

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Says Tehran Has Not Received Or Seen a Letter From U.S. President Donald Trump, Adding Iran Has Never and Will Never Agree to Negotiations That Imply Coercion

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Says It Has Disbanded Two Takfiri Terrorist Teams in Sistan-and-Baluchestan Province, Southeast Iran, Before They Could Carry Out Any Sabotage Act

2 DOMESTIC

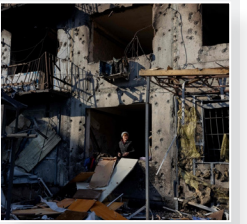


\$17b Pressure Boosting Contract Signals Rebirth for South Pars Gas Field

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

Zelensky Condemns Russia's Strikes on Ukraine, Moscow claims advances in Kursk region



> SEE PAGE 3

Tehran, Riyadh Call for Muslim Unity in Confronting Israeli Displacement of Gazans



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia have underscored the need for the Muslim community to unite in opposition to Israel's plots to forcibly displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has met and conferred with his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, in the city of Jeddah on the sidelines of an extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Saudi city on Friday.

Araqchi and Farhan stressed "the necessity for the Islamic world to focus on addressing challenges, particularly regarding the occupied Palestine and preventing the conspiracy to erase Palestine through the forced displacement of the people of Gaza from the Strip."

During the meeting, the two sides also reviewed the state of bilateral relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and reiterated that both countries are determined to advance the shared goals of their leaders in developing relations across all fields.

The Iranian foreign minister arrived in Jeddah on Thursday to attend the OIC meeting convened to address Israeli aggression and crimes against Palestinians as well as Israeli plots to forcibly displace Gazans.

Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump proposed that Washington would take over control of the Gaza Strip — possibly with the help of US troops — to create a "Riviera" of West Asia, a yet-to-be-conceived plot that was widely bashed by the international community and Arab states, but welcomed by the occupying regime.

On the sidelines of the OIC meeting in Jeddah, Araqchi also met with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan and discussed the challenges facing the Muslim world, underscoring concerted efforts to confront Israel's forced displacement of Gazans and the regime's annexation of the occupied West Bank.

Pointing to the dangerous developments unfolding in Syria under the rule of HTS militants, Araqchi stressed the responsibility of Syria's new rulers to safeguard the security and lives of all groups and segments of Syrian society.

The top Iranian diplomat also emphasized that insecurity and instability in Syria would only benefit the Israeli regime and provide opportunities for terrorist and extremist groups to exploit the situation.

Yemen Threatens Israel With Blockade If It Ignores Ultimatum on Stopping Gaza Attacks



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen's Supreme Political Council has warned that it would resume its naval operations aimed at enforcing a "blockade" against the Israeli regime if Tel Aviv failed to heed the country's ultimatum on stopping its deadly attacks against the Gaza Strip.

In a statement on Sunday, the council declared that Yemen's Armed Forces were fully prepared to carry out the directives of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, leader of Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement, once the four-day ultimatum expired.

Houthi issued the ultimatum recently amid the regime's incessant violations of a ceasefire deal between Tel Aviv and the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, which is hoped to end Tel Aviv's 15-month-plus war of genocide against the coastal sliver.

"We affirm the full readiness of the Armed Forces and all relevant agencies to implement the directives of the Leader of the Revolution if the deadline expires," the statement added.

"The Zionist enemy and its allies are fully responsible for the resumption of Yemeni naval operations."

The council was referring to the robust military, political, and intelligence support that Tel Aviv's Western allies, mainly the United States, were providing for the war that has so far claimed the lives of at least 48,453 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The Yemeni Armed Forces began taking Israeli ships and the vessels carrying supplies to the occupied Palestinian territories via the waters off the Arab Peninsula country, under missile and drone strikes after October 7, 2023, when the regime launched the brutal military onslaught.

Leader Rejects Negotiations Driven by Bullying Gov'ts, Stresses Economic Reform

TEHRAN - In a significant address on Saturday, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, asserted that the insistence of certain domineering governments on negotiations is not aimed at resolving issues but rather at imposing their demands. Speaking to the heads of Iran's three branches of government and a large gathering of officials and managers, he emphasized that the Islamic Republic would not bow to such expectations.

The meeting saw Ayatollah Khamenei deliver a blend of spiritual guidance for the holy month of Ramadan and practical directives for governance. He underscored the critical need to improve the economy and people's livelihoods, urging officials to prioritize unity across all levels of government, reform the currency system, preserve the national currency's value, support production and investment, expedite decision-making, and combat smuggling decisively.

Reflecting on the previous year's meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei paid tribute to the late President Ebrahim Raisi, who attended the 2024 session and, he said, is now reaping divine rewards for his efforts. He encouraged officials to view their roles as fleeting opportunities for service, promising divine favor for such an approach.

The Supreme Leader praised President Masoud Pezeshkian's remarks during the meeting, describing his trust in divine guidance and ambition for major projects as "highly valuable" and "paving the way forward." He expressed hope that Pezeshkian would soon announce the completion of significant initiatives, bringing joy to the nation.

With Ramadan underway, Ayatollah Khamenei described the month as one of remembrance, calling the Quran a book of mindfulness. He warned against the perils of self-forgetfulness and neglecting God, citing Quranic verses to highlight the dire consequences: divine abandonment and exclusion from mercy and guidance. He urged individuals to combat personal forgetfulness through prayer, piety, and worship, noting that such mindfulness fosters accountability to God.

For officials, he stressed an even greater responsibility, saying divine scrutiny of their actions would be rigorous. "We must be extremely cautious in our behavior, words, and performance, relying more on remembrance, prayer, and supplication," he advised.

On a societal level, he cautioned against repeating the errors of past regimes, such as the Pahlavi dynasty, which he accused of self-forgetfulness and dependence on foreign powers. Quoting a striking verse from Surah Tawbah, he warned that mirroring such behavior in the Islamic Republic would be a grave offense with devastating consequences. While acknowledging that Iran has so far avoided this fate, he urged vigilance to preserve the revolution's identity and principles.

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated that Iran's system, rooted in Quranic ideals, cannot follow



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Western civilization, though it could adopt beneficial elements from anywhere, including the West. He lambasted Western colonialism, resource exploitation, mass killings, and hypocritical stances on human rights and women's issues. He dismissed claims of free information flow in the West as a "lie," pointing to censorship of figures like Qassem Soleimani and Hassan Nasrallah on Western social media platforms, as well as suppression of criticism of Israeli actions in Palestine and Lebanon.

Western media's portrayal of Iran, he argued, amplifies flaws while ignoring scientific progress, massive public gatherings, and systemic achievements. Citing Western sociologists, he predicted the ongoing decline of Western civilization, asserting Iran's duty to chart

its own path.

Turning to domestic challenges, Ayatollah Khamenei acknowledged economic struggles since the early 2010s, attributing many threats—security and intelligence-related—to enemies aiming to undermine livelihoods and discredit the Islamic Republic's governance. While recognizing sanctions as a factor, he insisted they are not the sole issue, urging focus on internal solutions.

He called for cohesive government action, criticizing delays between ideation and execution. "Speed is essential," he said, lamenting indecision among some managers who avoid risks to evade scrutiny. "God questions not just our actions but our inactions," he warned.

Highlighting Iran's untapped potential—innovative youth, natural resources like oil and minerals—he stressed the need to leverage these strengths. He condemned bidirectional smuggling as a persistent economic drain unrelated to sanctions and pushed for currency reform to bolster the rial, enhance purchasing power, and restore national pride.

Production support, legal backing, and investment facilitation were also prioritized, with a call for government and citizens to favor domestic goods over imports. He noted that sanctions aim to deter foreign investment but insisted internal reforms could counter this.

In his closing remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei endorsed an active foreign policy, including ties with neighbors, but rejected negotiations with "bullying" powers. "Their goal isn't problem-solving but domination and imposition," he said, accusing them of using talks to curb Iran's defensive capabilities and international ties—demands Iran will never accept.

He alleged these powers stoke public doubt by feigning readiness to negotiate, only to blame Iran for refusals. Referencing the 2015 nuclear deal, he criticized European signatories for failing to honor commitments after the U.S. withdrawal, calling their accusations against Iran shameful. "There's no alternative but to stand firm against coercion," he concluded, reaffirming Iran's resolve.

President Emphasizes Unity as Key to Overcoming Challenges

TEHRAN - In a Ramadan meeting between Iranian officials and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, President Masoud Pezeshkian underscored the critical role of unity and solidarity in overcoming national challenges. He stated, "We are capable of overcoming all difficulties, provided we remain steadfast in unity and empathy and do not stray from the path of righteousness."

Addressing energy shortages, Pezeshkian acknowledged temporary power and gas cuts in some regions as measures to avert larger crises, expressing hope that energy imbalances would be resolved by next year as planned.

On foreign policy and investment, he emphasized leveraging the potential of neighboring countries and the Iranian diaspora. Labeling the 14th government a supporter of both domestic and foreign investors, he revealed plans for several major investment projects. Guided by the principles of "dignity, wisdom, and expediency" in foreign affairs, Pezeshkian described national unity as the primary deterrent to external threats, stating, "No force can defeat a nation that relies on God and moves united behind its leader."

Reflecting further on Ramadan, the president called it an opportunity to reaffirm commitments to justice, eliminate discrimination, promote honesty, aid the afflicted, mend societal divides, and combat oppression and corruption. "Religious texts are not merely for recitation but for action," he said, stressing that achieving this requires unity, mutual tolerance, and collaboration between the public and officials.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Iran Won't Await U.S. Correspondence



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In a resolute address to Majlis, Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf announced that Iran will not hold its breath for any overtures from the United States concerning negotiations. Speaking at an open legislative session, Qalibaf rejected the U.S. President's recent claims of desiring dialogue with Iran, labeling them a deceptive ploy intended to weaken and disarm the Islamic Republic.

Qalibaf's remarks began with a nod to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's Saturday speech to government officials, where he laid out critical strategies to tackle Iran's challenges. Qalibaf underscored the parliament's commitment to enacting the Supreme Leader's guidance and working in tandem with other governmental branches to propel Iran forward.

Echoing the Supreme Leader, he stressed that resolving economic difficulties and improving citizens' livelihoods must remain the top priority for all state institutions. "Our efforts as officials and representatives of the people must zero in on enhancing well-being," he asserted, insisting that no other issue should derail this focus. He pledged that parliament would channel its energies into alleviating economic woes, emphasizing that unity across government branches is vital to achieving tangible results.

He highlighted the Supreme Leader's call for cohesion within and between government entities, describing it as the cornerstone of effective governance. "Cooperation and synergy are prerequisites for progress," he said, urging all officials loyal to the Leader and Iran's interests to foster collaboration. He warned that deviating from this approach contradicts national interests and the Supreme Leader's vision, reiterating that parliament's mission is to solve public and national issues—a goal contingent on government success and inter-branch harmony.

Turning to foreign policy, Qalibaf dismissed the U.S. President's negotiation rhetoric as a façade. "The U.S. track record with other nations reveals this as a trick to push disarmament on Iran," he said, citing a signed U.S. policy document as proof. He argued that talks under threat, aimed at extracting concessions, would only humiliate Iran rather than lift sanctions. "Sanctions relief comes from Iran's strength and neutralization efforts," he declared. "We won't wait for any American letter." He expressed optimism that by harnessing domestic potential and broadening international ties, Iran could force its foes to relent through ongoing JCPOA talks.

Persian Gulf States to Run out of Water in 3 Days If Iran's Nuclear Sites Attacked



DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar's prime minister says his country and the Persian Gulf Arab states will run out of water within three days if Iran's nuclear facilities are targeted by the United States or the Israeli regime.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani made the comment in an interview with American political commentator and presenter Tucker Carlson on Friday.

Asked what would happen to the body of water between Iran and Qatar if the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant in southern Iran were ever attacked, Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani said such an incident would lead to an "environmental catastrophe" due to the high level of water contamination.

"This would be basically entirely contaminated...The whole country would run out of water in three days," he said, adding, "This is not only applied for Qatar, it is applied for Kuwait, for the UAE, for all of us in that part."

Elsewhere in the interview, the Qatari premier admitted, "We fought against Iran in Syria for 14 years," but emphasized that the two countries maintain bilateral ties despite their differences.

Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani also said a US congressman had urged him to cut ties with Tehran but he responded that this is not possible, explaining that he had to draw a map for Americans to illustrate how geographically close Qatar and Iran are.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi recently cautioned about the dire consequences of an act of aggression involving the Israeli regime or the United States against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"My assumption is that in this case (a likely attack against the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities), we will enter into a widespread war in the region, a catastrophe that no one, neither in the region nor outside the region, wants," Araqchi said.

IRAN NEWS



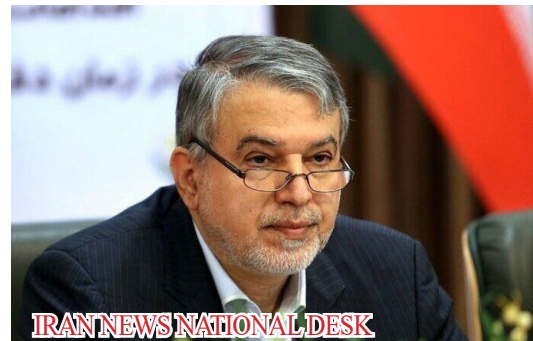
Lufthansa Flights to Iran Not Suspended, Official Denies Rumors

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Director of Communications, Public Relations, and International Affairs at Imam Khomeini Airport City has refuted rumors about the suspension of Lufthansa flights to Iran, confirming that a flight operated by the German airline is scheduled to land at Imam Khomeini Airport tonight.

In an interview with IRNA on Saturday, Ahoura Mohammadi stated, "Last night, there was a single flight cancellation reported by Lufthansa, which the company itself requested via a call."

He emphasized that there are no obstacles affecting the airline's operations in Iran, adding, "According to the announced schedule, a Lufthansa flight from Frankfurt will land at Imam Khomeini Airport at 10:10 PM tonight and will depart Iran at 2:30 AM tomorrow."

Gov't Explores Investment Opportunities in Northern and Southern Coastal Tourism



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, announced that significant opportunities exist for tourism development along the country's northern and southern coasts, with investment plans currently under review.

Speaking at a gathering of deputy commanders and regional and base commanders of the Iranian Navy, Salehi Amiri emphasized the importance of a sea-based economy. He stated, "There are abundant opportunities for advancing tourism on the northern and southern coasts, and the armed forces' cooperation in freeing up parts of the coastline for tourism activities marks a significant step forward."

The minister highlighted Iran's ambition to increase its inbound tourist numbers to 15 million as part of its development programs. Reflecting on last year's figures, he noted that approximately 7 million tourists visited Iran, adding that the country's current accommodation capacity—1,843 centers with 455,000 beds—needs to double to meet this target.

Salehi Amiri pointed to the extensive tourism investments made by neighboring countries such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, underscoring Iran's vast potential in the sector. "With over one million historical and cultural heritage sites, Iran is one of the world's premier tourism destinations," he said, citing historical regions like Jiroft, Susa, Shushir, and Firuzabad as key assets that could drive the industry's growth.

\$17b Pressure Boosting Contract Signals Rebirth for South Pars Gas Field

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad announced on Saturday that the signing of a \$17 billion pressure boosting contract for the South Pars gas field marks a "rebirth" for the country's largest gas reservoir. The landmark agreement, formalized during a ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian and oil industry leaders at the International Oil Industry Conference Center in Tehran, aims to secure Iran's energy future and counter production declines in the shared field.

Paknejad emphasized that the contract, signed seven months into the 14th administration's tenure, fulfills a long-standing ambition. "This is a pivotal step toward achieving the quantitative goals outlined in the Seventh Development Plan," he said, noting that Iran aims to increase its daily raw gas production to 1.34 billion cubic meters by the plan's end.

The South Pars field, which Iran shares with Qatar, supplies roughly 70% of the nation's gas, fueling households, small and large industries, and power plants. However, three decades of joint extraction have led to a natural decline in reservoir pressure, threatening output levels. Paknejad warned that without intervention, production could drop by the equivalent of one South Pars phase by 2027 and 1.5 phases by 2029. "From 2027, we'll see a reduction equivalent to one phase, exacerbating gasoline imbalances since 40% of Iran's gasoline comes from South Pars condensates," he added.

To meet the 1.34 billion cubic meter target within four years, an average annual investment of \$19 billion is required, totaling \$75 billion over the period. Of this, \$53 billion will fund new gas field development, while \$22 billion—including the \$17 billion South Pars project—will sustain existing production capacity. Paknejad stressed the need for meticulous planning to leverage national financial resources, citing potential funding from the National Development Fund and energy-intensive industries like petrochemicals, as stipulated in the Seventh Development Plan.

The minister also highlighted a competitive challenge from Qatar, which has already begun preparing platforms and turbo-compressors for pressure boosting. "In two years, Qatar could increase production from its North Dome section, potentially drawing gas from Iran's side due to pressure disparities," Paknejad cautioned. This urgency underscores the strategic importance of the South Pars initiative.

The pressure boosting scheme comprises seven hubs, each with four



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

platforms: one for power generation, one for accommodation, and two for compression units. Each platform will house four high-capacity SGT-700 turbo-compressors, totaling 56 across the project. While some components will be sourced domestically, technology transfers from foreign partners will also play a role. Each hub is estimated to cost \$2.5 billion, with the full \$17 billion investment projected to generate \$780 billion in field revenue by 2056—an economic boon Paknejad described as too critical to delay.

The contracts were signed with four major Iranian contractors—OIEC, Mapna, Khatam-al Anbiya, and Petropars—who will serve as general contractors, subcontracting to private firms to maximize local expertise. Paknejad noted their prior experience in South Pars development as a key asset. He contrasted this with preliminary \$400 million contracts from the 13th administration, which he criticized as underfunded and ineffective, saying, "Not a cent was spent."

The project's financial model will follow the "IPC" (Iran Petroleum Contract) framework, with negotiations underway with the National Development Fund for "EPCI" (Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Installation) agreements. Technologically, the initiative will elevate Iran's capabilities, particularly in designing and building heavy platforms weighing 7,000-8,000 tons—double the 3,500-ton limit of past projects. With 420,000 tons of marine structures and 600 kilometers of subsea pipelines planned, 70% of the work will be executed by Iranian companies, creating a nationwide industrial boom.

Economically, the project promises 17,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs, alongside sustained energy security. Paknejad urged swift financial approvals from the National Development Fund and Budget Organization to kickstart operations, warning that delays could jeopardize national interests.

Following his address, Deputy Oil Minister Hamid Bovard, representing the National Iranian Oil Company, signed the contracts with the four firms. This \$17 billion endeavor not only aims to offset pressure declines and prevent gas migration to Qatar but also to stabilize gas and gasoline supplies, reinforcing Iran's position in global energy markets. As the South Pars field enters a new era of sustainable exploitation, its success could redefine Iran's economic trajectory for decades to come.

Regional Countries Are Customers of Iran's Agro Products



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of Majlis, Mohammad Javad Askari, emphasized the need for sufficient infrastructure to facilitate the export of agricultural products across all provinces. Speaking on Friday during a visit to a sturgeon farming complex in Juybar, he highlighted that the 500 million people in the region represent a significant market for Iran's horticultural and agricultural goods.

Askari pointed out that one of the main shortcomings in the agricultural sector is inadequate packaging and sorting. "Given the diverse capacities of each province, we can establish a nationwide framework for the final processing of agricultural products," he stated. He added that this proposal would be communicated from the Interior Minister to provincial governors to leverage the plan for effectively exporting agricultural products to target countries.

Askari further noted that existing laws mandate agencies such as the Agricultural Jihad Organization's Plant Protection and Horticulture Department, customs authorities, and ports to streamline the export process for agricultural goods.

The parliamentarian stressed that the 500 million-strong population of neighboring countries shows a keen interest in Iran's agricultural products. However, he lamented that the country has failed to create adequate capacity and infrastructure for exports, including a shortage of suitable ships for transporting agricultural goods.

Mazandaran Province, with over 400 kilometers of Caspian Sea coastline, is a key player in Iran's fisheries sector. The region hosts 54 fishing cooperatives employing approximately 4,200 people and more than 3,400 aquaculture farms, making it the leading contributor to fishing activities in the southern Caspian Sea region, according to IRNA.

In recent weeks, efforts to boost Mazandaran's fisheries production and reduce dependency on direct sea catches have intensified. These include supporting investors, expanding aquaculture opportunities, and increasing aquatic production capacity. Authorities have prioritized multiplying output, employment, and income in the fisheries sector while securing national funding to complete a processing center for sturgeon-related industries.

The latest fisheries development project in Mazandaran involves a leap forward in constructing a processing and supplementary industries center at the province's first fully integrated sturgeon farming facility. Located along the Juybar coast of the Caspian Sea, this modern, technology-driven project has reached approximately 80% physical completion. With a private sector investment of 2 trillion IRR (Iranian Rials), it is expected to create direct employment for 250 people.

Iran-Turkmenistan Economic Consortium Established to Boost Trade Ties



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A new economic consortium aimed at enhancing exports and trade exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan has been officially formed, according to the head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce. The initiative, supported by the joint chambers of both nations, seeks to strengthen economic cooperation and unlock new opportunities for bilateral trade.

In a statement, Ramadan Bahrami, president of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber, announced the development on Saturday. He described the consortium as a significant step toward organizing trade, facilitating investment, and addressing commercial barriers between the two countries. "The establishment of the Iran-Turkmenistan Economic Consortium, which has been warmly welcomed by economic stakeholders, provides a valuable platform to streamline commerce and foster sustainable growth," Bahrami said.

Highlighting its potential, Bahrami emphasized that the consortium would serve as an effective tool to boost exports, attract investment, and simplify economic interactions. He noted that it offers a structured framework for Iranian businesses to engage purposefully in the Turkmen market, paving the way for expanded collaboration. "This initiative will create fresh capacities for deepening ties and advancing mutual interests," he added.

The consortium, launched through private sector participation and within the framework of the joint chamber's efforts, is expected to increase trade volumes, lower transaction costs, and bolster regional economic ties. Bahrami expressed optimism about its impact, stating that it could significantly enhance Iran's access to Central Asian markets, a region of growing economic importance.

The announcement has been met with widespread support from economic actors, with Bahrami welcoming the active involvement of Iranian companies. "Their collaboration in this consortium will lay the groundwork for sustained trade growth and smoother market entry into Central Asia," he concluded. The move marks a strategic effort by Iran and Turkmenistan to capitalize on their geographic proximity and shared economic goals, potentially setting a model for future regional partnerships.

This development comes as both nations aim to leverage their complementary strengths to drive prosperity and stability in the region.

Iran Economy Faces Deepening Recession as PMI Signals Continued Decline

TEHRAN - Iran's economy is showing signs of a deepening recession, according to the latest Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data released by the Iran Chamber of Commerce Research Center. The overall PMI for the economy in month of Bahman 1403 (January 21-February 19, 2025), after seasonal adjustment, stood at 46.4, marking its third consecutive month below the 50 threshold that separates expansion from contraction. This figure reflects a slight worsening from January's 46.6, underscoring a persistent economic downturn that began in Azar (November-December 2024).

The PMI, a key indicator of business conditions, highlights a broad decline across most of its components. Production levels, new customer orders, order delivery speed, and raw material inventories all contracted in Bahman, though employment showed a modest uptick—the highest in four months. Despite this, the overall trend points to a sluggish economy grappling with multiple challenges.

The industrial sector PMI, adjusted seasonally, dropped to 46.7 in Bahman, down sharply from 52.8 in Dey (December-January), marking its lowest level in seven months. Production in the sector fell to 47.3, continuing a downward trend for the sixth time this year. Contributing factors include severe energy shortages, with power and gas outages disrupting operations, alongside weak demand and soaring input costs driven by a sharp rise in exchange rates.

New orders in the industrial sector also hit a seven-month low, reflecting weakened consumer confidence amid economic uncertainty. Rising costs, fueled by currency fluctuations and sanctions-related pressures, have dampened demand, even as the year-end typically sees a seasonal uptick. Foreign sales and exports have similarly declined, further exacerbating the drop in orders.

The cost of raw materials and purchased supplies reached a 22-month high in Bahman—the steepest increase since Farvardin 1402 (March-April 2023). Imported materials, heavily impacted by exchange rate volatility, have driven up production costs, forcing businesses to raise prices. The PMI sub-index for output prices hit its highest level in 34 months, since Ordibehesht 1401 (April-May 2022). However, with consumer purchasing power eroded by inflation, demand remains subdued, squeezing company profit



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

margins and pushing many firms toward closure.

Energy shortages have compounded these woes, halting production processes and forcing businesses to rely more heavily on dwindling warehouse stocks. Raw material inventories also declined at a faster pace in Bahman, as supply chain disruptions—stemming from currency allocation issues and limited availability—hindered restocking efforts.

While most indicators pointed downward, hiring activity offered a rare bright spot. The employment sub-index

rose in Bahman, reaching its highest level in four months across the broader economy. However, this gain was overshadowed in the industrial sector, where employment contracted. Businesses, facing financial strain from rising costs and energy constraints, have scaled back production capacity and reduced hiring. Meanwhile, workers are increasingly reluctant to join manufacturing firms, as wages fail to keep pace with soaring living costs.

The PMI report paints a bleak picture of Iran's economic trajectory. Persistent energy shortages, intensified sanctions, and currency depreciation have created a perfect storm for businesses. Foreign exchange pressures, driven by reduced oil revenues and heightened demand for dollars to settle export commitments, have triggered sharp currency fluctuations, further inflating import costs.

Despite the approach of the Persian New Year, when demand typically rises, new orders fell, signaling a lack of confidence among consumers and businesses alike. Analysts warn that without significant policy interventions—such as stabilizing the currency or addressing energy deficits—the recession could deepen in the coming months. Inflation is expected to climb further as production costs continue their upward spiral, potentially pushing more companies to the brink.

The Iran Chamber of Commerce report underscores the urgent need for structural reforms to halt the economic slide. For now, businesses and households brace for tougher times as the nation navigates an increasingly precarious economic landscape.

Potential Rise in Home Appliance Prices Amid Market Challenges



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A member of the Iran Chamber of Commerce has warned of an impending increase in home appliance prices due to the elimination of the subsidized Nima exchange rate, replaced by the higher free market rate.

Alireza Mohammadi Daniali, speaking to IRNA, explained that this shift has driven up the cost of raw materials, leaving manufacturers with little choice but to adjust prices. He highlighted additional pressures, including delays in securing foreign currency for imports, further complicating production.

Mohammadi noted that while domestic appliance production has risen in recent years, declining purchasing power among Iranians has negatively impacted the market. Compounding the issue, approximately 30% of Iran's home appliance market is dominated by smuggled goods, with an estimated \$2 billion worth of appliances illegally entering the country annually. The source of foreign currency funding this smuggling remains unclear, and these goods evade customs duties and oversight, undermining legal trade.

When asked if liberalizing imports could curb smuggling, Mohammadi said manufacturers are not opposed to imports within a legal framework. However, he stressed that fair competition with foreign brands requires affordable raw materials, modern machinery, updated technology, reliable energy supplies, and faster access to currency—conditions currently unmet. Iran ranks 99th globally in industrial competitiveness and 127th in ease of doing business, making it difficult for local producers to rival countries with far stronger industries.

Mohammadi, also president of Iran's Home Appliance Industries Association, emphasized the sector's economic significance. Production has surged from 8 million units in 2019 to 20 million today, employing 300,000 directly and 1 million indirectly. He argued that unsupported imports could jeopardize these jobs, especially given the industry's inability to compete with foreign goods under current conditions. Economic growth and employment, he added, are critical priorities, as seen in global tariff wars, even in Iran's state-controlled economy.

Pope Responding Well to Pneumonia Treatment

VATICAN CITY (Dispatches) - Pope Francis is responding well to treatment for pneumonia after three weeks in hospital, the Vatican said Saturday, adding that the 88-year-old was showing "a gradual, slight improvement". The Argentine pontiff has been in Rome's Gemelli hospital since February 14, and has suffered a series of respiratory crises, but for several days now his condition has been described as "stable". "The Holy Father's clinical condition in recent days has remained stable and, consequently, testifies to a good response to treatment. There is therefore a gradual, slight improvement", the Vatican said.



Germany's Conservatives and Center Left Agree in Principle to Form Gov't



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany's future chancellor Friedrich Merz on Saturday said his conservative CDU party has come to an agreement in principle with the Social Democrats (SPD) to form a coalition government.

Both Merz -- who will be the next chancellor after his party won the elections but did not secure a majority -- and Lars Klingbeil of the SPD said they had successfully finished exploratory talks held in the wake of February 23 elections, and would now move to formal talks to build a coalition government.

In Germany, where coalitions are the norm, governments are typically formed in two phases, with parties first holding exploratory talks and then entering into formal coalition talks.

The two parties were racing for a deal before next week when they hope to push a loosening of Germany's borrowing limits through parliament to revive growth in Europe's largest economy and boost military spending.

Merz wants to form a coalition by Easter and has warned it was "five minutes to midnight" for Europe to fend for itself against a hostile Russia, with the US under President Donald Trump no longer seen as a reliable ally.

Merz's conservative CDU/CSU bloc and the SPD have haggled over issues such as migration and welfare payments, coming together after a bruising election campaign.

The two parties have also discussed the issue of equipping Ukraine with longer range Taurus missiles, which outgoing SPD Chancellor Olaf Scholz opposed but Merz supports under certain conditions.

One of your browser extensions seems to be blocking the video player from loading. To watch this content, you may need to disable it on this site.

Merz said both sides shared "the conviction that we have a great task ahead of us." He said all were "aware of the great challenge we are facing—above all the international situation, but also... facing the whole of Europe".

China Hits Back at Canada With Fresh Agriculture Tariffs



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China announced tariffs on over \$2.6 billion worth of Canadian agricultural and food products on Saturday, retaliating against levies Ottawa introduced in October and opening a new front in a trade war largely driven by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff threats.

The levies, announced by the commerce ministry and scheduled to take effect on March 20, match the 100% and 25% import duties Canada slapped on China-made electric vehicles and steel and aluminium products just over four months ago.

By excluding canola, which is also known as rapeseed, and was one of Canada's top exports to the world's No.1 agricultural importer prior to China investigating it for anti-dumping last year, Beijing may be keeping the door open for trade talks.

But the tariffs also serve as a warning shot, analysts say, with the Trump administration having signalled it could ease 25% import levies the White House is threatening Canada and Mexico with if they apply the same extra 20% duty he has slapped on Chinese goods over fentanyl flows.

"Canada's measures seriously violate World Trade Organization rules, constitute a typical act of protectionism and are discriminatory measures that severely harm China's legitimate rights and interests," the commerce ministry said in a statement.

China will apply a 100% tariff to just over \$1 billion of Canadian rapeseed oil, oil cakes and pea imports, and a 25% duty on \$1.6 billion worth of Canadian aquatic products and pork.

"The timing may serve as a warning shot," said Dan Wang, China director at Eurasia Group in Singapore. "By striking now, China reminds Canada of the cost of aligning too closely with American trade policy."

Zelensky Condemns Russia's Strikes on Ukraine, Moscow claims advances in Kursk region

KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned Russia's "brutal" new strikes on Ukraine, warning that Moscow is "not thinking about how to end the war", but said his country remains fully committed to constructive talks with the US next week. Russia, meanwhile, said it had recaptured three more villages seized by Ukrainian forces in the Kursk region last August.

Zelensky named a high-level delegation including ministers to meet US negotiators in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, seeking to repair ties with President Donald Trump's administration.

US envoy Steve Witkoff said Thursday Washington wanted to discuss a "framework for a peace agreement".

"We hope to discuss and agree on the necessary decisions and steps", Zelensky said, stressing that Ukraine was "fully committed to constructive dialogue".

But he condemned "brutal" deadly strikes on eastern Ukraine, saying they proved that Russia was "not thinking about how to end the war".

Trump on Friday threatened new sanctions and tariffs against Russia over its bombardment of Ukraine.

The three-year-long war is now at a critical juncture for Kyiv after Trump suspended US military aid following his public falling-out with Zelensky last week.

Ukraine still controls some 400 square kilometres in the Kursk region after launching an offensive last August. Zelensky sees this as a possible bargaining chip in peace talks.

But Ukraine's troops in Kursk have seen their position worsen in recent weeks with Russia's army pushing back.

Russia's defense ministry on Saturday announced the recapture of three more villages: Viktorovka, Nikolayevka and Staraya Sorochina.

According to DeepState, an online military tracker linked to the Ukrainian army, the Russian move followed a "breach" in the Ukrainian defence lines near the town of Sudzha, which is under Kyiv's control.

The advance appears to have cut off the logistics route needed by Ukraine to supply its troops, although Kyiv has not confirmed this.

Russia has already taken back over two-thirds of the territory in Kursk initially seized by Ukraine.

The Ukrainian military General Staff said Saturday that clashes were ongoing amid heavy bombardment with artillery and guided aerial bombs.



Mohammed bin Salman.

For the US, Witkoff has said he wants to discuss an "initial ceasefire" with Russia and a "framework" for a longer agreement. Zelensky said Ukraine would be represented by officials including Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov.

In his evening address, he told Ukrainians he was "confident that the meeting will be productive".

Zelensky also urged allies to "increase sanctions against Russia" after heavy overnight bombardment in the east and northeast.

A Russian barrage hit the centre of Dobropillia in the eastern Donetsk region late Friday, killing 11 people and wounding 40, according to the emergency services.

"Russia is proving literally every day with its cruelty that nothing has changed for them," Zelensky said.

He accused Moscow of wanting to "destroy and capture more as long as the world allows them to wage this war".

On Saturday, a strike on the embattled city of Pokrovsk killed a man in his 40s and wounded 2 others, the Donetsk governor Vadym Filashkin said.

Separately, four people were killed Saturday by drone attacks in the eastern Kharkiv region, one of which hit a meat processing plant, the head of its military administration, Oleg Synegeubov, said.

A drone attack also killed a 74-year-old man in the southern Kherson region, the governor Oleksandr Prokudin said.

Hundreds of Alawite Civilians Killed in "Executions" by Syria's Security Forces

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - At least 745 civilians belonging to Syria's Alawite minority have been killed execution-style by the country's security forces and their allies in the past two days, a war monitor said Saturday. Witnesses recount horrifying scenes, saying bodies lay strewn on the streets in some areas.

The clashes between security forces and loyalists of ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad erupted on Thursday.

The government has said it was responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence.

The revenge killings that started Friday by Sunni Muslim gunmen loyal to the government against members of Assad's minority Alawite sect are a major blow to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the faction that led the overthrow of the former government three months ago. For decades, Alawites made up a large part of Assad's support base.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 745 Alawite civilians were killed in the coastal regions of Syria and the Latakia mountains by security forces and allied groups in the past few days.

The Britain-based Observatory said they were killed in "executions" carried out by security personnel or pro-government fighters, accompanied by the "looting of homes and properties".

In total, it said the overall death since Thursday has climbed to 1,018, including also 125 security personnel and 148 fighters loyal Assad.

Residents of Alawite villages and towns spoke to The Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP.



The violence on the Syrian coast Saturday prompted the International Committee of the Red Cross to call for safe access for health and aid workers to the affected areas, particularly in the Latakia and Tartus governorates.

In a post on X, the ICRC urged all parties to "ensure unimpeded access to health care and protection of medical facilities. First responders and humanitarian workers must be allowed safe access to provide medical aid and to transport the wounded and dead".

Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbours killed Friday at close range.

Ali Sheha, a 57-year-old resident of Baniyas who fled with his family and neighbours hours after the violence broke out Friday, said that at least 20 of his neighbours and colleagues in one neighbourhood of Baniyas where Alawites lived, were killed, some of them in their shops, or in their homes.

Sheha called the attacks "revenge killings" of the Alawite minority for the crimes committed by Assad's government. Other residents said the gunmen included foreign fighters, and militants from neighbouring villages and towns.

A funeral was held Saturday afternoon for four Syrian security force members in the northwestern village of Al-Janoudiya after they were killed in the clashes along Syria's coast. Scores of people attended the funeral.

Syria's state news agency quoted an unnamed defence ministry official as saying that government forces had regained control of much of the areas from Assad loyalists. It added that authorities have closed all roads leading to the coastal region "to prevent violations and gradually restore stability".

The government also announced school closures on Sunday and Monday in Latakia and Tartus provinces due to the "unstable security conditions".

On Saturday morning, the bodies of 31 people killed in revenge attacks the day before in the central village of Tuwaym were laid to rest in a mass grave, residents said. Those killed included nine children and four women, the residents said, sending the AP photos of the bodies draped in white cloth as they were lined in the mass grave.

Lebanese legislator Haidar Nasser, who holds one of the two seats allocated to the Alawite sect in parliament, said that people were fleeing from Syria for safety in Lebanon. He said he didn't have exact numbers.

Israel, Hamas Signal Readiness for Fresh Ceasefire Talks

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israel and Hamas signaled they were preparing for the next phase of ceasefire negotiations, as mediators pushed ahead with talks to extend the fragile 42-day truce that began in January.

Hamas said there were "positive indicators" for the start of the ceasefire's second-phase talks but did not elaborate.

Israel also said it was preparing for talks. "Israel has accepted the invitation of the mediators backed by the US, and will send a delegation to Doha on Monday in an effort to advance the negotiations," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

A delegation from Hamas is engaging in ceasefire talks in Cairo with Egyptian mediators who have been helping facilitate the talks along with officials from Qatar. They aim to proceed to the next stage of the deal, which could open the way to ending the war.

"We affirm our readiness to engage in the second-phase negotiations in a way that meets the demands of our people, and we call for intensified efforts to aid



the Gaza Strip and lift the blockade on our suffering people," Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif Al-Qanoua said in a statement.

In a later statement reporting its delegation's meeting with the head of Egypt's general intelligence agency, Hassan Mahmoud Rashad, Hamas affirmed the group's approval of forming a committee of what it described as "national and independent" characters to run Gaza until elections.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi earlier said Cairo had worked in cooperation with Palestinians on creating an administrative committee of independent, professional Palestinian technocrats entrusted with the governance of Gaza after the end of the Israel-Gaza war.

His remarks came during the Arab summit which adopted Egypt's alternative reconstruction plan for Gaza, as opposed to US President Donald Trump's "Middle East Riviera" vision.

Even as diplomacy continued, an Israeli airstrike killed two Palestinians in Rafah in southern Gaza on Saturday, medical sources said.

Djokovic Crashes out at Indian Wells as Alcaraz Sails Through



INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Five-time champion Novak Djokovic tumbled out of the Indian Wells ATP Masters, falling in his first match to lucky loser Botić van de Zandschulp as two-time defending champ Carlos Alcaraz advanced.

"No excuses for a poor performance," 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic said after 37 unforced errors in a 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 defeat.

"It doesn't feel great when you play this way on the court," he added. "But congratulations to my opponent — just a bad day in the office, I guess, for me."

Djokovic is just the latest in van de Zandschulp's string of superstar victims. He stunned Alcaraz at the US Open last year before beating Rafael Nadal in Davis Cup in what proved the Spanish great's last match.

"I think I kept my cool during the whole match," said van de Zandschulp. "I know if I go into the match and lose my cool, especially against the big players, it's going to be a really tough day. That's always one thing I'm trying to do well."

After 14 unforced errors in the first set, Djokovic cleaned things up in the second, grabbing a quick break on the way to a 3-0 lead.

Djokovic pumped his fist after belting a forehand winner to the corner for his first break chance of the match and after consolidating the break nodded his head in satisfaction.

The rallies remained tense affairs and Djokovic's frustration was clear at times, but after he was broken when serving for the set he closed it out on his next service game, muscling a forehand winner to the baseline to level the match.

It was only a brief respite. Van de Zandschulp kept the pressure on both from the baseline and at the net and Djokovic's errors began to pile up again.

Van de Zandschulp took control with a break for 3-1, reeling off the last five games as Djokovic was unable to stop the bleeding.

"The first three games, four games of the third set were quite close," Djokovic said. "Had my chances.

Was just some awful mistakes."

Djokovic, seeded sixth, joined world number two and top seed Alexander Zverev and fourth seed Casper Ruud in exiting in the second round.

With Zverev out and world number one Jannik Sinner serving a three-month drugs ban, world number three Alcaraz is the highest seed left in the men's draw.

Alcaraz, trying to join Djokovic and Roger Federer as the only men to win three straight Indian Wells titles, eased into his defence with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over France's Quentin Halys.

He admitted he was feeling some nerves to start the match, but they evaporated amid a strong all-around performance.

One early break staked Alcaraz to the first set, and he roared to a 4-0 lead in the second behind a formidable service display.

He finished with seven aces and saved the only break point he faced, securing the win in 67 minutes. "I was nervous at the beginning of the match," he told a supportive crowd. "The first match is never easy so I was trying to be focused on my game."

"I just tried to be relaxed, as relaxed as I can. Can always be better, but I'm ready for the (next) round and excited."

Australian Open champion Madison Keys opened the day's action in the combined ATP Masters and WTA 1000 event, subduing hard-hitting Russian Anastasia Potapova 6-3, 6-0 in her first match since her maiden Grand Slam triumph.

She showed no sign of rust as she dispatched Potapova in 63 minutes.

Later world number one Aryna Sabalenka launched her bid for an elusive Indian Wells title against hard-hitting American McCartney Kessler.

In other early matches, Americans Taylor Fritz and Coco Gauff both advanced. Fritz, the 2022 men's champion, defeated Italian qualifier Matteo Gigante 7-5, 6-3 while Gauff — like Fritz seeded third in her draw — clawed out a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Japan's Moyuka Uchijima.

Bayern Get Away With Shock Loss



MUNICH (Dispatches) - A 10-man Bayern Munich got away with a shock 3-2 home defeat to Bochum after title chasers Bayer Leverkusen were beaten 2-0 by Werder Bremen.

Despite the loss, just Bayern's second of the season, the Bavarians still hold an eight-point lead over defending champions Leverkusen with nine games to play.

Leverkusen's woes were deepened with an injury to star midfielder Florian Wirtz, who limped off after a rough challenge having played just 14 second-half minutes.

With an eye on Tuesday's return leg in the Champions League last 16 against Leverkusen, Bayern coach Vincent Kompany named a heavily changed XI, including leaving striker Harry Kane on the bench.

Bayern midfielder Raphael Guerreiro's 14th minute goal, when the Portuguese hammered a loose ball into the net, had Bayern on track before Serge Gnabry missed a 21st-minute penalty.

With Kane, who has converted his past 30 penalties in a row, sitting on the bench, Gnabry stepped up but hit the ball against the post.

Guerreiro however scored again with a rare header on the 28-minute mark, just three minutes before Bochum's Jakov Medic pulled one back with an unstoppable rocket.

Bochum were given hope when Bayern's Joao Palhinha saw red for sinking his studs into Giorgos Masouras's ankle just before half-time.

Ibrahima Sissoko headed Bochum level six minutes into the second half and Matus Bero put the underdogs in front 71 minutes in, going the length of the field to knock in a Philipp Hofmann pass.

Bochum's surprise victory, their first win in Munich since 1991, took them three points clear of the automatic relegation placings.

"There are no excuses — we lost," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said, adding "even with 10 men, we should at least have the expectation of avoiding defeat."

Harry Kane told reporters Bayern "had a chance to go 11 points clear, (but) we can't dwell on it", adding the loss would put "fire in our belly" ahead of Tuesday's trip to Leverkusen.

Leverkusen were down after just seven minutes when Romano Schmid tapped in from close range.

Salah Fires Liverpool 16 Points Clear, Forest Beat Man City

LONDON (Dispatches) - Premier League leaders Liverpool needed two Mohamed Salah penalties to beat bottom-of-the-table Southampton 3-1, while Nottingham Forest took a giant step towards the Champions League with a 1-0 win over Manchester City.

Liverpool stretched their lead at the top to a massive 16 points, despite a lethargic first 45 minutes.

Fresh from a smash-and-grab 1-0 Champions League victory over Paris Saint-Germain, Liverpool boss Arne Slot made just three changes.

However, the Dutchman was forced into making three half-time alterations to kickstart the champions-elect.

"The manager was like going for us — but that's something you need sometimes. Because first half, the game was sloppy," said Salah.

Southampton have taken just nine points from 28 games all season, but stunned Anfield when Will Smallbone fired the visitors in front in first-half stoppage time.

Alisson Becker was Liverpool's hero at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday but the Brazilian and Virgil van Dijk got in each other's way to allow Smallbone to roll into an unguarded net.

Slot turned to Harvey Elliott, Alexis MacAllister and Andy Robertson at the break, and the changes had the desired effect with two goals in three minutes before the hour mark.

Darwin Nunez levelled with a sharp near-post finish from Luis Diaz's cross.



Nunez was then upended inside the area and Salah converted from the spot.

The Egyptian slotted home a second penalty two minutes from time to take his tally for the season to 32 goals.

Second-placed Arsenal have two games in hand on the leaders, the first of which comes away to Manchester United on Sunday.

But it appears a matter of when not if Liverpool will clinch just their second league title in 35 years.

Forest pulled four points clear of City in third thanks to Callum Hudson-Odoi's late winner at the City Ground.

The former Chelsea winger fired past Ederson on 83 minutes from Morgan Gibbs-White's pass to spark jubilant scenes of celebration as Forest beat the English champions for the first time since 1997.

Two-time European champions, Forest have not experienced the continent's top competition since 1980.

But they are closing in on the Champions League with a top-five finish almost certain to be enough thanks to the strong performance of English teams in Europe this season.

"We are not here to joke", Hudson-Odoi posted on social media. "Goal, MOTM (man-of-the-match), three points!"

City remain fourth and are looking over their shoulders after a ninth league defeat of the season.

Pep Guardiola's men are likely to be overtaken by Chelsea, when they host struggling Leicester.

Aston Villa closed to within two points of the top four as Ollie Watkins came back to haunt Brentford once more in a 1-0 win in west London.

Brentford goalkeeper Mark Flekken let the England striker's effort fly through his legs on 49 minutes as Watkins struck for the sixth time in six games against his former club.

Brighton boosted their own Champions League hopes courtesy of Joao Pedro's 98th-minute penalty to beat Fulham 2-1.

Inter Extend Lead at the Top With Comeback Win



MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan were given a real scare by bottom club Monza before coming back to win 3-2 at the San Siro, where an own goal allowed the hosts to extend their lead at the top of the Serie A standings.

Inter move to 61 points, four ahead of Napoli who host Fiorentina, while Monza remain rooted to the bottom of the table on 14 points, 10 from safety.

Monza had the first strike on goal when Keita Balde let fly from distance, his shot bouncing just wide of the target, but he would later find the net to celebrate his 30th birthday.

Inter preferred a more measured approach early on but began to turn the screw and Monza needed keeper Stefano Turati, and VAR, to keep Inter goalless.

Turati pulled off a fine save from Marko Arnautovic's header and then showed great reflexes to deny a Lautaro Martinez headed effort and although the forward netted the rebound, it was ruled out for handball.

Monza, with just two league wins all season, stunned the home crowd in the 32nd minute when a clever one-two with Dany Mota sent Samuele Birindelli through on goal and he coolly picked his spot.

Inter continued to press forward but Monza scored again after Mota passed to Balde who cut inside and curled a beautiful strike from the edge of the area into the far top corner.

That goal came one minute from the break but Monza were unable to retain their two-goal cushion until the interval.

In added time, Henrikh Mkhitaryan floated the ball into the box and Denzel Dumfries headed across into the six-yard box for Arnautovic to send a diving header past Turati.

Inter swarmed forward after the break and they drew level in the 64th minute when a headed clearance fell to Yann Bisseck who tapped the ball to Hakan Calhanoglu and he drove a powerful shot into the bottom corner.

Jokic Logs NBA's First 30-20-20 Game as Nuggets Win in OT

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Nikola Jokic produced 31 points, a career-high 22 assists and 21 rebounds as the host Denver Nuggets rallied after losing a 21-point lead and beat the Phoenix Suns 149-141 in overtime.

Jokic logged the first 30-20-20 stat line in NBA history. He notched his 29th triple-double of the season and 159th of his career with a rebound less than two minutes into the second half.

Aaron Gordon tied his career best with seven 3-pointers and finished with 27 points, Christian Braun scored 25 points and Jamal Murray contributed 19 points and eight assists for Denver.

The Nuggets have won two straight, and they took three of their



four meetings with Phoenix this season.

Jokic's bucket began a 7-0 Denver run to start overtime. Kevin Durant stopped the run with two free throws, but Jokic scored and made a free throw and later Braun had a dunk and layup as the Nuggets went ahead by as many as 11 in overtime.

The Suns put Denver on the line in the last minute, but Murray, Braun and Gordon combined to hit six free throws.

Devin Booker had 34 points and seven assists for Phoenix, while Durant posted 29 points and nine rebounds, and he hit a tying 3-pointer at the end of regulation.