, shipping, aviation, gold trade, and technologies will inflict the greatest damage and hardship on ordinary people and place their livelihoods under severe pressure and constraint. Yet the miscalculation of American officials lies precisely here: they imagine that livelihood pressure on the people can stir public opinion against the Islamic Republic and provoke unrest. They further believe that serious sanctions can bring about the collapse of Iran's economy.

Page 2 >

Continuation of war not in interest of Iran, region: *Pezeshkian*

2 >



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the 26th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on August 31, 2026.

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Was US attack
on southern Iran
legitimate
self-defense?

4-5 >



Iran coach
Toloukian rues
Asian Games snub
after historic run

6 >



Stone carving
helps preserve
Iran's ancient
artistic heritage

7 >



Continuation of war not in interest of Iran, region: *Pezeshkian*

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that continuing the war with the United States did not benefit Iran but noted that certain groups in the US saw their interests in the conflict to drag on. "We continue to strive for agreement and understanding, and we believe that the continuation of war is in the interest of neither us, nor the region, nor humanity," Pezeshkian said as he met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the 26th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek. Unfortunately, Pezeshkian said, certain groups in the United States see their interests in the continuation of war and seek to prolong conflicts. The president said Tehran had always tried to establish peace and security and resolve issues through dialogue but Washington has unfortunately chosen the path of war, insecurity, and imposing its will through force instead of using diplomatic mechanisms. "We believe that the solution to the existing issues is dialogue and coopera-

tion, and all capacities must be used to prevent the spread of insecurity and conflict." Referring to the June 17 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Tehran and Washington to end the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, he reiterated that Tehran has honored its commitments as per the deal, but the US failed to do so.

Tehran-New Delhi relations

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said Tehran was ready to promote its longstanding and friendly relations with New Delhi in all areas. "Iran and India have extensive capacities for expanding cooperation in political, economic, scientific, cultural and other areas of mutual interest. It is possible to further enhance relations between the two countries by strengthening bilateral cooperation and neutralizing the effects of sanctions," the president said. The United States and Israel are working to create obstacles to Iran's cooperation with other countries, Pezeshkian said. Tehran is ready to expand cooperation with India in various fields despite such

pressures, he added.

For his part, Modi said New Delhi sought to maintain its cooperation and contacts with Iran during the recent difficult period.

The Indian prime minister said he agreed with Pezeshkian's view that some groups see their interests in the continuation of war and stressed the importance of doubling efforts to establish peace.

The Iranian president also held separate talks with the heads of state of Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. During his meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country mediated the June MoU, Pezeshkian said Iran remained committed to implement the deal provided that the other party also adhered to its obligations.

Pakistan-Turkey-Saudi Arabia pact

Pezeshkian also welcomed a recent defense agreement reached between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, describing it as a step toward strengthening the unity of the Islamic world. "We hope that other countries in the



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on August 31, 2026.
● president.ir

region and Islamic countries will also join this process and expand their cooperation not only in the defense field, but also in the political, economic, and cultural fields," Pezeshkian added.

The three Muslim countries signed the joint defense agreement on August 7 following growing regional tensions caused by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in February.

Iran batters US bases in Jordan, UAE in retaliation for strike on isle

International Desk

Iran launched barrages of missile and drones at US military assets in the Middle East on Monday to retaliate an American strike on an island in the Strait of Hormuz, the first exchange of fire for over a month in a war that has engulfed the region. More than six months into the conflict, the two sides remain at an impasse, with Iran keeping the strategic strait shut and the United States persisting with a naval blockade of Iranian ports and vessels. The US had signaled a pivot to economic pressure in place of military action, but on Sunday claimed it attacked Iranian rocket launchers on the small island of Larak to prevent Tehran planting mines in the strategic shipping lane. "US forces took limited, precise action against IRGC minelaying forces posing an imminent threat in the Strait of Hormuz," the US military's Central Command wrote on X. Iran's Revolution Guards Corps said they responded by striking two US air bases with ballistic missiles in Washington-allied Jordan, causing "heavy damage". Jordan's army said it had intercepted eight missiles, without stating their origin. Iran also said it targeted US personnel at an air base in the United Arab Emirates and shot down an American drone over Hormuz. The exchange of fire between the United States and Iran came at a time when hostilities had been subsiding.



Economic pressure

In recent weeks, the administration of US President Donald Trump had prioritized "economic warfare" over military action. But the militaries of the two sides remain vying for control of the Strait of Hormuz, with Tehran having blocked the passage of commercial ships since the war began. One-fifth of the world's oil passed through the waterway before the US and Israel triggered the war with strikes on Iran on February 28. Trump insists the US navy has "total control" of the conduit and has even called it US territory, with Washington last week claiming it had completed clearing explosives from the waterway. Iran has rejected the US claims of control of the energy chokepoint. Iran's leaders have remained defiant in the face of US pressure, with President Masoud Pezeshkian saying Monday that "we are not seeking war, but we will deliver a decisive response to the aggressors".

Legitimate right to retaliate

Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the US attack on Larak as violation of Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, saying it exercised its legitimate right to retaliate. In a statement, the ministry said the American attack killed two Iranian servicemen and injured several others including civilians. It reiterated that the US attack on the island was a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, and urged the UN Security Council and the UN secretary general to fulfill their responsibilities in preserving international peace and security and holding the aggressor accountable. Diplomatic efforts, spearheaded by mediators including Pakistan and Qatar, have tried for months to bring an end to the war. While a ceasefire was agreed in April and a memorandum of understanding signed in June, no agreement has been forthcoming, and Washington has since declared "economic warfare" against Tehran.

FM says 'serpent' Netanyahu tricked US into war with Iran

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that the Israeli prime minister had fooled the United States into going to war with the Islamic republic, calling Benjamin Netanyahu a "serpent". "In Hebrew, Netanyahu openly crows that he suckered the US Administration into a war on Iran on behalf of Israel. Netanyahu explicitly laughs about how he 'influenced' America through 1,000 hours of airtime on US networks," Araghchi said in a post on X. "In English, he praises POTUS' leadership. Serpent," he added. War broke out between Iran and the US on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on different Iranian cities, which led to the martyrdom of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei along with senior military officials as well as hundreds of others on the first day of the aggression. Iran retaliated with attacks on the US military bases in regional countries and Israel's positions in the occupied territories as the conflict continued to spread. An April ceasefire put an end to the most intense fighting after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Mem-



Abbas Araghchi
● TASNIM

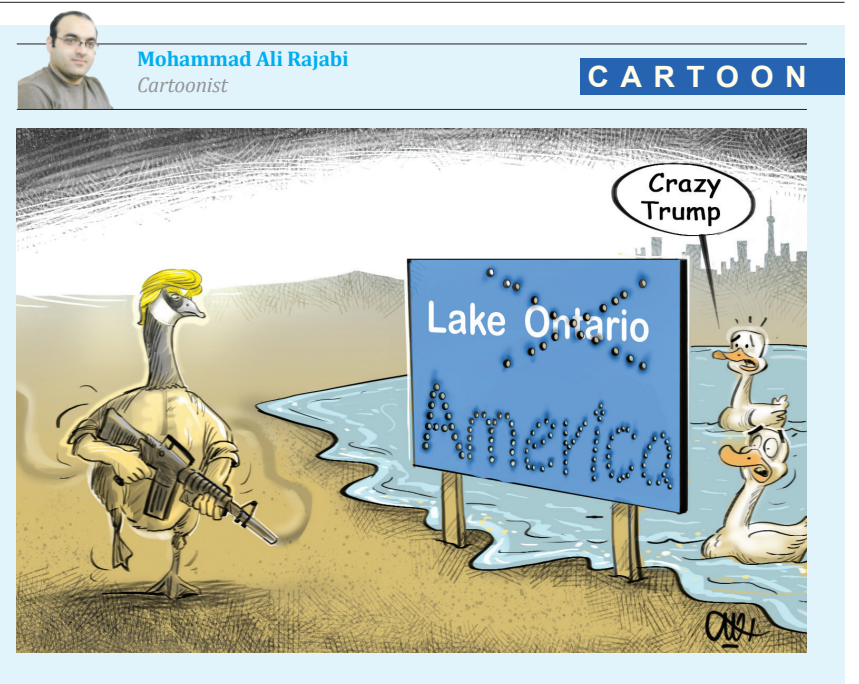
orandum of Understanding brokered by Pakistan and Qatar. However, the US began attacking Iran in July after it violated the terms of the agreement under the pretext of Iranian strikes on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. The US also recently shifted toward a campaign of what it calls "economic asphyxiation" of Iran, imposing sanctions on various sectors in Iran. Last week, the Israeli prime minister dismissed any prospect of an Iran-US agreement. Netanyahu has long been skeptical of diplomacy with Iran, openly campaigning against a 2015 nuclear deal hammered out by then US president Barack Obama, but he has been publicly careful not to criticize Trump while he sought a negotiated settlement.

Unmasking US inhumane ...

They overlook the fact that if economic sanctions could destroy Iran's large economy, this should have occurred at least sometime during the past 40 years. It did not. Iran has managed to circumvent and neutralize the sanctions. Had economic pressure been capable of pitting the people against the government, this would have happened during the two wars—the 12-day war and the 40-day war. The joint US-Israeli attacks provided the best opportunity for any dissatisfied segment of the population

to side with America. What actually occurred was the opposite: national solidarity was strengthened. In other words, American sanctions failed to collapse Iran's economy, and military warfare failed to create a rift between the people and the government. Instead, national unity in Iran was reinforced and hatred and enmity toward the United States deepened in public opinion. Another reality that Americans ignore is that the international community and the countries that maintain commercial and economic relations with Iran

are under no obligation to comply with America's anti-human policies—just as they did not stand with the United States during the military aggression against Iran and refused to support the attack on the country. It can therefore be predicted that the new US policy of economic pressure may create difficulties for Iran's commercial exchanges, but it will be neutralized and fail within a short period. More importantly, the Iranian people's sense of distrust toward American policies will deepen further than before.



Iran backs Kyrgyzstan proposal to build refinery, Pezeshkian says

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that Tehran supports Kyrgyzstan's proposal to build a joint refinery in the Central Asian country, as the two sides seek to expand economic and energy cooperation.

Speaking during a meeting with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and SCO Plus summits in Kyrgyzstan, Pezeshkian said Iran had "positively" considered the proposal and agreed with it in principle, ISNA reported. "Under this plan, the crude oil needed by the refinery can be supplied by Iran, while the products can be divided between the two sides," he said, calling it a "good opportunity" to elevate energy cooperation.

Japarov welcomed the expansion of economic and energy cooperation and invited capable Iranian oil exploration companies to use their expertise and capabilities to cooperate with Kyrgyzstan.

Pezeshkian also pointed to more than 30% growth

in trade between the two countries in recent years, saying the level of bilateral trade remained below the potential and expectations of both sides.

"The full implementation of Iran's free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union and the removal of existing obstacles would create conditions for a significant increase in trade and greater use of the economic potential of both sides," he said.

The free trade agreement between Iran and the five-member EAEU, comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, entered into force in May 2025.

Pezeshkian also identified transportation and logistics as key areas for cooperation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan.

"Iran can be the best and most suitable route for transporting Kyrgyzstan's goods by sea to the Persian Gulf countries, the Indian subcontinent and East Asia," he said.

He added that establishing a Kyrgyz-owned logistics center in the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas could



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and SCO Plus summits in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on August 31, 2026. ● president.ir

help expand trade and transit cooperation between the two countries and enable Kyrgyzstan and other EAEU members to make greater use of Iran's transport infrastructure and access to

open waters. On the capabilities of Iranian technical and engineering companies, Pezeshkian said Iran had experienced and capable firms in various technical and engineer-

ing fields, some of which are already operating in Kyrgyzstan. On tourism, Pezeshkian said Iran had abolished entry visas for Kyrgyz citizens over the past three years and ex-

pected Kyrgyzstan to take a similar step.

"Mutual visa-free travel could boost movement and tourism between the two countries," he said, adding that the two sides could subsequently work toward establishing direct flights between Iran and Kyrgyzstan.

Japarov said he would fully consider Iran's proposal for visa-free tourism between the two countries.

He also referred to a cooperation memorandum signed by Iran and Kyrgyzstan in 2025, saying it could provide a suitable basis for strengthening and expanding bilateral cooperation.

Modi seeks to diversify trade with Tehran

Pezeshkian also held meetings with several heads of state from Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Met President Masoud Pezeshkian in Bishkek. Reiterated our commitment to strengthening India's long standing friendship with Iran across diverse sectors," Modi said on his x account.

"We want to expand and diversify our trade basket in the times to come," he added.

India's trade with Iran rose 66% year-on-year to \$1.42bn in the first five months of 2026, driven by the resumption of Iranian crude imports, according to India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Exports to Iran fell 18% to \$471mn, while imports surged 243% to \$949mn, including \$706mn worth of Iranian crude.

India imported \$430mn of Iranian crude in April and another \$276mn in May, accounting for nearly three-quarters of its imports from Iran during the January-May period.

India, which was once forced to abandon Iranian oil under US sanctions, turned back to Tehran, with an oil tanker carrying Iranian crude heading to the Asian country for the first time since May 2019.

After the US-Israeli aggression on Iran began on Feb. 28 and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was disrupted, Washington issued a waiver allowing India to purchase oil and gas from Russia and Iran, both under US sanctions.

Iran, Iraq telecom ministers open major ICT expo in Tehran



Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi (R) and his Iraqi counterpart Mustafa Jabbar Sand (C) take part in a traditional ritual before the opening of Iran's 29th International Exhibition of Electronics, Computers and E-Commerce (ELECOMP) in Tehran on August 31, 2026. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iranian and Iraqi communications ministers on Monday opened Iran's 29th International Exhibition of Electronics, Computers and E-Commerce (ELECOMP) in Tehran, with Iranian officials highlighting the capabilities of domestic technology firms in areas including artificial intelligence and communications resilience.

Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi, speaking at the opening ceremony, hailed Iranian companies' capabilities in the sector including artificial intelligence, ISNA reported.

"We are designing and developing these capabilities for Iran and its future," Hashemi said.

Iraqi Minister Mustafa Jabbar Sand, is attending the exhibition at Hashemi's official invitation and is also due to hold talks on the future of bilateral cooperation in communications and technology.

The four-day fair, one of Iran's main information and communications technology and e-commerce events, is being held with more than 350 participants in 14 halls.

The event covers areas including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, software and hardware, digital services and

innovative businesses, bringing together domestic and foreign technology companies, startups, knowledge-based firms and ICT specialists.

An Iran-Iraq specialized forum will also be held on the sidelines of the exhibition to examine opportunities and potential for cooperation in communications and information technology, with companies, operators and technology-sector representatives from the two countries expected to take part.

The exhibition's main slogan is "Artificial Intelligence, Digital Security, the Future of Iran."

A locally developed dedicated Iranian chatbot was also unveiled at the opening ceremony.

Deputy minister says Kharg oil operations intact after Trump AI video

Economy Desk

Deputy Oil Minister Hamid Bovard on Monday mocked a video shared by US President Donald Trump purporting to show Kharg Island under attack, calling it "laughable" and saying oil operations on the key Persian Gulf export hub had not stopped.

"Conditions in Kharg are calm and appropriate and oil activities on the island have not stopped even for a moment," Bovard, who also serves as chief of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), told Fars News Agency.

Trump posted an AI-generated clip on his social media platform early in the day showing the island's oil installations on fire.

"Kharg Island being blown to

smithereens," he wrote on Truth Social.

Bovard said Kharg, from which about 90% of Iran's oil exports are shipped, had been bombed "on different occasions by the American-Zionist enemy", but oil industry workers and operational teams had kept activities running.

"Several contractors are now carrying out repairs and modernization of storage tanks, while work on jetties, tanks and previously planned projects is continuing without interruption," he said.

Kharg has come under attack during the war waged by the United States and Israel against Iran in late February.

The US battered the island twice, in mid-March and early April, hit-

ting military sites including naval mine depots, shelters and missile storage facilities.

Washington said oil facilities and export infrastructure were not targeted.

On June 16, Negahdar Hosseinpour, Kharg's special district governor, said 548 missiles had struck the island during the attacks, including 50 in one of the heaviest raids in mid-March.

He said oil production, storage and exports continued without disruption.

Hosseinpour also said six ferryboats were targeted in attempts to cut Kharg's links with the mainland, but fishing and civilian vessels kept residents and oil workers moving, leaving the island connected to the mainland.



A satellite image shows an oil terminal at Kharg Island, Iran, February 25, 2026. ● REUTERS

Negotiation for peace or cover for assault?

Was US attack on southern Iran legitimate self-defense?



By Gholamreza Vatandoost

Researcher at the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

If the objective of a military attack is solely to repel an assault that is imminent, international law might, under exceedingly exceptional circumstances, afford latitude for discourse concerning preemptive self-defense. However, if the true objective is to weaken the strategic capacity of a state, to disrupt its energy resources and port infrastructures, to alter that state's political calculations, and to coerce it into accepting a desired security order, then we are no longer confronting a simple defensive matter. This distinction assumes particular significance with respect to the United States' attacks on southern Iran in 2026. The attacks, executed in late June and subsequently in early July against targets along Iran's southern littoral, appear, from a military perspective, to constitute part of a broader strategy for constraining Iran's naval, missile, and logistical capabilities and for augmenting pressure upon Tehran. Nevertheless, this very circumstance poses a fundamental legal question: Was America's objective genuinely the repulsion of an impending assault, or was Washington seeking to alter the balance of power in the Persian Gulf and to reduce Iran's strategic capacities?

This is not merely a political question. It is a legal one: Exactly which attack was the US repelling? The answer matters because it determines whether the operation can be understood as an act of self-defense or as an unjustifiable use of force.

Herein, one must distinguish among three levels: first, the military description of the operation; second, its political objective; and third, its legal basis. An operation might be entirely comprehensible from a military standpoint, yet that fact does not render it lawful. An attack might be effective for deterrence, but deterrence does not per se constitute an exception to the prohibition against the use of force. Likewise, a state might defend an action on grounds of safeguarding energy security and freedom of navigation, but such interests, absent the conditions for self-defense, do not authorize an incursion into the territory of another state.

Hence, the legal point of departure is



A patient is being evacuated from the Shahid Baqaei Hospital in Ahvaz, southwestern Iran, in the early hours of July 15, 2026, to another medical facility following US air strikes on surrounding areas.
● IRNA

unequivocal. The governing principle is the "prohibition against the use of force," and self-defense constitutes an exception. Consequently, a state invoking self-defense must demonstrate the existence of the requisite conditions for applying this exception.

In international law, self-defense is classically connected to the occurrence of an armed attack. Moreover, the defensive action must be necessary and proportionate. These two conditions bear substantial importance. A state cannot, merely because it perceives itself as threatened, employ any level of military force against another state.

The International Court of Justice, in the case of *Nicaragua v. United States*, likewise emphasized that the exercise of the right of self-defense is linked to the concept of armed attack and to the requirements of necessity and proportionality. In the case concerning *Oil Platforms (Iran v. United States)*, these same criteria were considered in evaluating the American attacks on Iranian oil facilities. The legal outcome of these cases clarifies a critical principle: a state's security claim does not substitute for the

demonstration of the legal necessity for using force.

Therefore, the principal difficulty with America's claim of "preemptive self-defense" resides precisely here.

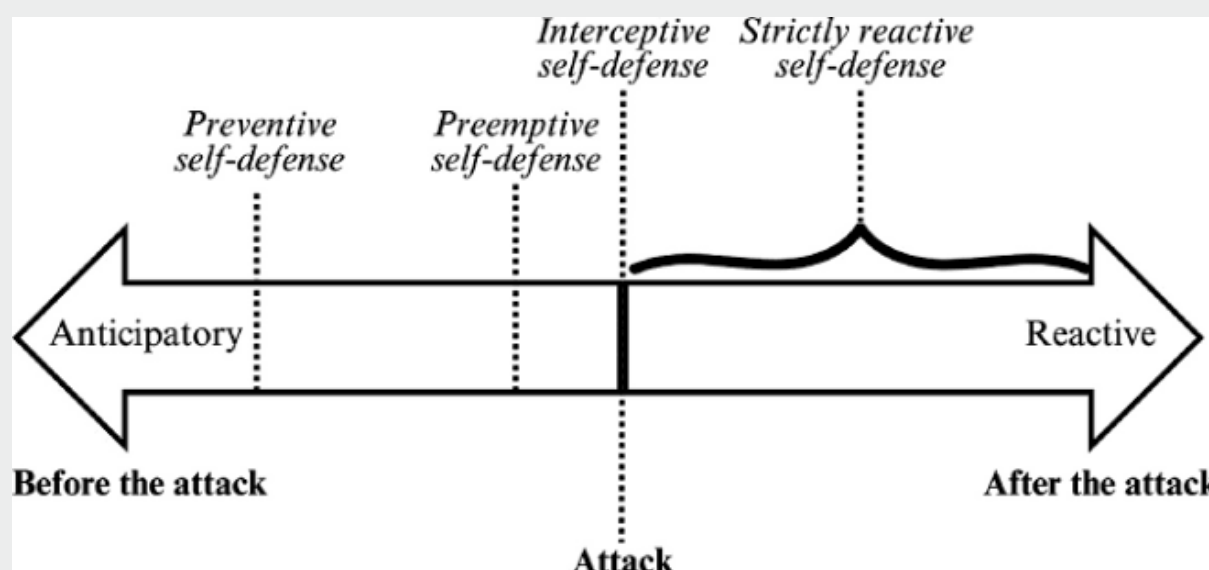
Preemptive self-defense, in its narrow meaning, refers to a situation wherein the enemy's assault has not yet commenced, but its occurrence is so imminent that awaiting the assault would effectively eliminate the opportunity for defense. In contrast, preventive defense pertains to an action undertaken to forestall a potential future threat.

The distinction between these two is also exceedingly important. If a state asserts that the opposing state might, in the future, acquire the capacity to threaten it, that argument possesses a preventive nature. But if it asserts that the enemy's attack was imminent and that no alternative existed except immediate action to repel it, then it enters the domain of preemptive argumentation. International law does not treat these two situations identically.

Concerning the operation in southern Iran, the principal question is whether the available evidence indicates that America confronted an imminent attack that could not have been repelled except by striking Iranian facilities, or whether Washington was targeting Iran's military and economic capacity, which it sought to reduce in advance.

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This query acquires greater significance when one considers the nature of the operation's targets. If the targets include coastal systems, missile and drone centers, port infrastructures, logistical hubs, and energy-related facilities, one can comprehend the military logic of such an operation. Reducing Iran's capacity to control or threaten maritime routes, diminishing its coastal missile capability, and constraining its logistical capacity are, from a strategic perspective, intelligible objectives. However, precisely this point can, from a legal perspective, work against the claim of self-defense. Self-defense is for repelling an attack, not for redesigning the strategic capacity of the opposing state. If a military operation transforms from "repelling an attack" to "reducing the enemy's future capabilities," the self-defense argument weakens. For then, the principal query is no longer whether the attack was necessary to repel an immediate threat, but whether the attacking state was employing force to alter the strategic situation of the opposing party.

This is the boundary between defense and preventive war.

Of course, one must fairly reconstruct America's argument as well. Washington could argue that attacks against commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz constituted a genuine and ongoing threat, and that Iran's coastal and missile facilities constituted part of the operational capacity employed for such attacks. If such a connection is proven, attacking certain specified military targets could be discussed within the framework of defensive necessity.

Yet even under this hypothesis, necessity and proportionality must be objectively examined.

A state cannot simply assert, "I determined that this attack was necessary for my security, therefore it was necessary." It must demonstrate that the specific attack, against the specific target, at the specific time, was necessary for repelling that same threat. Herein, the timing of the operation acquires importance. The American attacks occurred when political dialogues between Tehran and Washington were still ongoing, and both sides had endeavored to establish a consensual mechanism for ending the war and managing their disputed issues. This fact elevates the matter from a purely military level to a higher legal and political level.

In international law, good faith is not a simple moral recommendation. Good faith is one of the fundamental principles governing the legal relations of states and the execution of international obligations. States cannot interpret and execute their obligations in a manner that effectively renders their object and purpose worthless.

Of course, the initiation of negotiation does not per se signify the extinguishment of the right to self-defense. If a state, during the course of negotiations, genuinely becomes the object of an armed attack, negotiation cannot automatically nullify that state's right to defense. However, negotiation is significant for discerning state behavior and for assessing its good faith.

If a state, while negotiating about ending the war, maritime security, nuclear issues, sanctions, and the future of political relations, simultaneously initiates

attacks that weaken the military and economic capacities of the opposing party, a significant question arises: Was negotiation truly a means for resolving the dispute, or was it part of a pressure strategy for improving the military position on the eve of an agreement? It is here that the concept of “cover negotiation” acquires importance. “Cover negotiation” does not necessarily signify that all negotiations were dishonest from the outset; rather, one segment of the political structure might genuinely desire an agreement, while, simultaneously, another segment regards negotiation as an instrument for managing the battlefield and augmenting pressure upon the opposing party. But from a legal perspective, the crucial matter is what state behavior during negotiation reveals about its true objective. If negotiation proceeds simultaneously with military operations for weakening the strategic position of the opposing party, this behavior can constitute a serious clue for assessing good faith and the genuine nature of the diplomatic process.

In such a circumstance, negotiation is no longer necessarily the antithesis of war. Negotiation itself might become part of the strategy of war. This point assumes particular importance concerning the understanding between Iran and America. If both parties had accepted, within the framework of an understanding, to refrain from new military operations and to pursue disputed issues through dialogue, a simultaneous attack would have necessitated a dual legal justification.

The US may argue that Iran, through its military actions, violated the commitments of the Memorandum of understanding and that, therefore, a military response was necessary. Yet even under this hypothesis, the violation of an agreement does not automatically authorize unlimited force. This constitutes one of the common fallacies in political analyses of war. That “the opposing party violated first” does not conclude the legal analysis. One must ask what obligation was violated, what action was permissible in response, whether the use of force possessed an independent basis, whether an armed attack occurred, and whether the response was necessary and proportionate.

Given the available data and signs, the concept of “preemptive self-defense” appears excessively broad for describing the entirety of American operations in southern Iran. Why? Because the pattern of operations indicates that America’s objectives were not limited solely to repelling an immediate attack. The focus on southern Iran, the importance of the ports, the energy routes, the coastal facilities, and the military capacities indicate that the operations are understood within the framework of a broader strategic objective: reducing Iran’s capacity to exert pressure upon the Strait of Hormuz and altering the balance of power in the region.

This objective is strategically explainable. But strategic explainability differs from legal lawfulness. In international relations, great powers typically define economic security as part of national security. The US, too, can assert that the flow of energy and the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz are vitally important for the global economy. However, international law does not permit every threat against the energy market or global commerce to be automatically regarded as an armed attack.

If such an interpretation were accepted, any great power could employ any threat against its economic interests as a basis for the use of force. That outcome is incompatible with the logic of the United Nations Charter. From this same perspective, the statements of American officials concerning oil and Hormuz are also significant for understanding the strategic objective of the operation. In the American narrative, the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, the increase in oil flow, and the reduction of pressure on the energy market have been among the important objectives of the agreement and of subsequent developments. Vice President J.D. Vance,



US Vice President J.D. Vance stands behind US Central Command Admiral Brad Cooper, delivering a speech in Washington, D.C., on April 9, 2026, a day before the former flies to Islamabad, Pakistan, to lead the peace negotiations with Iran.
● CENTCOM

too, in explaining the American government’s positions, has emphasized the importance of opening Hormuz and restoring the flow of oil. Of course, one must distinguish between a proven fact and a political interpretation. Without a reliable document, one cannot attribute a specific sentence to an American official or claim that the attacks were executed solely for the purpose of “filling oil reserves”. Yet even without accepting such a formulation, one critical fact remains: energy and freedom of navigation have been an important part of America’s calculations in this crisis. This fact alters the nature of the war. The war is no longer solely about missiles and military bases. It is also about oil, ports, straits, vessel insurance, trade routes, and economic bargaining power. Under such conditions, the risk exists that states will conflate their economic interests with the criteria of self-defense. But international law has precisely established rules such as necessity and proportionality for preventing such a situation.

Even if the principle of self-defense is accepted, not every target becomes permissible. The relationship between the target of the attack and the threat being repelled must be clear. If a target is attacked solely because its weakening would, in the future, weaken Iran’s position, that argument distances itself from immediate self-defense. If a target is attacked to prevent a specific and imminent attack, the situation is different. The boundary between these two is precisely the boundary that must be considered in the legal evaluation of the operation in southern Iran.

From the perspective of humanitarian law, the matter does not conclude. Even if the use of force were assumed justifiable at the level of the Charter, the parties to the conflict remain obligated to

observe the rules of humanitarian law during the hostilities. The distinction between military and civilian targets, proportionality in attack, and the adoption of necessary precautions to mitigate harm to civilians all retain their importance. In other words, the legality of initiating the use of force and the modality of conducting the operation are two separate matters. A state might face difficulty with its claim of self-defense while, simultaneously, some specific attacks might be separately examinable from the perspective of humanitarian law.

This same distinction must be applied to Iran as well. But the most important issue, in the final analysis, is the relationship between negotiation and military operation. If negotiation is genuinely for ending the war, there must exist a minimum of trust and predictability within it. If one party perceives that the other is using the negotiating table to buy time and the battlefield to alter the conditions of negotiation, no incentive for trust remains. In that case, any provisional agreement becomes a fragile cease-fire, and any cease-fire becomes an opportunity for reconstituting military capacity. This cycle could transform into a permanent security dilemma in the Persian Gulf. The US asserts that, to prevent the Iranian threat, Iran’s capacity in Hormuz must be reduced. Iran asserts that, to prevent American pressure and attack, it must preserve and strengthen its deterrent capacity. Both parties characterize their behavior as defensive.

But the sum total of these behaviors is an increase in insecurity. This is the security dilemma wherein a state’s action for augmenting its own security is perceived, from the opposing party’s perspective, as a threat, and ultimately both parties move toward greater militarization. International law, in this context, has the role of a fundamental barrier. If

People walk on the shoreline in the Strait of Hormuz, where cargo and service vessels are anchored off Bandar Abbas, Iran, on June 1, 2026.
● AMIRHOSEIN KHORGOOI/ISNA



Exactly which attack was America repelling? If the answer is that the objective was preventing a specific and imminent attack, then the evidence thereof must be presented. If the answer is that the objective was reducing Iran’s capacity to threaten Hormuz, to control the flow of energy, and to alter the balance of power, then we are confronted with a different logic. Even if America can justify attacking Iran’s strategic infrastructures under the label of preemptive self-defense, Iran will find greater incentive to regard any future American or allied military action as an imminent threat and, on that same basis, to undertake preventive action.

the concept of self-defense is expanded to such an extent that states can invoke it for eliminating the potential future capacities of a rival, the boundary between defense and preventive war nearly vanishes. Then “defense” will no longer be a description of a legal situation; it will become a political label for rendering the use of force ostensibly legitimate. For this reason, in evaluating the American attacks, one must begin from a simple yet difficult question: Exactly which attack was America repelling? If the answer is that the objective was preventing a specific and imminent attack, then the evidence thereof must be presented. If the answer is that the objective was reducing Iran’s capacity to threaten Hormuz, to control the flow of energy, and to alter the balance of power, then we are confronted with a different logic. The second logic might be exceedingly effective from a strategic perspective. But it is not necessarily self-defense. This distinction bears great importance for the region’s future. For if America can justify attacking Iran’s strategic infrastructures under the label of preemptive self-defense, Iran will find greater incentive to regard any future American or allied military action as an imminent threat and, on that same basis, to undertake preventive action. Under these conditions, the threshold for using force declines.

And when the threshold for using force declines, war ceases to be an exception and becomes an ordinary instrument of foreign policy. From this perspective, the issue of the attacks on southern Iran is not merely a dispute between Tehran and Washington. The issue is whether the restrictive rules governing the use of force can still resist the logic of power. The response to these queries possesses extraordinary importance for the security order of the Persian Gulf. If negotiation becomes a cover for military pressure, trust in diplomacy diminishes. If preemptive self-defense becomes a concept for justifying attacks on future capacities, regional security will become more fragile. And if energy interests and global commerce alone can substitute for the legal criteria of self-defense, the principle of the prohibition against the use of force will become increasingly vacuous.

Therefore, based on the data and signs available as of the date of writing this article, one cannot categorically and exclusively situate the totality of American attacks on southern Iran within the framework of preemptive self-defense. On the contrary, the scope of the targets, the operational logic, the importance of the energy and port infrastructures, and the simultaneity of the attacks with the negotiation process create serious signs that the operation extended beyond repelling an immediate threat and constituted part of a broader strategy for weakening Iran’s strategic capacities and for altering the conditions of negotiation. If that is the case, the more precise term for describing it is not “preemptive self-defense”; rather, it is the preventive use of force for altering the balance. And this is precisely the point at which international law must resist the logic of power. Negotiation possesses meaning when the parties know that the negotiating table is a substitute for the battlefield, not an extension thereof. If states hold the text of a memorandum of understanding in one hand and, in the other, a map of attack, the problem is not merely the violation of trust between two states. The problem is the erosion of the very meaning of diplomacy itself. And perhaps the most important question concerning the 2026 crisis is precisely this: Was negotiation undertaken to end the Iran war, or was war undertaken so that negotiation might continue under more favorable conditions?

The response is to be found, more than in official statements, in the interval between the time of signing the understanding, the time of commencing the attacks, and the type of targets that were struck in southern Iran. In international law, the label of the operation is not determinative. Its nature is determinative.

AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship:

Iran coach Toloukian rues Asian Games snub after historic run

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Alireza Toloukian believes his team's performance at the AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship was "worthy of winning the title itself," while lamenting the team's absence from the country's delegation for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games later this month.

Iran was beaten in straight sets by Japan on Sunday to miss out on the bronze medal at the continental showpiece in Tianjin, China.

Despite suffering back-to-back defeats against two world-class sides in their final two outings, including a semifinal loss to China, the young Iranian team will still have every reason to be proud of its six-game run, having already made history by securing a maiden last-four spot in nine appearances at the competition. With the formidable trio of Thailand, China and Japan proving to be in a league of their own, it was always going to be a race between the likes of South Korea, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Vietnam and Kazakhstan for the one

remaining semifinal spot on offer. Iran, meanwhile, entered the tournament as an underdog after enduring a below-par campaign at June's AVC Women's Volleyball Cup in Candon, Philippines, settling for seventh place in the continent's second-tier tournament. Iranian girls, however, beat the odds in Tianjin, fighting back to defeat Chinese Taipei – the runner-up at June's event – in four sets in their Pool A opener, before claiming a historic quarterfinal victory over Indonesia in similar fashion, avenging their four-set loss to the Southeast Asian side at the Women's Volleyball Cup. The poor result in Candon, nonetheless, had already done the damage, as it convinced the Iranian sports authorities to leave the team out of the equation for the Asian Games, a decision in line with the country's medal-focused policy for the multi-sport event and much to the frustration of Toloukian, who argued that regular international exposure is essential if the team is to close the gap with the continent's leading sides.

"With my 22 years of coaching experience, I believe we cannot



● IRIVF

afford to wait until a team has a realistic chance of winning a medal before sending it to the Asian Games," he said. "The Ministry of Sport and the National Olympic Committee need to provide the conditions for the women's national team to participate in different competitions so that the players can improve both the mental and

technical aspects of their game." "The Asian Games are not even on the FIVB calendar, so teams do not participate at full strength. Even countries such as Afghanistan and Nepal compete at the Asian Games, making it more attainable to win a medal than at the Asian Championship." On his team's display against Japan, the Iranian coach said:

"We played well in the first set against a team with a great history in women's volleyball. We were within touching distance of winning the third set, but Japan was lucky to have a late video challenge [after Iran had converted the set point] go in its favor." "In future competitions, our players will step onto the court against these teams looking to

win. They realized that they are not inferior to the East Asian teams and that they can compete with them," added the Iranian.

Having previously served as the team's technical director, Toloukian took over from South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee, who parted ways with the senior national team for unknown reasons only weeks before the Asian showpiece got underway, with many believing his different tactical approach ultimately played a part in the historic feat. The coach stressed that Iran should not attempt to replicate the playing style of China, Japan or South Korea.

"Our style of play is different from the likes of China, Japan or South Korea; it is closer to the European teams, and we play our own volleyball."

Despite the disappointment of missing the Asian Games, Toloukian believes the result in Tianjin marked an encouraging start to a long-term project.

"The federation's vision for this team extends through 2028 or 2029. Hopefully, by participating in different competitions, they will be ready to win medals at major events."

Sports Desk

Iran's Saghar Moradi stole the show on the final day of the World Taekwondo Women's Open Championships in Taiyuan, China, marching to the gold medal in the -67kg class without conceding a single round across six bouts. Entering the tournament fresh off a bronze-winning run at the WT President's Cup in Lahore a fortnight ago, the Iranian rounded out her emphatic campaign with a victory over European champion Styliani Marentaki of Greece. Moradi defeated Daria

World Taekwondo Women's Open Championships: Moradi cruises to gold in -67kg

Maslii in her first bout before beating the host's Xing Jiani and American Chloe Chua to progress to the quarterfinals. A victory over Croatia's Doris Pole saw Moradi set up a last-four clash with high-profile Serbian Aleksandra Perisic – a silver medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics – who was also outmuscled in back-to-back rounds by the Iranian. With the G4 event serving as part of the qualification

pathway for the Los Angeles Olympics, Sunday's triumph helped Moradi collect 40 ranking points in her bid to book a berth at the sporting extravaganza in two years. Moradi's gold took Iran's haul to two medals across three days of action, following Hana Zarrinkamar's silver in the +73kg class on the opening day. Reigning two-time world champion Zarrinkamar picked up where she had left off in her gold-winning

run in Lahore, conceding just one round in four victories on her way to the final, including a win over former world bronze medalist Zhou Zeqi of China. In the final, however, the 16-year-old prodigy fell short against her formidable British opponent, Lauren Williams – a silver medalist at Tokyo 2020 – losing 11-5 and 16-5 in straight rounds to earn 24 ranking points. The tournament, however,

proved one to forget for five other members of the Iranian squad, including Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani, after they all finished empty-handed in their respective categories. An Asian champion in May, Kiani fell to American former world champion Makayla Greenwood in her first outing in the -57kg contest. Fatemeh Ahmadi (+73kg), Saina Karimi (-46kg), Hasti Mohammadi (-57kg) and Yalda Valinejad (-62kg) suffered



Iran's Saghar Moradi (c) celebrates after winning the gold medal in the -67kg class at the WT Women's Open Championships in Taiyuan, China, on Aug. 30, 2026.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

early exits, while Nastaran Valizadeh was beaten by the host's Wu Shanshan in the -62kg quarterfinals.

FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers:

Manolopoulos urges Iran to rediscover form after Philippines defeat

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos has called on his players to regain the form that saw them go 5-1 in the previous group phase of the FIBA World Cup 2027 Asian qualifiers after suffering a 68-56 defeat to the Philippines. Sunday's defeat in a packed Mall of Asia Arena in Manila summed up Iran's dreadful start to its second-round Group E campaign, following a narrow 93-91 setback against New Zealand on Friday.

Congratulating the Philippines on "a deserved victory," the Greek head coach expressed frustration with his team's defensive shortcomings and poor shooting in the closely contested encounter. "This was a bitter and bad



Iran head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos (c) is pictured during a timeout in a game against the Philippines at the FIBA World Cup 2027 Asian qualifiers in Manila, Philippines, on Aug. 30, 2026.
● FIBA

defeat for us, and now we have to find the strength to rebuild the team and get back on track," Manolopoulos said. The coach highlighted the stark disparity in fouls and free-throw attempts, saying Iran's defensive

performance needed significant improvement. "Despite scoring 56 points, our main problem was on defense," he said. "The Philippines had 23 free throws in the first half alone, while we had only two. By the end of the

game, they had 27 free throws compared with six for us. This shows that we need to significantly improve our concentration and the quality of our defensive play." Manolopoulos also criticized Iran's inability to capitalize on open scoring opportunities, particularly from beyond the arc. "We had no problem creating opportunities and getting open shots, but we failed to take advantage of them," he said. "We have excellent shooters on our roster, but making only eight of 31 three-point attempts is simply unacceptable. With those numbers from the free-throw line and from three-point range, it is impossible to succeed in a tight game." The defeat left Iran third in

the six-team group standings, level on 13 points with fourth-place Jordan, ahead of a crunch double-header against Australia and the Philippines in November.

Looking ahead to the remaining qualifying windows, Manolopoulos said Iran must quickly rediscover the style that helped it put together its five-game winning streak in the previous round.

"We had a good performance against New Zealand, and if we had been a little luckier and avoided some mistakes, we could have won that game," he said. "But today, we were not good at all."

"We have to quickly change our style of play back to what it was before the start of this window – the style that brought us five consecutive victories in the previous round. If we want to remain in contention, there is no alternative but to return to that level of authority and confidence."

U17 Beach Wrestling World Championships: Iran, Azerbaijan dominate with six medals apiece

Sports Desk

Iran and host Azerbaijan each bagged six medals, including double gold, to jointly claim the men's team title at the U17 Beach Wrestling World Championships in Baku. Kiarash Torabi and Amir-saleh Javidani spearheaded Iran's medal haul by claiming the top prize in their respective events. Torabi edged out Hooman Kalhori 1-0 in an all-Iranian final in the 70kg division, while Javidani outmuscled the host's Elgun Karimli 3-0 in the 90kg showdown. Reza Jalalian, meanwhile,

settled for silver in the 80kg contest following a 3-0 setback against Azerbaijani wrestler Nihad Suleymani in the final, with Amirali Domirkolaei (60kg) and Amirali Amini (90kg) adding two bronzes to the haul. Domirkolaei recovered from a 3-0 semifinal loss to Azerbaijan's Eljan Hasanov to beat his compatriot Mohammadali Ehsan Arezou in the third-place bout, while Amini – beaten by Javidani 3-0 in their last-four clash – defeated Senegal's Ablaye Diouf 3-0 to finish with a consolation prize.



Iranica Desk

Sometimes, appreciating a work of art does not require looking at paint and canvas. It can be enough to take a closer look at a stone that has remained silent in nature for years and is now gradually taking shape under an artist's hands. Stone carving is one of those arts that takes form through silence and patience, transforming raw stone into a lasting work through the artist's skill, experience and creativity. This report introduces the art of stone carving and the work of Mohsen Shahsavand, a handicrafts artist from Tehran Province. The craft is part of Iran's traditional artistic heritage and still has the potential to play an influential role in contemporary life and architecture, according to chn.ir.

Stone carving is an ancient art rooted in Iran's culture and civilization. Its traces can be seen in historical buildings, columns, capitals, inscriptions, stone tablets, architectural ornaments and

Stone carving helps preserve Iran's ancient artistic heritage

numerous artistic works from different historical periods of the country. For a stone carver, stone is more than a raw material; it is a medium whose characteristics must be properly understood to bring the desired forms and patterns out of it.

Choosing the right stone is the first step in the craft. The artist must be familiar with the type, texture, hardness and other characteristics of each stone and select appropriate tools and carving techniques according to the nature of the work. The design and preparation process then begins, with the artist gradually and carefully removing material from the raw stone until the final form emerges.

Shahsavand is an active stone-carving artist who draws on his experience and skills to create designs and produce stone works. In his workshop, each piece of stone follows a different path, beginning with selection and preparation and ending with carving, shaping and finishing.

What stands out most in this process is the combination of skill and patience. Stone carving is not an art that can be completed in haste. Every stroke of a tool must be carefully calculated, as a wrong movement can permanently remove

part of the stone. This is why the artist's experience is particularly important in this field, while understanding how stone behaves, together with hand skills, plays a decisive role in the final result. Despite its long historical background, stone carving also has the potential to remain relevant in contemporary life. The use of carved works in architecture, urban design, decorative elements, artworks and functional products can help create a connection between traditional art and modern needs.

Specialized workshops such as Shahsavand's are not merely places where handicrafts are produced; they also serve as important settings for the transmission of knowledge and experience. Skills passed down from one gener-

ation to another over many years can gradually be forgotten if they are not practiced and taught in real production environments. Stone carving also has considerable potential for job creation and economic development in the handicrafts sector. Supporting artists in this field, creating opportunities for carved works to enter domestic and international markets, holding training courses and introducing the craft's poten-

tial can all contribute to its further development.

At a time when many products are made rapidly with the help of new technologies, stone carving serves as a reminder of the value of being handmade — the time an artist devotes to creating a work and the identity conveyed to the product through their skills. Perhaps this is what elevates carved works beyond being merely decorative objects and turns them into part of a community's cultural narrative.

One of the most important characteristics of Iranian stone carving is its deep connection with architecture and the country's cultural identity. Many of the patterns and forms seen in stone works are rooted in historical motifs, traditional architecture and visual elements of Iranian culture. From this perspective, preserving stone-carving skills is not merely a matter of supporting a profession; it is also an effort to safeguard part of the country's traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage.

Stone carving may initially appear to be a hard and rugged art, but behind the sound of tools and the resistance of stone lies a profound delicacy. By understanding the material precisely, the

artist does not fight the stone but works with it, allowing the final form to gradually emerge from within.

Supporting such workshops, introducing artists and creating opportunities for training and the transfer of experience to younger generations can help secure the future of this art — an art that has existed alongside Iranian architecture and culture for centuries and can still find a new place in handicrafts and applied arts while preserving its authenticity.



Reading Room

Avicenna's journey from science to search for truth

Iranica Desk

The Wandering Physician: An Account of the Life of Avicenna, written by Mohammad Reza Tavakoli-Saberi, explores the life, ideas and intellectual pursuits of Avicenna, the renowned Iranian physician and philosopher.

Recently published by Morvarid Publishing House, the book offers a human and poetic portrayal of Avicenna, bringing together science, philosophy, love, suffering and the search for truth.

The story begins in Bukhara, the powerful capital of the Samanid dynasty. In the fourth century AH, Bukhara was one of the most prosperous, advanced and brilliant cities in the Islamic world and a major center of science, culture, trade and civilization. Located along the Silk Road, the city was also a multicultural center. Persian speakers formed the majority of its population, while Arabs, Turks, Turkmens, Chinese, Jews, Nestorian Christians and Zoroastrians also lived there.

Its bustling markets brought together merchants and scholars from different lands, helping make Bukhara one of the major centers of civilization of its time, according to IBNA. According to Tavakoli-Saberi, the title The Wandering Physician refers not only to Avicenna's numerous

journeys but also to his inner journey. Throughout his life, Avicenna traveled from Bukhara to Gurgan, Gorgan, Rey, Hamadan and Isfahan. Political turmoil, rivalries and the instability of the rulers of his time repeatedly forced him to leave one place for another. During these journeys, in addition to confronting political power, imprisonment and exile, he grappled with fundamental questions about truth, life, freedom and the meaning of knowledge.



From the author's perspective, Avicenna's life cannot be understood solely through his scientific achievements. He was a seeker who sought, through science and philosophy, to understand both the external world and the inner world of human beings. The Wandering Physician seeks to highlight this human dimension by portraying Avicenna's philosophical and mystical reflections, as well as his interactions with students, scholars, philosophers and mystics of his time, alongside

the political and social events that shaped his life.

Avicenna is regarded as one of the most renowned and influential scientists and philosophers of Iran and the Islamic world. His fame rests primarily on his contributions to philosophy and medicine, works that influenced generations of physicians and philosophers. Tavakoli-Saberi said Avicenna's life is also significant as an example for those pursuing knowledge. From childhood until

the end of his life, he remained committed to learning, research and teaching. Even while holding political positions and constantly traveling from one city to another, he continued his scholarly work and writing.

One of Avicenna's most important scientific legacies is The Canon of Medicine. The significance of this work lies not only in the breadth of its contents but also in Avicenna's effort to organize the medical knowledge of his time into a systematic framework. He collected

Mohammad Reza Tavakoli-Saberi



and classified medical knowledge from earlier traditions and incorporated his own observations, experiences and innovations. The Canon established connections between symptoms, diagnosis, causes, prognosis and treatment, creating a coherent system for medical education and practice.

The influence of The Canon of Medicine extended far beyond the Islamic world. About 150 years after it was written, the work was translated into Latin in Spain. Following the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, it was also among the early books to be printed. It was subsequently translated into various languages and remained a standard medical textbook at European universities for roughly six centuries. In the Islamic world, it continued to be taught until relatively recent centuries and today is studied mainly from the perspective of medical history.

At the same time, Tavakoli-Saberi stresses the need to distinguish between Avicenna's method of medicine and the scientific content of his medical theories. Some aspects of his medical thought, including the theory of the four humors and certain views on physiology and disease, were later abandoned as modern science advanced. Modern medicine explains many diseases that Avicenna attributed to an imbalance of the humors through advances in physiology, biochemistry, pathology and microbiology, identifying causes such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi.

Nevertheless, Avicenna's approach to scientific inquiry remains significant from the perspective of the history of science. Careful observation, classification of symptoms, comparison of cases, testing treatments and revising views based on evidence were among the features of his approach that bear similarities to certain principles of modern medical science.

According to the author, if Avicenna were alive today, he would probably set aside many of the scientific theories presented in The Canon and use modern knowledge and technology to conduct research and develop new theories. Some of his philosophical ideas, particularly his views on natural philosophy and Aristotelian cosmology, would likewise be challenged by modern astronomy and cosmology.

Yet Avicenna's intellectual achievement must be judged within the context of his time. Working with the limited scientific tools and knowledge available in his era, he advanced the medicine and philosophy of his day to a level whose influence endured for centuries. His legacy therefore lies not only in the theories he proposed, many of which were later superseded, but also in his enduring commitment to observation, reason, learning and the pursuit of knowledge.



Iran holds leading position in stem cell research across region, Asia: *Royan Institute chief*

New clinical studies target cancer, neurological diseases, fertility preservation

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Over more than 35 years, the Royan Institute has evolved from a specialized infertility-treatment center into a broad-based scientific and research institution working across stem cells, genetics, embryology, fertility preservation and gene therapy. According to its director, the institute now holds a prominent position in the region and Asia in terms of scientific capabilities, as well as the training and presence of researchers in the field of stem cells, while maintaining a respectable standing globally. In recent years, Royan's research portfolio has expanded well beyond infertility treatment to include the use of stem cells in treating eye and neurological diseases, leukemia and certain brain cancers, as well as fertility preservation for cancer patients. At the same time, the institute has sought to broaden international scientific cooperation and organize academic events to share its accumulated expertise and experience with scientific centers across the region.

Ahead of the 27th Royan International Reproductive Medicine Congress, the 22nd Royan International Congress on Stem Cell Biology and Technology (ICSCBT), and the 21st Royan Nursing and Midwifery Seminar, we spoke with Abdolhossein Shahverdi, director of the Royan Institute, about Iran's scientific standing in stem cell science and reproductive medicine, the institute's latest research, the prospects for stem cell-based therapies, fertility preservation for cancer patients, and Royan's plans to expand scientific cooperation with countries in the region and around the world.

IRAN DAILY: Could you explain Iran's and the Royan Institute's position in infertility treatment and stem cell science? How do you assess Iran's standing in these fields?

SHAHVERDI: The findings of a study by a reputable US-based scientific database, which assessed the activities of medical and research centers around the world in infertility treatment, show that the Royan Institute ranks among the world's 10 major and leading reproductive medicine research and treatment centers. Royan has also made significant advances in stem cell science in recent years. Some time ago, a



paper was published examining work carried out in the field of embryonic stem cells and products derived from these cells for the treatment of various diseases, including eye diseases and other conditions. Based on those findings, Iran is one of the active countries in stem cell science in the Middle East.



ABDOLHOSSEIN SHAHVERDI

We had two registered products based on embryonic stem cells, and apart from Iran, only one other country in the region, the Israeli regime, had succeeded in registering such products. Of

course, countries such as India and China have also been active in stem cell science in Asia. Therefore, Iran holds a prominent position in stem cell science in the region and across Asia.

We entered this field in 2000, and we have been working in stem cell science for nearly three decades. Other countries have also entered the field with major investments and have sought to expand their stem cell activities by recruiting researchers from other parts of the world. However, one of our strengths is the large number of researchers we have working in this field.

Despite the pressures and restrictions that have existed, many Iranian researchers today are recognized among influential figures in the field, and Iranian scientific centers have also

secured a respectable standing. The numerous papers published by Iranian researchers abroad are evidence of Iran's strong scientific position in this area. It should be noted, however, that the United States and European countries have a larger number of registered stem cell products, so there is still a gap in terms of the number of products. But in terms of scientific knowledge and capabilities, Iran holds a prominent position in the region and Asia and is also considered one of the countries with advanced technical expertise at the global level.

Could you explain the Royan Institute's latest research into the use of stem cells to treat various diseases? What stage have these studies reached?

A number of research projects are currently underway, and clinical trial activities have also begun in areas including eye and neurological diseases. The results have not yet been finalized, but the work is continuing, and papers have also been published on these studies.

One of the areas we are working on at the Royan Institute involves the use of stem cells for women with diminished ovarian reserve. Research is underway in which stem cells are injected into the target area. Investigations in this field are still ongoing, and the research has not yet reached its final stage. During the clinical trial phase, a limited number of patients have also been enrolled in the study. The initial results have been encouraging, and we hope that this research will ultimately

lead to an effective treatment method.

Are the Royan Institute's activities in the field of infertility limited solely to treatment? No. One of our major approaches in the field of infertility is fertility preservation.

Today, we have couples who, for various reasons, undergo cancer treatment, including radiotherapy, whether the patient is a man or a woman. Such treatments can affect their reproductive cells.

Under these circumstances, if the individual is married, the procedures carried out at the Royan Institute can make it possible to preserve embryos. For others, male or female reproductive cells can be collected and preserved before treatment begins, allowing the individual to seek fertility treatment after completing cancer therapy and pursue having children through these methods.

What projects is the Royan Institute currently pursuing on the use of stem cells in other fields, such as cancer treatment?

Several projects are underway in stem cell science. One involves genetic manipulation, and we have entered the field of blood cancers through this work. Another project focuses on the body's immune cells. The aim is to modify and strengthen these cells so they can be used in cancer treatment. One of our colleagues is also working specifically on brain cancer, particularly certain types of brain tumors affecting children. The results obtained so far have

been acceptable and encouraging. Our aim is to ensure that the institute's activities do not remain confined to infertility treatment. In fact, our work began with infertility, but the experience we gained in embryology and genetics gave us the capacity to move into stem cell-based treatments. Gene therapy was subsequently added to our research agenda.

As knowledge and experience accumulate in each of these fields, they open up new avenues for us and can represent a new approach and another step toward advancing the country's scientific and therapeutic capabilities.

What plans does the Royan Institute have for scientific cooperation with other countries?

We are seeking to expand scientific cooperation with other countries. In organizing educational and scientific activities, our approach is twofold. On the one hand, we seek to maintain ties with the international scientific community and draw on global experience. On the other, we are working to share the experience we have accumulated over the years with countries in the region.

In this regard, the Royan Institute organizes the annual international congress of the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) countries. Seven editions of this scientific congress have so far been held in various Iranian cities, including Mashhad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Kish and Tehran.

We plan to hold the eighth congress outside Iran for the first

time, in cooperation with Al-Zahra University in Iraq, in the city of Karbala this fall. We hope that holding the first WANA congress outside Iran, in Iraq, will help lay the groundwork for a scientific network through which experience can be shared.

What significance does holding these programs in countries across the region have for the Royan Institute?

Our aim is to build a scientific network not only in stem cell science but also in reproductive medicine and infertility, so that researchers and scientific communities in the region can share experience more easily.

One avenue for sharing expertise is to establish scientific networks and hold training courses in other countries, or to invite participants from other countries to attend training programs in Iran. Those who take part in these training courses can, upon returning home, in a sense serve as scientific ambassadors for Iran in their own countries and help strengthen ties and interaction among scientific centers. This is particularly important in the field of medicine because, in some emerging areas, the direct transfer of expertise faces certain limitations. Scientific networks, training programs and interaction among specialists can help facilitate this process.

Could you also explain the participation of foreign speakers and countries in the 27th International Congress on Reproductive Medicine in Iran?

The 27th Royan International Reproductive Medicine Congress, the 22nd Royan International Congress on Stem Cell Biology and Technology (ICSCBT), and the 21st Royan Nursing and Midwifery Seminar will be held beginning Wednesday, September 2, 2026, at the University of Science and Culture in Tehran, with the participation of Iranian researchers, specialists and prominent scientific figures, as well as speakers from various countries.

The scientific program features 24 foreign speakers from 13 countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Malaysia, Canada, the United States and the Netherlands.

Due to certain existing restrictions, some of these presentations were delivered virtually. Despite these limitations, we sought to ensure that our scientific ties with other countries were not severed.

The participation and engagement of foreign specialists, even virtually, helps increase mutual familiarity, establish new professional connections and strengthen scientific interaction among researchers.