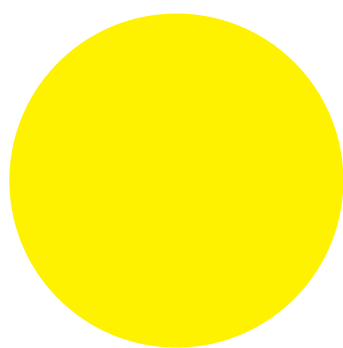


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determine approach
to US engagement: *SpoX*

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Pakistan-Kuwait defense pact signals Islamabad's bid for bigger Mideast role



By Mohsen Farkhani
International affairs analyst

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The memorandum signed by the defense ministers of Pakistan and Kuwait cannot be viewed merely as a technical agreement on training and capacity building. In fact, the document comes against the backdrop of deeper shifts in the Middle East's security equations following the Iran-US war and forms part of Pakistan's structured efforts to redefine its position in the region. The development can be analyzed in three parts: the context and significance of the memorandum within the framework of Iran's relative victory; Pakistan's expansionist strategy in the region; and, finally, the likelihood of a confrontation with Iran and Pakistan's structural vulnerabilities. The Iran-US war, which has seen active mediation by Pakistan, has so far produced two simultaneous outcomes. On the one hand, by ensuring its survival, maintaining control over the Strait of Hormuz and preserving its regional network of influence, Iran has consolidated its deterrent position and achieved relative hegemony, in the sense of being able to impose heavy costs on the US, any other hostile country and its rivals, which are seeking to consolidate their power advantage in the region. On the other hand, Persian Gulf states have largely lost confidence in unilateral US security guarantees and are moving toward diversifying their security partnerships.

Against this backdrop, Kuwait, having found itself unable to rely on US protection, has sought to diversify its military and security relations and build up its capabilities rapidly.

In recent years, Pakistan has pursued its objectives in exchange for providing training, logistical support and collective deterrence, driven by its energy shortages, need for foreign investment and desire to expand its political influence. Islamabad has followed a clear pattern in line with these objectives, seeking to turn its military capabilities and geographical position into economic and political leverage. In this regard, the expansion of the 2025 mutual defense agreement with Saudi Arabia to a trilateral agreement with Turkey, and now the defense protocol with Kuwait can be seen as links in a single chain. Together, they will broaden Islamabad's deterrence-building efforts, not against Iran but against India, open up access to the markets of Persian Gulf countries for Pakistan, and make any Indian military action against Pakistan subject to deeper calculations in advance.

This strategy has two important implications for the Middle East's security equations. First, Pakistan has evolved from a peripheral player into an active diplomatic-military actor capable of mediating for Iran while simultaneously signing defense agreements with Persian Gulf states. Second, new security alignments are taking shape that are no longer solely dependent on the US. However, without Iran's cooperation, as a balancing element in the region, these alignments will lack sufficient credibility to fully achieve their stated objectives.

Given Pakistan's deep domestic and regional vulnerabilities, including its long shared border with Iran, common interests in containing Baloch separatism, Islamabad's recent role as a mediator, and mutual economic interdependence, the likelihood of a direct military confrontation between Pakistan and Iran in the short term is very low. However, Pakistan's growing proximity to Saudi Arabia and Turkey could be interpreted as an indirect effort to contain Iran's influence, which could, at later stages, lead to proxy or border tensions.

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Putin reaffirms support for Tehran after new sanctions

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Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the 26th Summit of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on September 1, 2026.
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Pezeshkian voices Iran's readiness to return to peace memo with US

Putin reaffirms support for Tehran after new sanctions

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian denounced the United States for violating the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) but said if Washington returns to its commitments, Tehran will immediately do so.

Addressing the 26th Summit of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Tuesday, Pezeshkian said the US began to make excessive demands and violate its obligations under the Islamabad MoU less than two weeks after its president, Donald Trump, signed it.

The US "honored its commitments to the document bearing the signature of its president for less than two weeks before beginning to make excessive demands and breach its commitments, a course that continues to this day," he said.

"The violation of the US commitments was met with an appropriate response from Iran," Pezeshkian added.



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in a meeting on the sidelines of the 26th Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on September 1, 2026.
● [president.ir](#)

However, he noted that if the United States returns to its commitments under the Islamabad Memorandum, Iran will immediately do the same.

"Unlike the United States, my country has a distinguished record of honoring its international commitments and agreements and has always acted in accor-

dance with the principles of international law," the president said.

He also described the recent US-Israeli war against Iran as aggression against the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law.

The US and Israel launched their war against Iran on February 28 by assassinating the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with senior military commanders 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. Forty days later, on April 8, Washington and Tel Aviv were forced to accept a ceasefire amid Iran's resistance, successful retaliatory operations, and a powerful grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran and Washington also signed the 14-point Memorandum 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.

Moscow's support for Tehran

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was also presence at the summit, reaffirmed Moscow's support for Tehran and its commitment to maintaining close economic ties.

Putin said Russia would continue to strengthen trade and economic cooperation with Iran despite mounting external pressure and rising tensions in the region.

"The Russian people stand in solidarity with the people of Iran in fighting for their interests," Putin told Pezeshkian during a meeting on the sidelines of the SCO summit.

National interests determine approach to US engagement: *SpoX*

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei pointed to recent visits of high-ranking officials from Oman, Qatar, and Pakistan to Tehran, stressing that Iran's national interests determine its approach to negotiations with the United States.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing on Tuesday, Baqaei said decisions are made based on the prevailing circumstances and what is required to safeguard those interests.

He also said that Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir, "carried neither a positive message nor a negative one" during his recent visit to Iran.

Baqaei explained that the visit was in line with Pakistan's role as a friendly and neighboring country, and falls within the framework of Islamabad's efforts in recent months to help reduce tensions between Iran and the US.

The spokesman highlighted that de-escalation attempts are not restricted to Pakistan, and that several other countries have also played a role in this regard.

Mediator Qatar on Tuesday urged the US and Iran to return to negotiations after they renewed tit-for-tat attacks. On Sunday, the US carried out strikes on an Iranian island in the Strait of



Esmail Baqaei
● [IRNA](#)

Hormuz, with Tehran quickly retaliating by attacking US military targets in the Middle East.

After six months of war, the foes remain at an impasse, with Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz and the US persisting with a blockade of Iranian ports.

"We have said from day one that leaving the issue unresolved and trying to normalize the closure of the strait would lead to escalation," Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari told a regular press briefing.

"This is precisely what we have witnessed over the past two days," he said.

"We urge the parties to exercise wisdom and return to the negotiating path, and we continue to intensify our efforts with our mediation partners to ensure a return to that path."

"In Qatar, in the region, in the world today, we cannot afford to accept the status quo," Ansari said.

"Discussions with our mediation partners - whether in Pakistan or Oman - are ongoing," he added.

Last week, Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani traveled to Tehran as part of the mediation efforts, after Iran and Oman, which border the key waterway, said they were discussing a temporary shipping corridor and the clearance of mines.

Baqaei said that the main problem with the US is that it confuses negotiations with "dictating terms" and assumes it can impose its demands on others, an approach that, he stressed, will not work with Iran.

"There is no doubt that American officials are confused in their approaches and statements; but this does not permit us to overlook our capabilities. We will utilize diplomatic means wherever necessary to elaborate on our stances and uphold the rights of the Iranian nation," Baqaei stated.

Envoy calls for UN action over American attack on Larak Island

Iran formally demanded that the UN Security Council act after a US military strike on Larak Island in the Persian Gulf, calling it a blatant act of aggression, a war crime and a direct assault on the country's sovereignty. In a letter dated Monday to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the president of the Security Council, Gholamhossein Darzi, Iran's ambassador and chargé d'affaires at the United Nations, said US forces attacked the Iranian isle on the evening of Sunday.

The strike, he wrote, led to the martyrdom and injury of Iranian defenders of the homeland as well as civilians and caused damage to public and private property, Press TV reported.

Tehran called the raid a clear violation of Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and a flagrant breach of Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Darzi said the Islamic Republic "strongly condemns this unlawful act of aggression."

He added that the Armed Forces, exercising their inherent right of self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter, carried out defensive and



Gholamhossein Darzi

proportionate attacks against US military bases in Jordan that had been used in Washington's "criminal attacks and aggression" against Iran. The letter placed the Larak strike in a broader pattern of hostility that began with a large-scale and unjustified US military attack on February 28.

Darzi called on the secretary-general and the Security Council to take all necessary measures to address the violation of Iran's sovereignty, ensure accountability for the unlawful use of force, and prevent further escalation that threatens international peace and security.

Iran specifically asked the UN to demand that the United States immediately halt its attacks and end actions that endanger navigation and maritime safety in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Pakistan-Kuwait defense ...

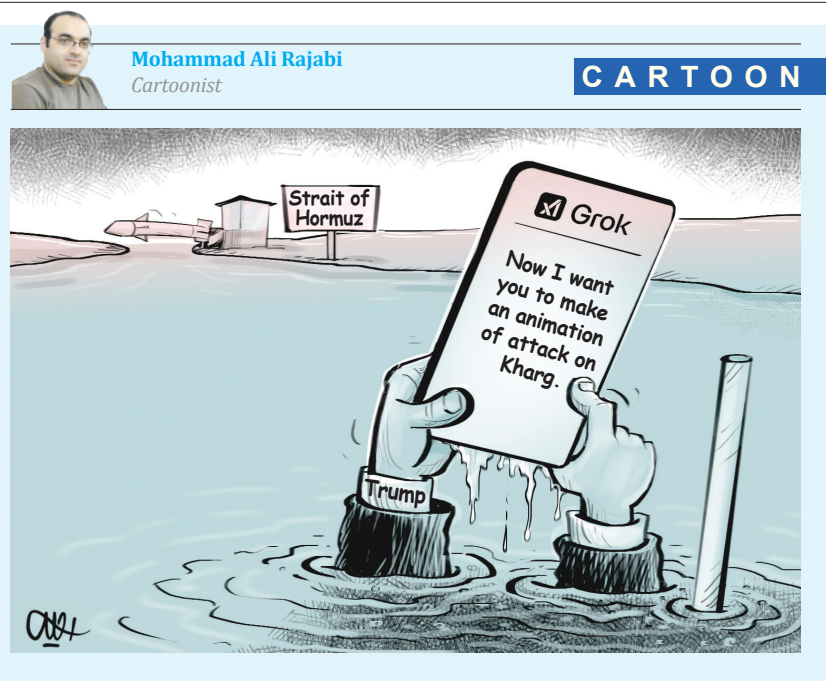
It should be noted that factors such as Pakistan's fragile economy and its heavy dependence on Persian Gulf energy and investment have placed Islamabad in a dependent position. At the same time, multiple military commitments will stretch the country's resources. As a result, simultaneously managing relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and the US is a fragile balancing act, and any overt tilt could carry heavy costs.

Based on the three points above, three possible scenarios can be identified: In the first scenario, Pakistan continues to expand military cooperation with Persian Gulf countries but refrains from deploying large numbers of combat forces. Relations with Iran remain focused on managing tensions and maintaining border cooperation.

The trilateral axis with Turkey and Saudi Arabia operates as a mechanism for collective deterrence, without taking action against Iran. Under this scenario, Pakistan secures its economic interests, while Iran, without entering the newly established defense agreements, independently maintains its deepening influence in the region. In the second scenario, the expansion of Pakistan's military and security relations with the Arab countries of the region and Turkey could pave the way for the creation of a collective regional structure involving Iran, ultimately leading to a region free of an effective US military and security presence.

In the third scenario, which would be particularly unlikely and costly for Pakistan, closer ties between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey raise concerns in Tehran. Proxy tensions in

Afghanistan or Balochistan intensify, while border cooperation is disrupted. Nevertheless, the costs of a direct war prevent a large-scale military confrontation, and the two sides manage tensions through diplomatic channels. Pakistan would then be forced to strike a more delicate balance among its partners and accept damage to its relations with Persian Gulf countries. Overall, the Pakistan-Kuwait memorandum is neither a sign of an inevitable confrontation with Iran nor merely a technical agreement. Rather, the document reflects Pakistan's efforts to turn itself into a central player in the emerging security architecture of the Middle East, where Iran's consolidation as the region's dominant power, Persian Gulf's security vacuum and Islamabad's economic needs are closely intertwined.



CBI chief downplays US economic collapse remarks as psy-war

Economy Desk

Iran has enough foreign currency and will not face an economic collapse, Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said on Tuesday, dismissing fresh US economic pressure on the country as psychological warfare.

"I am telling the President of the United States: Iran has (foreign) currency and it has enough," Hemmati said at the 36th Islamic Banking Conference in Tehran.

His remarks came after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent claimed "Tehran is lashing out with military actions because it is losing ground economically."

The comments come as part of the broader US administration effort to enforce secondary sanctions

and a naval blockade to cut Iran off from global finance and oil markets.

"Enemies impose new sanctions on Iran every week, but the country's economic system continues to operate," Hemmati said. He also rejected claims that Iran had entered an economic collapse.

"I firmly say that the claim that Iran has entered an economic collapse is not true, and there will be no breakdown," he said.

"The CBI is also prepared to supply up to \$2 billion in foreign currency to the market," Hemmati said, adding that the recent rise in exchange rates was driven more by psychological factors than underlying economic conditions.

He said the current turbulence in the foreign exchange market would



Abdolnasser Hemmati
ISNA

subside and that the recent rise in the exchange rate was driven more by psychological factors than by underlying economic conditions.

Iran's national currency has dropped to record lows the US dollar trading at around 2,140,000 rials on the open market on Tuesday.

The depreciation has underscored growing strain on an economy already grappling with high inflation. The country has also remained on a war footing

since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict.

Hemmati said the CBI was continuing to collect foreign currency receivables and had domestic reserves as well as other resources, though details could not be disclosed.

"I tell the people with complete honesty that economic conditions and livelihood management have become difficult, but collapse has never happened and will never happen. These claims are just psychological warfare and the dust will settle soon," Hemmati said.

Bessent said on Monday that Iran was taking US sanctions seriously.

Washington has been increasingly relying on eco-

nommic pressure to try to force Tehran to meet its demands, and Bessent has warned that those doing business with Iran could face US sanctions.

Hemmati pushed back against that assessment, saying even more optimistic experts had expected Iran's economy to move toward hyperinflation as the war and economic pressure intensified. But despite the heavy burden of inflation on people's daily lives, he said, Iran had not entered hyperinflation and he considered the likelihood of that happening low.

The governor said monetary and prudential measures had helped control the pace of inflation. He said the bank's main task under current conditions was to control inflation and prevent the

NIGC restores 95m cubic meters of gas capacity lost in attacks

Economy Desk

Iran has brought back 95 million cubic meters of daily natural gas production capacity damaged during the US-Israeli war, the head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said on Tuesday.

Saeed Tavakoli said "sabotage attacks" on March 18 knocked out about 230 million cubic meters of the country's gas refining capacity, equivalent to one-third of total capacity, according to Tasnim News Agency.

"But with integrated management at the Oil Ministry and measures that began from the very first moments, 95 million cubic meters has so far returned to production, and efforts to fully restore the capacity will continue until before the start of the cold season," Tavakoli said.

According to the NIGC, Iran's gas industry was already facing a daily shortfall of about 300 million cubic meters before the war. The remaining 130 million cubic meters of lost capacity has been added to the existing deficit, making efforts to curb consumption more important



South Pars Platform 128
SHANA

than ever.

The NIGC head said the damage to gas industry facilities had been extensive, with a total of nearly 7,924 cases of damage recorded.

He said reconstruction and efforts to restore capacity were progressing rapidly through follow-up, planning and measures taken by the company.

Tavakoli said gas deliveries to some industries and small businesses were about 1 billion cubic meters higher than a year earlier.

He added that there were no restrictions on gas supplies to

major industrial consumers, particularly steel and petrochemical producers, although some of those facilities were also damaged during the war.

Iran has about 34 trillion cubic meters of proven natural gas reserves, making it the world's second-largest holder of gas reserves after Russia. The country accounts for about 17% of global proven gas reserves.

Despite its vast reserves, a significant portion of Iran's gas potential remains undeveloped because of sanctions-related constraints and insufficient investment.

Tajikistan envoy says Iran trade to rise despite US sanctions

Economy Desk

Trade between Tajikistan and Iran is expected to increase this year despite the impact of US sanctions and recent regional developments, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda said on Tuesday, citing a sharp rise in bilateral commerce during the first half of the year.

Speaking at a news conference marking the 35th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence, Shamsiddinzoda said the recent developments would not have a serious impact on economic ties between the two countries, IRNA reported.

"During the first half of the year, which was the period of the war, we expected trade volume to decline, but according to our statistics, trade volume increased 14-fold compared with last year," he said.

"Trade between our countries will definitely increase this year," he added. Shamsiddinzoda criticized the use of sanctions as a political tool, saying they did not benefit any country.

"Sanctions are in no country's interest, and many sanctions



Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda speaks at a news conference marking the 35th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence in Tehran on September 1, 2026.
IRNA

violate international law. Unfortunately, in today's world, sanctions are used as a tool and leverage to resolve political issues," he said.

Last week, the US imposed a wave of new sanctions on Iran, hitting five sectors of the nation's economy — aviation, digital assets, gold, technology, and shipping — as it also imposed sanctions on 60 specific individuals and vessels.

The ambassador said bilateral trade had stood at about \$55 million in 2020, having declined from higher levels earlier due to some misunderstandings

between the two countries. By 2025, however, trade had reached \$450 million — a more than eight-fold surge over five years, he added.

Iran and Tajikistan have set a target of increasing bilateral trade to \$1 billion, he said, adding that the necessary conditions to achieve the goal were in place.

The two countries have also held 18 meetings of their Joint Commission for Cooperation in Tehran and Dushanbe, with the latest meeting held last month in Dushanbe, he said.

"The Joint Commission for Cooperation between the two countries makes serious and important decisions to promote and develop relations between Tehran and Dushanbe," Shamsiddinzoda said.

He said Iran had invested about \$300 million in Tajikistan during the 35 years since the country's independence.

One of the projects was the construction of Tajikistan's Independence Tunnel by Iran, he said, adding that the project had helped Tajikistan overcome a transportation bottleneck.

Tajik companies are also investing in Iran, he said.

Mahan Air launches flights to Vietnam in post-conflict push to revive routes

Economy Desk

Mahan air, Iran's first private airline, has launched new direct flights to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, as the country continues to rebuild and expand its international air connectivity following the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February, the head of Imam Khomeini International Airport said on Tuesday.

Ramin Kashef-Azar said on Tuesday that the two new routes would mark the Mahan Air's 18th and 19th new destinations.

Kashef-Azar pointed to the tourism potential of the Vietnamese cities and noted that the launch was significant as it came alongside the restoration of previously suspended routes.

"The importance of launching these

routes is that in the post-war period, in addition to reviving previous routes, we have been able to include entirely new routes in our network," he told IRNA.

Reviewing the broader recovery of international flights, he said, "Since the ceasefire took effect on April 8, more than 50 international air routes have been launched so far, with around 40 now operating on a permanent basis."

"In the first days after the ceasefire, only five destinations were available, served by 12 flights," he added.

"The expansion of the flight network is continuing, and we are looking to identify and reopen new routes in East Asia and Western Europe," he said.

The Ho Chi Minh City service began on Sunday, while flights to Hanoi have been scheduled regularly on a seasonal basis, according to Fars News Agency.

Following the April 8 ceasefire reached between Tehran and Washington, Iran Air resumed domestic flights on April 25 after a 55-day suspension, with its first service between Tehran and Mashhad. International operations restarted later that month, beginning with a Hajj flight to Medina, and flights to three destinations were available on the first day.

Meanwhile, Morteza Dehqan, head of Iran's Airports and Air Navigation Company, announced an increase in transit flights through Iranian airspace and said steps were being taken to expand its capacity.

Dehqan, who is also deputy minister of roads and urban development, noted that some navigation equipment damaged during the war had been repaired, and that alternative flight plans had been developed and implemented

at airports where equipment had sustained more serious damage.

Seven Iranian airports were targeted during the US-Israeli war, with attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities.

Dehqan said improving safety and increasing airspace capacity remained priorities for the company. "New equipment that is being delivered and installed will help increase Iran's airspace capacity," he said, adding that the country's entire airspace was currently under control.

He also said foreign airlines had grown more confident in Iran's air traffic control services, adding that some carriers had been assured that air traffic control in the Islamic Republic's airspace was safe.



IRNA

Legal challenges to Iran's commerce amid US-Israeli war of aggression

From sanctions to force majeure, insurance, and redesign of foreign trade contracts



By Rasoul Safarahang

Researcher at Center for Middle East Strategic Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The impact of war on the trade of Middle Eastern merchants manifests itself in foreign trade contracts before it becomes discernible in customs statistics. A vessel that does not sail, a bank that refuses to accept documents, an insurer that restricts war-risk coverage, or a port that is no longer accessible can disrupt a chain of contractual obligations extending from seller to buyer and from bank to insurer.

For this reason, one of the most consequential effects of the United States-Israeli war on Iran should not be sought exclusively in declining oil exports, difficulties in importing goods, or rising transportation costs; a more consequential dimension of the matter materializes where international law, contract law, sanctions, and maritime risks converge. Developments in recent months have transformed this issue from a theoretical discussion into a significant challenge for Iranian commerce. A sharp decline in commercial maritime traffic along the region's routes, heightened security risks for vessels, and difficulties in obtaining insurance coverage have presented Iranian exporters and importers with a succession of legal and contractual questions.

Under such circumstances, the principal question is no longer merely, "Can Iran continue its exports or imports?" The more consequential question is this: if war, sanctions, the closure of a maritime route, increased insurance risk, or governmental intervention prevents the performance of an Iranian commercial contract, who bears responsibility and who must absorb the cost of such disruption? The answer is not straightforward; international law does not automatically equate every war with "force majeure," nor does it recognize every increase in costs as a legitimate ground for terminating a contract. The point of departure is the text of the contract and the law governing it.

War does not automatically extinguish a contract

One of the most prevalent misconceptions in international commerce is that, upon the outbreak of war, a contracting party is automatically exempted from its obligations. No such absolute rule exists. In international commercial law, "force majeure" is generally invoked when an event beyond the obligor's control renders performance impossible or, under the circumstances stipulated in the contract, incapable of being performed, and the obligor has been unable, by reasonable means, to prevent the event or overcome its effects. Where the impediment is temporary, the exemption is generally confined to the corresponding period. Therefore, an important distinction exists between "the occurrence of war" and "the legal effect of war on a specific contract". Suppose that an Iranian company has undertaken to deliver goods to a Middle Eastern port on a specified date. If war causes the maritime route to close and no reasonable alternative route exists, a force majeure argument may be substantial. However, if the maritime route remains open and only transportation costs have increased, the matter does



not readily fall within the scope of force majeure.

In the latter circumstance, "Hardship," or economic difficulty, may arise as an issue; that is, performance of the contract remains possible, but its conditions have become severely detached from the initial economic equilibrium. In international commercial law, force majeure and hardship are two distinct concepts. The former is principally employed to provide exemption from liability arising from non-performance, whereas the latter is more closely associated with renegotiation, adjustment, or contractual reconfiguration.

This distinction is of particular importance for Iranian commerce. In many export and import contracts, the principal difficulty is not "impossibility"; rather, it is a combination of increased costs, delays, route alterations, lack of banking access, higher insurance rates, and sanctions exposure. If all these circumstances are included, without differentiation, under the heading of force majeure, the likelihood of failure in contractual litigation increases.

Sanctions; force majeure or legal impediment?

The most intricate dimension of the matter emerges where war intersects with economic sanctions. Sanctions are not merely an economic impediment. In

certain legal systems, compliance with sanctions constitutes a legal obligation. Consequently, a bank, shipping company, or insurer may be practically incapable of executing a transaction; not because it lacks a commercial inclination to do so, but because executing the transaction could expose it to legal liability. In this situation, the question must be whether non-performance arises from "sanctions" or from "the contractual party's commercial decision to avoid sanctions risk". These two circumstances are not legally equivalent.

If a contract was concluded at a time when the relevant sanctions already existed and the parties were aware of them, subsequent reliance on those same sanctions as an unforeseeable event will be more difficult. However, if new sanctions are imposed after the conclusion of the contract and genuinely render performance unlawful, the legal position will be different. Here, the issue of "foreseeability" assumes fundamental importance.

In commerce with Iran, sanctions are no longer an entirely alien and inconceivable phenomenon. This reality may acquire significance for a court or arbitral tribunal in the future. Could a professional merchant contracting with Iran have contemplated the possibility of intensified sanctions at the time of contract formation? This question is particular-

ly significant with respect to long-term contracts. In such contracts, sanctions clauses should not merely state, "In the event of the imposition of sanctions, the parties shall bear no liability." It must be specified which sanctions, imposed by which country, with what effect, and to what extent, may suspend performance of the contract.

Strait of Hormuz; where the Law of the Sea and contract law converge

For Iran's foreign trade, the issue of the Strait of Hormuz is not merely a security issue; it is a contractual issue. Whenever the passage of a vessel encounters the risk of attack, seizure, route alteration, or a substantial escalation in insurance costs, a constellation of legal questions arises concerning delivery dates, transfer of risk, liability for losses, and the obligations of seller and buyer.

Under such circumstances, a common error is to assume that Incoterms alone resolve all the difficulties; they do not. Incoterms rules are principally designed to determine the place of delivery, costs, and transfer of risk in a transaction. However, these rules themselves do not determine issues concerning force majeure, sanctions, export and import prohibitions, or many of the consequences of contractual breach. These matters must be regulated in the contractual text and under the law



The more consequential question is this: if war, sanctions, the closure of a maritime route, increased insurance risk, or governmental intervention prevents the performance of an Iranian commercial contract, who bears responsibility and who must absorb the cost of such disruption? The answer is not straightforward; international law does not automatically equate every war with "force majeure," nor does it recognize every increase in costs as a legitimate ground for terminating a contract.



governing the contract. This point is vital for an Iranian exporter. In an FOB contract, for example, the moment of risk transfer differs from that under a contract in which the seller assumes a broader obligation concerning transportation. In CIF contracts as well, the seller must arrange the stipulated insurance, but this does not mean that every form of war-related risk is automatically covered by insurance. In fact, the use of an Incoterm without revisiting the clauses concerning war, sanctions, and insurance can transform an ostensibly standardized contract into one of considerable risk.

Insurance; the link that may bring the entire chain to a halt

In maritime commerce, goods may be legally eligible for export, a vessel may be technically ready to sail, and the buyer may likewise be prepared to make payment; however, if the insurer does not provide the requisite coverage, the transaction may effectively come to a standstill. This is precisely where war, sanctions, and insurance become interconnected. Marine insurance under wartime conditions can expand its capacity to cover war risks, but such coverage is generally contingent upon risk assessment, sanctions screening, and compliance with applicable regulations. This development conveys an important message: the insurance market does not necessarily regard war risk as uninsurable; rather, it transforms it into a risk that must be separately priced and managed. Conversely, any costs or charges associated with passage through sensitive maritime routes may also become an insurance and sanctions issue. Therefore, in future Iranian contracts, the sentence “The seller is obligated to procure transport insurance” will no longer suffice. It must be specified what type of insurance, with what coverage limit, against which risk, under what conditions, and subject to which exclusions, will be procured. It must also be established who bears responsibility if the insurer cannot provide coverage because of sanctions or the regulations of the country in which it operates.

Iranian foreign trade and the imperative of contractual redesign

The new reality is that Iran's foreign trade contracts cannot be drafted as though they belonged to an era of stability. A future contract must regard war not merely as an “event,” but as a multilayered risk. The first layer is war and physical security. The second is sanctions and financial regulations. The third is transportation and ports. The fourth is insurance. The fifth is banking and payment, and the sixth concerns legal disputes over which of these factors has actually impeded contractual performance. If these six layers are not incorporated into the contract, future disputes will be almost inevitable. For example, Iranian export contracts should specify more precisely what le-

gal status is created by the “closure of a transportation route”. Must the seller identify an alternative route? Over what distance? At what cost? Is a 20% increase in transportation costs tolerable, while a 50% increase triggers renegotiation? If no safe route exists, is the contract suspended or terminated? If an alternative route exists but causes several weeks of delay, does force majeure remain operative? These are questions whose answers cannot be deferred until the crisis occurs. In future contracts, force majeure and hardship clauses must be designed in proportion to the nature of the transaction, and complex commercial risks in a sanctions- and war-affected environment cannot be managed merely by copying a generic provision from other contracts.

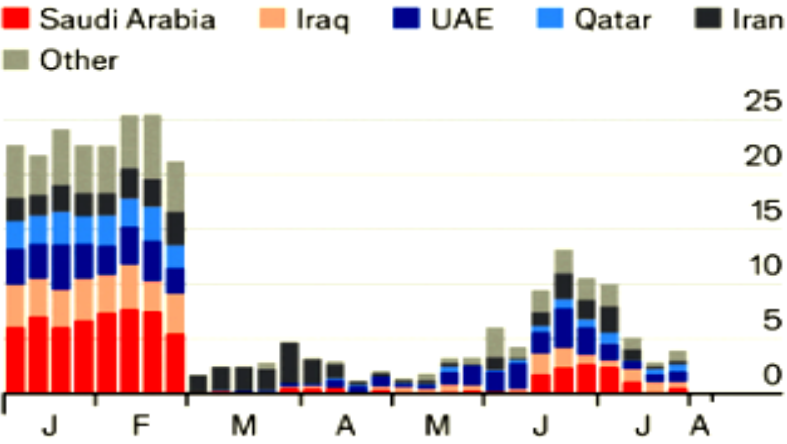
From ‘termination’ to ‘contractual resilience’

Perhaps the most consequential change in perspective for Iran's foreign trade lies precisely here. Under ordinary conditions, a contract is drafted to ensure performance. Under conditions of war and sanctions, a contract must, in addition to ensuring performance, specify how the transaction is to remain viable during a crisis. This signifies a transition from contracts predicated upon “termination after a crisis” to contracts predicated upon “resilience during a crisis”. Under this model, a contract can contain a hierarchy of solutions: first notification, then negotiation, followed by temporary suspension, then alteration of the route or method of transportation, subsequently adjustment of the price or delivery time, and finally, if the impediment is persistent and fundamental, termination of the contract. Such a mechanism prevents an immediate dispute; because the parties know in advance what consequence attaches to each stage. More precise provisions should also be incorporated concerning “change in law”. If a country imposes new sanctions, a bank prohibits a transaction, or a maritime route becomes subject to security restrictions, the contract should specify whether this circumstance creates merely a right of suspension or also a right of termination. In contracts connected with Iran, even the choice of governing law and the arbitral forum assumes greater significance. An arbitration clause that merely identifies an arbitral institution is insufficient. The question must be whether the arbitrator can disregard the sanctions law of a third country. Will enforcement of the judgment be possible in a country that imposes the sanctions? Will payment of arbitration costs itself encounter financial restrictions? In reality, war can transform a dispute that appears “commercial” into a dispute concerning multiple legal systems. The issue is not confined to exports; imports are exposed to the same risks. This discussion should not be confined exclusively to oil and petrochemical exports. For an Iranian importer, the risk may originate elsewhere: the foreign seller possesses the goods, but its bank is unwilling to receive payment from Iran; or the shipping company is unwilling to enter the region; or the insurer does not provide the requisite coverage; or the goods become stranded at an intermediate port. Under these circumstances, the important question is not “Who is at fault?” but rather what mechanism the contract has

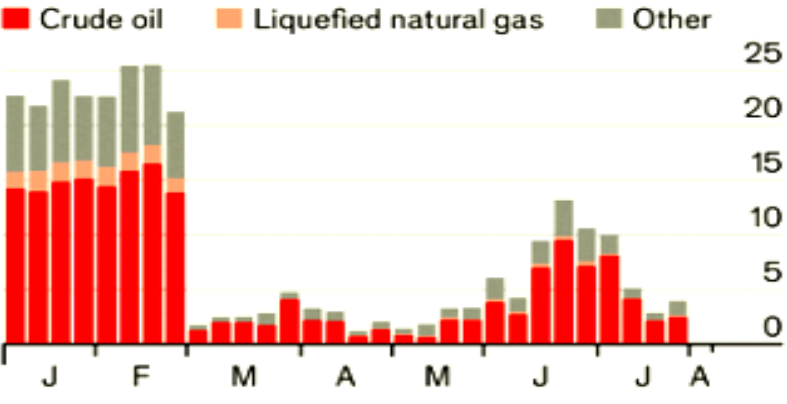
Feeling the squeeze

Trade passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 2026, tonnes, m

By country of origin



By commodity



Source: Kpler

contemplated for such a situation. This issue assumes amplified importance in trade predicated upon banking documents. War may subject banking and documentary operations to delay and disruption, but the rules governing letters of credit and other instruments of documentary trade do not automatically cease to exist. This point is extremely important: war may render performance of a transaction difficult, but “difficulty” is not synonymous with “legal exemption”.

A warning concerning force majeure

The experience of recent crises conveys an important lesson to Iranian economic actors and non-Iranian merchants conducting commerce with Iran: force majeure should not become the final bullet of a contract. A party that declares on the first day of a crisis, “War has occurred, so the contract is over,” may subsequently encounter the argument that it could have performed part of its obligation through route alteration, reasonable delay, alternative transportation, or negotiation. Conversely, a buyer cannot merely invoke late delivery to impose all responsibility upon the seller if it is established that the transportation route was genuinely unsafe and that no reasonable alternative existed. Therefore, in future disputes, courts and arbitral tribunals will likely examine the

“

The more consequential question is this: if war, sanctions, the closure of a maritime route, increased insurance risk, or governmental intervention prevents the performance of an Iranian commercial contract, who bears responsibility and who must absorb the cost of such disruption? The answer is not straightforward; international law does not automatically equate every war with “force majeure,” nor does it recognize every increase in costs as a legitimate ground for terminating a contract.

The chart shows the volume of trade passing through the Strait of Hormuz in January–August 2026. THE ECONOMIST

operational particulars more closely than before: Which routes were open? When did they close? What was the cost of an alternative route? Was insurance available? What precisely did the sanctions prohibit? Could the bank execute the payment? And, most importantly, what did the parties know or ought to have known at the time of contract formation? This is the point at which contract law becomes disentangled from foreign policy and is transformed into commercial risk management.

Strait of Hormuz and the future of Iranian trade

The Strait of Hormuz is now more than a strategic waterway; it has become one of the most consequential legal and economic variables affecting regional commerce. However, even if the maritime route reopens at a particular juncture, the difficulties confronting foreign trade will not terminate with the reopening of the waterway. Insurance rates may remain elevated, banks may continue to exercise caution, shipping companies may prefer alternative routes, and foreign counterparties may demand more stringent conditions in new contracts. For this reason, the restoration of trade to normal conditions does not necessarily signify the restoration of costs and risks to their pre-war levels. Law ultimately returns to the contract. The American–Israeli war on Iran has once again revealed an old reality: international law cannot resolve every difficulty confronting a merchant, but it can clarify the boundaries of responsibility and risk. Sanctions may impede a contract, but they do not, by themselves, answer whether the contractual obligation is suspended or extinguished. The closure of a maritime route may render contractual performance impossible, but the ultimate answer depends upon the text of the contract, the governing law, and the practical circumstances. Increased insurance costs may render a transaction unprofitable, but not every loss constitutes force majeure, and war may profoundly alter contractual conditions, but not every economic alteration creates a right of termination. From this perspective, perhaps the most important lesson for Iran's foreign trade lies not in any particular statutory provision, but in a transformation of the way contracts are conceived. Iran's foreign trade contracts must be redesigned on the basis of the country's geopolitical reality; a contract drafted for an environment without war, without fluctuating sanctions, and without maritime disruption is fragile in the face of contemporary crises. Iran requires more than alternative routes, additional vessels, or more expensive insurance to preserve its exports and imports. It requires a new legal architecture for foreign trade; an architecture in which sanctions, war, maritime disruption, insurance, banking, route alteration, force majeure, hardship, governing law, and arbitration are contemplated together from the outset. If war is regarded merely as a temporary event, upon the cessation of hostilities, we will return to the same old contracts. But if it is understood as an indication of a transformation in Iran's commercial risk environment, contracts can become instruments of resilience. In today's global economy, trade security does not merely mean that a vessel can sail. Genuine security arises when, if the vessel does not sail, if the bank does not transfer the funds, if the insurer does not provide coverage, or if a new sanction enters the equation, the parties know in advance what rights they possess, what obligations they bear, and who will absorb the cost of the crisis. This may be the most important legal lesson of war for Iran's foreign trade: war can alter the routes of vessels, but contractual ambiguity must not be permitted to obstruct the legal pathways of commerce as well.



Sports Desk

There will be much more on the line than a fifth title in eight editions when Iran gets its AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship campaign underway against New Zealand in Fukuoka, Japan, on Friday.

With the champion qualifying for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, the Asian event provides Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's side with the most realistic shot at securing a place in the sporting extravaganza, compared with next year's World Championship in Poland – where the top three will qualify – or the three remaining berths through the FIVB World Rankings. Piazza's men will still face a daunting task at the upcoming showpiece, as Japan will be the heavy favorite to secure back-to-back titles on home soil.

Having dominated men's volleyball on the continent for the best part of the 2010s and the early years of the following decade, Iran has been dethroned by Japan in recent years, comprehensively falling short against its Asian foe in the previous four meetings between the two sides, including a straight-set defeat in the 2023 Asian Championship final in front of the home crowd in Urmia.

The two sides last squared off in the Volleyball Nations League in June, with Japan

emerging victorious in five sets in Orléans, France, as part of a 12-game winning run in the preliminary phase.

Iran will still look to take inspiration from that meeting after fighting back from two sets down to force the game into a decider, having been swept in straight sets by the Japanese in the previous three encounters.

The Asian Championship could also play a defining role in Piazza's future with the Iranian national team. When the Italian was appointed to the role on a 2+2-year contract midway through 2024, he said he had set his sights on securing "a constant place among the top eight teams in the world" with Iran.

Piazza delivered on that objective to some extent in his first year in charge, as Iran recovered from a shaky start to finish eighth in the preliminary standings of the 2025 VNL and then reached the World Championship quarterfinals later in the year.

The second year of his tenure has been anything but successful.

The young, new-look Iranian team managed just three victories in 12 preliminary outings to finish 14th in the 18-team table, leaving Piazza and his side under massive scrutiny ahead of the Asian Championship. Despite Iranian Volleyball Federation chairman Milad Taqavi throwing his sup-

AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship: Japan the team to beat as Iran eyes Olympic berth



● PAYAM SANI/IRIVF

port behind the Italian on several occasions in recent weeks, anything but the ultimate prize in Fukuoka may well lead to a premature end to his time with

the Iranian national team. A run of poor friendly results in the buildup to the continental event, meanwhile, added to concerns among Iranian fans. The

team was beaten by Russia and Belarus either side of a three-set win against Cuba at the Ufa Cup, before losing twice to Russian club Dynamo Moscow.

Piazza, however, will be thrilled to have Amin Esmaeilnejad available again, after the prolific opposite missed the World Championship and this year's VNL

campaign with an ankle injury.

Friday's opener for Iran will be followed by a game against India on Sunday, before a final Pool B fixture against China next Wednesday.

Japan, meanwhile, will open its Pool A campaign against Oman, followed by potentially tricky tests against Bahrain and Australia.

Qatar, which won bronze in 2023, South Korea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand complete the field in Pool C.

The top two teams in each of the three pools will be joined by the two best third-placed teams in the quarterfinals.

The following is Iran's 14-man roster for the Asian Championship:

Arshia Behnejad, Ilshan Davoudipour, Issa Nasseri, Nima Bateni, Mohammad Valizadeh, Ali Hajipour, Amin Esmaeilnejad, Morteza Sharifi, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh, Ali Haqqarast, Esmaeil Mosafar, Mobin Nasri, Mohammadreza Hazratpour and Hossein Hajikalateh.

Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship: Iran finishes fourth but finds consolation with world spot



● IRIHF

Sports Desk

Iran missed out on the bronze medal at the Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan, after suffering a 29-28 setback against South Korea in the third-place contest on Monday.

The Iranian boys delivered a brave performance against the most decorated team in the history of the competition, leading 15-14 at halftime and still holding a one-goal advantage with one minute left on the clock. South Korea, however, scored twice through Oh Junseok, who finished with a game-high 12 goals, and Seong Jiseong in the closing seconds to secure a victory by the narrowest of margins.

Despite the late heartbreak, Iran still left the Jordanian capital with something to cheer about, as reaching the semifinals had already seen head coach Mohammadreza Rajabi's boys qualify for next year's IHF U19 World Championship.

Mohammad-Taha topped the scoring for Iran with seven goals, with Seyyed Mohammad Keshavarz adding six. Farshad Norouzipour and Ali Ghayour, who was named to the tournament's Dream Team as the Best Right Wing, contributed four goals apiece, as Iran – runner-up to South Korea in 2022 – achieved its second-best finish in the tournament since its bronze-winning run in the 2008 edition.

The Iranian boys kicked off

their campaign with an impressive victory over Saudi Arabia – a 2024 semifinalist – in Group B, before falling short 24-22 against Qatar, which went on to beat Bahrain 28-24 in Monday's final to claim its third gold medal and first since 2012.

Rajabi's side, however, was quick to bounce back, defeating traditional Asian powerhouse Kuwait 21-18 and Syria 45-30 to finish second to Qatar in the group standings and advance to the quarterfinals. Iran delivered yet another sublime showing to comprehensively defeat Uzbekistan 36-24 in the last eight and punch its ticket to the World Championship, before being undone 26-23 by Bahrain in Saturday's semifinal clash.

Golmohammadi enduring tough start to life in Iraqi top flight

Sports Desk

Head coach Yahya Golmohammadi is enduring a difficult start to life with Duhok in the Iraqi top flight, with the club failing to register a victory in its first four matches of the new Iraq Stars League season.

The Iranian coach's presence at Duhok, along with the continued tenure of compatriot Alireza Mansourian at Al Talaba, has drawn increased attention from Iranian football fans to the Iraqi league. Several other Iranian players are also plying their trade in Iraq, with Siavash Yazdani and Jafar Salmani joining Al Talaba during the summer transfer window, while Sina Moridi, Sina Asadbeigi and Mohammadreza Soleimani followed Golmohammadi to Duhok.

A three-time Iranian league champion as Persepolis coach, Golmohammadi, who had also been linked with a return to the Tehran Reds in the summer, took charge of Duhok after an inconsistent spell with Foolad Khuzestan toward the end of his time in the Iranian Premier League. His move to Iraq was expected to provide a fresh start, but his beginning at Duhok has fallen short of expectations, with criticism from the club's supporters and Iraqi media emerging after only four games. Duhok began last season in similarly disappointing fashion, losing their first four matches before finally beating Newroz in their fifth outing.

The club's management subsequently turned to Golmohammadi in an attempt to change the team's fortunes, improve on last season's results and establish Duhok as a contender. The club also enjoyed a busy transfer window ahead of



● VARZESH3

the new campaign, signing many of the players targeted by the Iranian coach.

The results, however, have yet to improve significantly. Golmohammadi's side has opened the new campaign with four consecutive draws, and while that represents four more points than Duhok had collected at the same stage last season, its failure to secure a victory remains a major concern.

The performances of the Iranian additions have also failed to meet expectations, particularly Soleimani, who has struggled to make an impact as Duhok's leading striker. Their underwhelming displays have further fueled criticism of Golmohammadi's recruitment and the team's overall performances. Duhok supporters, despite acknowledging the team's improved points tally, have voiced considerable dissatisfaction with the way the side has performed and have quickly grown frustrated with Golmohammadi.

The situation has been further

complicated by reports that Golmohammadi has expressed concerns over Duhok's financial and administrative situation and has clashed with club officials.

Iraqi media have also circulated claims that the Iranian coach could be considering a return home. Sport Iraq, following Duhok's fourth consecutive draw of the season, criticized Golmohammadi and alleged that his mind was already in Iran because Sepahan had contacted him.

The report further claimed that Golmohammadi had fallen out with Duhok officials and suggested that the coach was "only physically in Iraq," while his thoughts were in Iran. The claims have not been confirmed by Golmohammadi, Duhok or Sepahan.

Golmohammadi has so far remained silent amid the criticism and speculation. His response to Duhok's difficult start, as well as the reports linking him with a possible move to Sepahan, will be closely watched as the season progresses.

Iranica Desk

Moeil village, nestled on the slopes of Mount Sabalan in Ardabil Province, is one of the region's pleasant-weather destinations. It offers visitors a combination of mountainous landscapes, hot springs, waterfalls and summer pastures, alongside traditional rural and nomadic life. Its high elevation and cool weather during the warmer months make Moeil village an attractive destination for nature tourism and an escape from the heat of the cities.

Moeil is one of the villages of Meshgin Shahr in Ardabil Province, located about 14 to 15 kilometers from Meshgin Shahr. The village lies in a mountainous area on the slopes of Mount Sabalan, and its high elevation gives the area a climate that differs from many surrounding locations. Tourism sources put the village's elevation at about 2,100 to 2,300 meters above sea level. This elevation is one of Moeil's most notable natural features. Summers in the area are generally cooler than in many other parts of the country, while the lush slopes and pastures surrounding the village take on a distinctive appearance during the warm season. By contrast, autumn and winter are cold, and the mountainous conditions make travel there different from visits during the warmer months. Moeil's landscape is shaped above all by Mount Sabalan and the valleys surrounding it. The mountains, pastures and hiking trails around the village create scenery that is particularly appealing to nature lovers and photographers.

The Khiav Chai River also flows through the area. The presence of water alongside the mountains and vegetation contributes to the formation of the natural landscapes around the village. The valleys become greener in spring and summer, helping attract visitors to Moeil during the warmer months.

Moeil is also located along mountain routes on Mount Sa-

Visit Moeil village where hot springs grace Sabalan highlands



● kojaro.com

balan, with some climbing and nature-tourism trails passing through or near the village. As a result, the village is not merely a destination for sightseeing but also has significance for mountaineers and those interested in high-altitude trails.

One feature that distinguishes Moeil from many other mountain villages is the presence of numerous hot springs in the surrounding area. The springs are located in a region with geothermal activity, where hot water reaches the surface through natural cracks and channels in the ground.

Moeil Hot Spring is located in the center of the village. It has traditionally been used by local residents, while modern hydrotherapy facilities have also been developed in the area. Tourism sources put the temperature of the spring at around 40 to 45 degrees Celsius.

The traditional Moeil hot spring and the hydrotherapy complexes around the village form part of the area's health-tourism potential. In addition to the main hot spring, other springs and facilities can be found in the surrounding area.



Claims about the therapeutic properties of mineral waters, however, should be treated with caution. Hot springs can be used for relaxation and hydrotherapy experiences, but claims that they can treat diseases require medical evidence as well as an assessment of the water's chemical composition and the individual's condition. Visitors should therefore not regard hot springs as a substitute for medical treatment. A considerable number of hot springs are found in the Moeil area, making hot-spring tourism an important part of the

village's identity. Hydrotherapy complexes are located near the village, allowing some visitors to combine mountain sightseeing with the experience of bathing in mineral-rich hot springs. Recreational facilities in the area have also added to the range of tourism options.

Another major natural attraction near Moeil is Gurgur Waterfall. The waterfall is located along a river a few kilometers from the village, with some tourism sources putting the distance from Moeil at about 3.5 kilometers.

With water flowing through the

mountainous landscape, Gurgur Waterfall is a suitable destination for visitors looking to combine hiking with nature sightseeing. The waterfall is reported to be about 12 meters high, while the surrounding scenery is considered one of its main attractions.

Visitors to such natural areas are advised to wear suitable footwear, carry drinking water and dress appropriately for mountain conditions. They should also avoid approaching slippery areas or potentially dangerous trails.

Jahannam Darreh, or Hell Valley, is another name frequently mentioned among the attractions around Moeil. The valley is situated in a mountainous area and, with its highlands, natural trails, springs and vegetation, is considered a point of interest for local nature enthusiasts.

The name Hell Valley may initially sound unusual to visitors, but it does not mean that every part of the area is dangerous. Nevertheless, valley and mountain trails can be difficult in some sections, and visiting the more challenging parts requires adequate preparation and, pref-

erably, a local guide.

Moeil is important not only for its natural attractions. Rural life and the area's connection with the seasonal migration of the Shahsevan nomads are also part of its cultural identity. Local and tourism sources have referred to the village's location along nomadic migration routes and the presence of livestock herders in the surrounding summer pastures.

Livestock raising, agriculture and the production of local goods have traditionally been among the main activities of the people in the area. Local dairy products and handicrafts also contribute to the village's economic potential. The connection between rural life, livestock raising and tourism can provide an opportunity to introduce visitors to the area's local culture.

Moeil's rural fabric is also influenced by its mountainous setting. Houses have developed on sloping and valley terrain, while their proximity to the surrounding mountains creates a landscape different from that of villages located on plains. The positioning of homes on the slopes means that, in some areas, buildings are closely connected with one another and with the natural topography. This feature, combined with the surrounding mountains and pastures, is one of Moeil's visual attractions.

For many visitors, late spring and summer are the best times to travel to Moeil village. During these months, the village's mountain climate is more pleasant and the surrounding landscape is greener. Tourism sources also identify the warmer months as suitable for enjoying the highland scenery and natural attractions of the area.

The cool weather at high elevations, however, does not mean visitors have no need for warm clothing in summer. Temperature changes can be noticeable in mountainous areas, so travelers are advised to bring appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear.

Yabr Ice House preserves centuries of climate-smart architecture

Iranica Desk

Amid the bustle of modern life and the rapid pace of urban development, historic structures still stand in corners of Iran's cities and villages, offering glimpses into the lives of generations past. Each brick and wall bears witness to the knowledge, experience and way of life of those who came before us.

In Pakdasht, an eye-catching adobe structure stands as a reminder of an era when it played an important role in the daily lives of local residents. The Yabr Ice House, a relic of the Qajar era, remains a remarkable example of indigenous architecture and the ability of traditional builders to adapt to the local climate, chtn.ir wrote.

The structure was more than simply a facility for storing ice. It formed part of the region's economic and social life and represented an ingenious response to one of the essential needs of communities living in a hot, semi-arid climate, long before the advent of modern refrigeration.

Traditional ice houses across Iran are among the most remarkable examples of the country's indigenous knowledge of climate and the use of natural resources. By carefully observ-

ing winter temperatures, water flow and air movement, people in the past developed methods that allowed ice produced during the cold months to survive well into the warmer seasons.

In adobe ice houses, water was collected in shallow pools and depressions and allowed to freeze during the cold winter nights. The resulting blocks of ice were then collected and transferred to the interior of the ice house, where darkness, cool temperatures and insulation helped preserve them for extended periods.

The thick adobe walls and specialized design of these structures played an important role in limiting heat transfer. The domed and conical form of the ice house not only provided structural stability but also helped reduce direct exposure to sunlight and promote air circulation. These simple yet ingenious solutions demonstrate how closely traditional Iranian architecture was connected to climatic needs.

A visit to the Yabr Ice House offers an opportunity to discover a form of architecture in which beauty emerged from necessity. There are no complex modern technologies in this structure. Instead, adobe, mud, geometry



and an understanding of nature were brought together to create a building capable of carrying the cold of winter into the heat of summer.

The ice house's location near the Yabr Garden also points to the historical importance of the area and its connection with agriculture and horticulture. In such communities, ice was not used merely to keep water and food cool; it served a range of everyday needs and was closely intertwined with the local cycle of life and livelihood.

Today, when visitors see a historic ice house, the building's age and unusual appearance

may be the first things to attract their attention. Yet behind its adobe walls lies a body of knowledge developed through generations of experience and a deep understanding of the surrounding environment. Without advanced equipment, people in the past understood the movement of the sun, wind, cold and heat and shaped their architecture accordingly.

The Yabr Ice House is another example of this indigenous knowledge. It demonstrates that Iranian architecture is not limited to monumental and

grand structures; even simple, functional buildings can reveal remarkable examples of Iranian creativity and engineering.

The historical and architectural significance of the Yabr Ice House led to its inclusion on Iran's national heritage list in 1988. Its national registration underscores the importance of protecting and preserving this valuable heritage.

Today, the Yabr Ice House could become more than a surviving



● paytakhttour.com

monument of the past. It has the potential to become part of Pakdasht's tourism attractions. With appropriate restoration, site management, interpretation and the development of dedicated tourism routes, the site could introduce visitors and history and architecture enthusiasts to an important aspect of the region's traditional way of life.

Explaining the story behind the ice house, including how ice was produced and stored and how the structure was connected to the Yabr Garden, could offer visitors a distinctive experience — one in which a visit to a historic building becomes a brief journey into the everyday life of Iranians in centuries past. The Yabr Ice House may no longer serve as an ice-storage facility as it once did, but it continues to preserve within its walls the memory of distant winters, the efforts of earlier generations and the ingenuity of local builders.

Every adobe brick evokes an era when people, in shaping their future, relied above all on nature, experience and human ingenuity.

Cultural heritage is more than a collection of old buildings. It is the story of people who lived on this land before us, understood their needs and developed solutions suited to their time and environment.

The Yabr Ice House is part of that story — a lasting heritage in the heart of Pakdasht. Protecting it means preserving far more than a few adobe walls; it means safeguarding a part of the knowledge, identity and way of life of the people who once called this land home.

Science minister calls TOEFL, GRE suspension ‘stone age’ behavior

Social Desk

Iran’s Science Minister Hossein Simaei Sarraf on Tuesday condemned the suspension of TOEFL and GRE testing in Iran as “Stone Age” behavior, while Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said the move showed that Washington was targeting Iranian citizens across fields including education.

The US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) indefinitely suspended General License G on August 24, which had authorized certain academic exchanges and the export and import of specified educational services involving Iran, IRNA reported.

Following the regulatory change, the US-based Educational Testing Service (ETS), which administers the TOEFL and GRE, halted both examinations in Iran pending further review. ETS said the decision was taken to comply with US sanctions laws and that affected candidates would be contacted directly.

The suspension directly affects Iranian students, researchers and other applicants who use standardized test scores as part of applications to universities abroad. TOEFL measures English proficiency in reading, listening, speaking and writing, while the GRE is a standardized graduate admissions examination used by many universities and programs internationally.



Simaei Sarraf said the National Organization of Educational Testing, which oversees international examinations in Iran, was reviewing the situation. “It is interesting that participation in an examination is essentially being prohibited based on Iranian nationality,” he told reporters on the sidelines of an event in Tehran.

“These are no longer anything but ‘Stone Age’ behaviors,” the minister said, arguing that sanctions were intended to pressure Iran into submission. He also pointed to what he described as a longer record of restrictions affecting Iranian universities and academic publications.

Baghaei said Foreign Ministry departments were working to facilitate access to such examinations for Iranian students and applicants.

“If there were even the slightest sincerity in their claims about nuclear concerns,” Baghaei said, “what does a student examination, or an issue solely related to student exchanges, have to do with the nuclear issue?” He described the latest restrictions as part of what Washington itself has called economic pressure on Iran, saying their effects extended to “science, knowledge, technology” and academic exchanges. Baghaei acknowledged that the measures created difficulties but said Iran would pursue alternative mechanisms to enable students and researchers to continue their academic activities.

Iran unveils rial, foreign-currency tourism credit cards

Trust, seamless payments key to winning over tourists: *Salehi-Amiri*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran on Tuesday unveiled an instant-issuance platform for rial and foreign-currency tourism credit cards, as Tourism Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri called for modern financial infrastructure to make payments easier for international visitors and strengthen their overall travel experience.

The Payval platform, unveiled at the headquarters of Refah Bank in Tehran in the presence of Salehi-Amiri, Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ahmad Meydari and the bank CEO Esmail Lalegani, enables travelers to obtain virtual tourism cards online without an in-person visit.

“Trust-building is more important than the volume of cards,” Salehi-Amiri said, stressing that the quality of a

traveler’s experience should be the main measure of the platform’s performance.

The minister said foreign visitors should not have to carry large amounts of foreign currency or struggle with payments for accommodation, restaurants, transportation, shopping and souvenirs in different cities.

“They should be able to use a reliable payment instrument just like a citizen,” he said.

Developed by Danesh Refah Pardis, a Refah Bank subsidiary, the platform provides access to rial and foreign-currency cards through an online registration process. Users can fund a multi-asset wallet and receive a virtual card instantly.

The platform supports holdings in rials, dollars and digital gold, with provisions for converting assets into the currency



Iranian Tourism Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri (1st R) and Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ahmad Meydari (1st L) as well as officials unveil the Payval platform for instant-issuance rial and foreign-currency tourism credit cards in Tehran on September 1, 2026.
● CHTN

needed to fund the card. It also offers online services for currency conversion and digital-gold transactions.

Security features include TLS encryption, two-factor authentication, one-time passwords and instant transaction alerts. Salehi-Amiri urged the opera-

tors to establish a continuous mechanism for identifying and resolving technical problems, warning that a poor first experience could discourage travelers from using the service.

He also called for dedicated support points at major airports, including those in Teh-

ran, Mashhad, Isfahan and Shiraz, so visitors can receive immediate assistance if they encounter problems with the card or platform.

The minister said neighboring countries should remain a priority market for Iran’s tourism industry, noting that visitors from neighboring states already travel to Mashhad, northern provinces and other destinations across the country.

Iran has received more than 12.2 million foreign tourists over the past two years, Salehi-Amiri said, while the country has set a target of 15 million visitors under the Seventh Development Plan.

The ministry also said Refah Bank has allocated six trillion rials to help address part of the financial pressures and losses faced by tourism and handicraft businesses. Salehi-Amiri said the Payval platform should ultimately connect hotels, travel agencies, accommodation providers, transport services and retailers into a more seamless payment network.

The initiative, he said, goes beyond a financial tool and can help shape visitors’ perceptions of Iran by making everyday services “smooth, smart and reliable.”

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