

Iran Cited the U.S.'s Long History of Hostility Toward It, Ranging From Military Aggression to Sanctions and the Misuse of Its Role as Host of the UN, Sharply Condemning Washington's Hypocrisy in Presenting Itself as Concerned for the Iranian People

IRAN NEWS

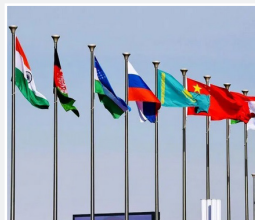
The Director General of Human rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Forouzandeh Vadiati in a Statement on Friday Strongly Condemned the Canadian Government's Imposition of So-Called "Human Rights" Sanctions on a Number of Iranian Citizens Based on Unfounded Allegations

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U.S.-Israeli Spy Network Neutralized During 12 Day War



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The senior spokesman for the Iranian Armed Forces says the enemy's extensive espionage network was dealt a severe blow during the 12-day Israeli-US aggression in June and largely dismantled, describing it as a major intelligence achievement.

Addressing an event in Tehran, Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi highlighted the US-Israeli miscalculations during the war, saying they relied on their espionage networks and direct US command, and believed the Iranian system of governance would collapse under the initial strikes.

However, he said the reality on the ground proved the national will of Iranians to be unshakable.

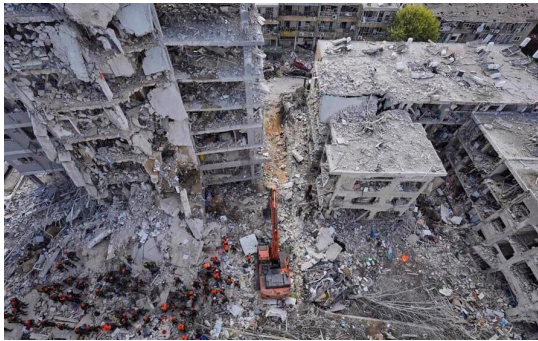
The spokesman said that during the war, NATO's full military capacity and its most advanced equipment were deployed as part of an all-out hybrid warfare strategy against Iran.

"The enemy entered the field with a wrong assessment," Shekarchi stated.

"Despite the martyrdom of commanders and initial damages, the command vacuum was quickly filled. Within hours of defense, Iran's continuous offensive began, increasing in operational power day by day and leaving the enemy in absolute confusion," he added.

According to the general, the enemy's inability to achieve its strategic goals, including regime change and the disintegration of Iran, led them to a point where they "begged" for an end to the war, ultimately resulting in a unilateral ceasefire declaration.

Iran's Intelligence Database on Israel Enabled Precise Strikes in June War



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran had a "complete intelligence database" on Israeli targets during the June aggression, which enabled the Armed Forces to carry out precise retaliatory strikes.

Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini, a spokesman for the IRGC, said on Wednesday that whenever the Zionist regime struck a target in the course of the illegal assault of June, Iran answered by hitting a building with the same purpose, noting that not a single missile went astray thanks to Iran's far-reaching intelligence.

"During the 12-day war, Iran's intelligence database on the Zionist regime was comprehensive, and this information dominance enabled the precise targeting by Iranian missiles," he added.

Naeini also said that Iran destroyed 47 Israeli strategic centers, several science and technology parks, and 2 power plants based on the information obtained from inside the Israeli-occupied lands.

"Around 80 percent of Iran's operations in the 12-day war relied on intelligence gathered in previous years; otherwise, such successes would not have been achieved."

Between June 13 and 24, Israel waged a terrorist act of aggression against Iran, killing at least 1,064 people and targeting the country's civilian infrastructure.

President Will Not Accept a Weak or Fragmented Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian said the country's problems are neither new nor limited to recent years, stressing that despite deep challenges, limited resources, and external pressures, his administration has clear plans to address them and will do so with public participation and expert support.

Speaking on Thursday, during a meeting with political activists in South Khorasan Province—his 16th provincial visit as part of the "National Consensus Government" tour—Pezeshkian said unity and reaching a shared national outlook take time and cannot be achieved overnight.

"Anyone who claims they can solve the country's problems quickly and better should step forward—we would even kiss their hand," he said. "But if they fail, they must be held accountable."

The president emphasized that provincial managers are now being selected from within their own regions and cultural contexts. He highlighted the appointment of Sunni Baluch, Kurdish, Arab, and female officials to provincial leadership positions, calling it unprecedented in Iran's administrative history.

He also noted that broader powers have been delegated to provincial governors to prevent centralized, top-down decision-making. Initiatives such as neighborhood-based, school-centered, and mosque-centered participation are being pursued to strengthen public involvement in governance.

"Change is not easy, but the path is being pursued firmly," he said.

Pezeshkian described public participation in decision-making as one of the core priorities of his administration. He cited progress in community-supported school construction and reiterated the government's commitment to justice in education, healthcare, and politics.

Acknowledging unfinished reforms, he said change takes time, particularly given limited financial resources. On water management, he said more than 80 full professors from leading Iranian universities are designing a national plan, with regional implementation involving governors, local officials, universities, and civil society organizations.

Asking for help, he stressed, does not mean the government lacks a plan. "No one can solve



problems alone," he said. "Those who claim they can fix everything overnight should come forward—we will give them authority."

Pezeshkian pointed to concrete improvements in energy management. When his government took office, diesel reserves were far below required levels, but they have since increased significantly. Solar energy capacity has expanded from 1,000 megawatts to over 3,000 megawatts, with 200 megawatts added weekly.

He also said gas flaring—costing Iran billions of dollars annually—has begun to be curbed, and power shortages have been reduced compared to worst-case projections. More than 7,000 schools are under construction nationwide, with 2,000 already opened before the academic year.

The president confirmed that the North-South railway project in South Khorasan will be completed despite financial constraints and highlighted new measures to combat smuggling through integrated national data systems.

Addressing inflation, Pezeshkian said no single policy can solve it quickly and invited anyone—even government critics—to help if they have real solutions.

He rejected the idea that relations with Europe or the West alone could resolve Iran's problems. Referring to past nuclear negotiations, he said Western powers ultimately demanded that Iran abandon enrichment, missile capabilities, and regional influence.

"They want a weak and fragmented Iran," he said. "But as an Iranian, I will not accept a weak or divided Iran. I want an Iran with power and dignity."

Pezeshkian stressed that building a strong Iran requires collective effort across all ethnicities, religions, genders, and beliefs, based solely on competence and expertise. He criticized empty slogans and warned against unqualified individuals offering simplistic solutions to complex economic challenges.

"Change happens gradually, not suddenly," he said. "Our progress is tangible compared to the past, but transformation takes time. Provinces must help build themselves—we will support them and grant the necessary authority."

The president concluded by calling for national solidarity, saying only through cooperation and realism can Iran overcome its long-standing challenges and move toward strength and stability.

Iran-Russia Partnership Has Entered New Phase With 3-Year Cooperation Roadmap

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says the strategic partnership between Iran and Russia has entered "a new, accelerated phase" following the signing of a three-year cooperation roadmap with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

Araqchi, speaking at a joint press conference in Moscow, confirmed that the newly signed document establishes the agenda for the two foreign ministries from 2026 to 2028, acting as a "roadmap for future three-year cooperation."

"Today, very close, precise, and detailed negotiations were held in all areas, including bilateral, regional, and international issues," he said.

The Iranian minister said the bilateral relations have witnessed remarkable expansion, particularly in the current year, gaining new momentum with the implementation of the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty between the two nations.

Araqchi underscored the high level of political ties, noting that over the past year and a half, during the current government term, the presidents of Iran and Russia have met five times. The most recent meeting was held on December 12 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, demonstrating the sustained high-level engagement, he said.

The Iranian minister said the relations are "significantly expanding" in the economic sector. He also noted substantial progress in key sectors such as energy, transport, and transit, specifically highlighting the strategic North-South Corridor project and the critical Rasht-Astara railway segment.

Bilateral trade is on an upward trajectory, with new avenues for growth actively being pursued, Araqchi said.

The joint economic commission, featuring 17 specialized working groups, is scheduled to convene in February, he added.

Araqchi also addressed Iran's nuclear position, emphasizing the nation's legal rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Iran, as a member committed to the NPT, adheres to all its commitments, but will not forgo its legal rights under the same treaty," he said.

He said the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including enrichment, is Iran's "undeniable right." Araqchi condemned the 12-day aggression by the US and Israel in June and thanked Russia for standing with Iran and condemning the illegal strikes.

"The attacks by the United States and the Zionist regime on Iran's nuclear facilities, although damaging some buildings and equipment, have managed to neither destroy the country's indigenous technology nor weaken the will of Iran."



Araqchi commented on the prospects for dialogue with Western countries, stating that the opposing side has "damaged diplomacy and the principle of negotiation through its actions."

"If they reform their approach and show genuine readiness for an equal, respectful, and mutually beneficial dialogue, Iran will reconsider the issue of negotiation," he said.

However, he warned, "It is clear that goals not achieved through pressure and military action will also not be imposed at the negotiation table."

On the international front, Araqchi confirmed a "clear convergence of views to confront the system of domination, bullying, and double standards of Western countries, especially the United States."

Iran and Russia share a common outlook in countering illegal sanctions and unilateral actions, leading to close cooperation within international organizations like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union, Araqchi said.

The Iranian minister underscored bilateral cooperation to counter unlawful US sanctions through economic collaboration, sharing experiences, and operational coordination.

He specifically mentioned the establishment of the Friends of the UN Charter group, comprising Iran, Russia, China, and other nations, saying Iran supports any international action to oppose the "system of domination, bullying, and thuggery of America."

Lavrov said at the press conference that Russia is in full solidarity with Iran on the issue of opposing unilateral enforcement measures.

"Speaking about the use of unilateral enforcement measures, we are in full solidarity with Iran in this regard with Iran and the whole number of other countries. We stand for setting up a group interested in countering such unlawfulness, and I believe this process will acquire more and more supporters."

"We agreed to consolidate members of the international community that share such approaches, and certainly, we will continue the specific efforts to neutralize the adverse impact of illegal sanctions on economies of both our countries."

On the talks surrounding Iran's nuclear program, Lavrov said Moscow and Tehran want to normalize the situation through diplomacy, aiming to exclude destructive scenarios.

"Both we and Iran want to stabilize the situation, normalize it, and categorically exclude any recurrence of forceful methods. Exclusively political and diplomatic solutions are what is needed in this situation."

He said Russia is not imposing its mediation efforts.

Hunger Riot: an "Overthrow Slogan"

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

The system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, relying on the Constitution and the participation of the people in various elections, has obtained its legitimacy from the public vote. Within the framework of this same law, mechanisms have been anticipated for criticism and improvement of performance at all levels; active public participation in elections, civil institutions, and the legally sanctioned space for expression are examples of this.

Any change must take place within the framework of the laws and through legal channels. The approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized reform and improvement from within the structure.

However, the "opponents of the Supreme Leader (Velayat-e Faqih)" (the reformist or moderate factions inside the system) have for some time felt that their destructive role in issues such as the JCPOA or the snapback mechanism has been exposed, and they no longer envision a political future for themselves within the existing framework and inside the system. They define the path to salvation as turning toward the discourse of, or forming alliances with, "overthrowist" currents (outside the system) by proposing the incitement of the people against the system. They have lost their hope for change from within, in a way that aligns with their own temperament. A feeling of despair about the future and bearing costs (for example, exposure through legal action taken against them) without having a clear outlook can increase the inclination toward more radical approaches—something that is, of course, a well-known pattern in political science.

The duality between being "opposed to the Supreme Leader" and "overthrow" has a very ambiguous boundary between the two in practice. Many critical currents within the system accept the foundations of the system (the Islamic Republic centered on the Guardianship of the Jurist), but oppose specific policies or the ruling individual. Moving toward overthrow for them means negating their own identity and all their past achievements, and it entails extremely high risk and total destruction.

Existing political parties and currents, even if they are far from power, usually have structural interests (economic, bureaucratic, social) in the continuation of the system, and resorting to an overthrow stance completely destroys these interests. This group believes that overthrow is not a slogan; it is a high-risk strategy with an unknown ending. Many prefer to remain on the margins of the system's structure rather than fall into the arms of expatriate alternatives or armed groups that may have no affinity with them at all.

The possibility of such an alliance is closely monitored by security institutions and is not easily achievable.

Although existing evidence shows that some of them are sitting on the branch and sawing off its base beneath themselves, and this very method has pushed the intra-party current toward a discourse of fragmentation. In reality, with the treacherous events that have occurred, part of these currents may be completely removed from the political scene or turned into small, passive groups. At the same time, they may try to redefine their positions—for example, aligning their criticisms more closely with the system's discourse, or even resorting to self-denial and withdrawal from the political scene, choosing silence until conditions change in their favor. In the second scenario of fragmentation, it is possible that part of the social base and the youth of these currents, becoming disappointed with party leadership, may themselves be drawn toward more radical protests; but this does not necessarily mean an organized alliance with overthrowists.

However, wishing for, hoping for, promoting, and perhaps even creating motivation for instigating hunger riots is part of their strategy, through which they seek to unite the front of opponents against the leadership and the very principle of the Guardianship of the Jurist.

All measures to neutralize this strategy involve ensuring the necessities of life for the lower economic deciles, accompanied by public awareness-raising. What is seen on the scene of activities by some members of parliament is that they are trying to take the lead in these measures through the instrument of the Seventh Development Plan Law.

Israeli Violations Against Syria Pose Direct Threat to Regional Security



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has warned that Israel's occupation of Syrian territory and acts of aggression against the Arab country endanger peace and security in West Asia.

Speaking at an UN Security Council meeting on Syria on Thursday, Amir Sa'ed Iravani said the Israeli regime has, over the past year, intensified its unlawful use of force, expanded its military footprint, and sought to consolidate its occupation of Syrian land.

IRAN NEWS

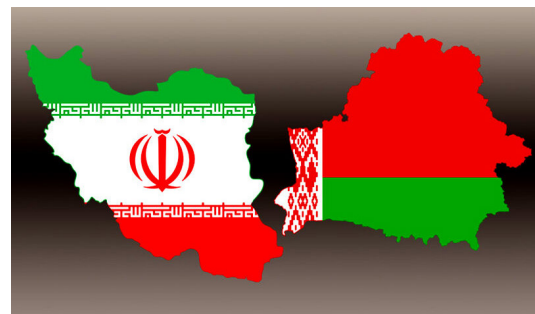


Pakistan Reaffirms Commitment to Expanding Ties With Iran

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar has emphasized his country's commitment to expanding comprehensive cooperation with Iran, particularly in the economic sector. According to a statement released Wednesday by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson's office, a number of senior Pakistani officials held a special meeting on relations with Iran.

The Islamabad meeting, chaired by Senator Ishaq Dar, was attended by the minister of petroleum, the prime minister's special assistant, and senior officials from the ministries of interior and foreign affairs, as well as the Federal Board of Revenue.

Belarusian Envoy Stresses Expansion of Bilateral Industrial Cooperation With Iran



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Ambassador of Belarus to Iran has emphasized the need to expand bilateral industrial cooperation between the two countries, highlighting the important role of the private sector in advancing joint industrial and technological projects.

A joint meeting between the Iranian Association of Equipment Manufacturers (ASTNA) and the Ambassador of Belarus to Iran was held on Wednesday, Azar 26, 1404 (December 17, 2025), at the headquarters of the association in Tehran.

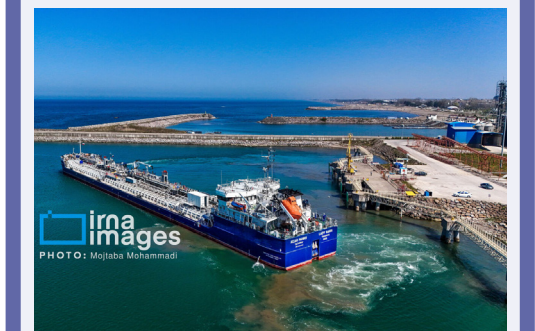
According to IRNA, citing the Iranian Association of Oil Industry Equipment Manufacturers, the meeting was attended by Dmitry Koltsov, Ambassador of Belarus to Iran, along with his accompanying delegation. The session was hosted by Ehsan Saghaei, Chairman of the Board of Directors of ASTNA, and was held in the presence of board members and the association's secretary.

During the meeting, both sides introduced the industrial, technical, and technological capacities and capabilities of their respective countries and exchanged views on various areas of potential cooperation. Key topics discussed included the equipment needs of different industrial sectors, opportunities for the transfer of technical knowledge and technology, and ways to expand industrial and commercial interactions between Iran and Belarus.

Participants also discussed the possibility of establishing a joint cooperation office aimed at strengthening structured communications between the two sides. The proposed office would seek to facilitate industrial interactions, streamline cooperation mechanisms, and provide the necessary platform for the presence and activities of ASTNA member companies in the Belarusian market. This initiative was presented as a practical step toward institutionalizing bilateral cooperation and supporting Iranian companies interested in operating or investing in Belarus.

In his remarks, the Belarusian ambassador underscored his country's strong interest in expanding cooperation with Iran's private sector. He stressed Belarus's readiness to support joint industrial and technological projects and expressed hope that closer engagement between companies and industry associations in both countries would lead to sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes. The ambassador also highlighted Belarus's experience and capabilities in industrial manufacturing and technology development, noting that these strengths could complement Iran's industrial capacities.

Trade Balance with Eurasian Agreement Up 18%



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Deputy for the Development of International Businesses at Iran's Trade Development Organization announced that the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union—under which 87 percent of goods are exported with zero tariffs—has created a valuable opportunity to expand the country's trade and improve its trade balance. As a result, Iran's trade balance has increased by 18 percent so far this year compared with the same period last year.

Amir Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari said on Wednesday afternoon during a one-day visit to Lahijan, speaking at a commodity roundtable on tea with industry stakeholders, that Iran's approach to exporting tea and peanuts has so far been largely traditional.

He also announced that a Eurasia trade exhibition will be held in Bahman this year, adding that producers and traders from Gilan Province can benefit from the exhibition, which will host more than 800 foreign delegations from member states of the Eurasian Union.

Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari noted that 83 commodity-specific working groups have been established within the Trade Development Organization of Iran. He said that while many countries require the repatriation of export revenues, Iran's foreign exchange pricing policy has so far been misguided, and this approach has failed to ensure stability in the monetary base and exchange rates.

The deputy head of the organization emphasized that the Trade Development Organization views foreign currency as a tool for expanding trade exchanges, whereas the Central Bank's approach differs, using foreign currency primarily to strengthen the monetary base and national currency value. He said this divergence in policy has created significant difficulties for economic actors.

Iran Charts a Roadmap to India's Billion-Dollar Market

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian trade officials and private-sector representatives have underscored the importance of branding, market knowledge, and strategic planning as key pillars for Iran's entry into India's vast and fast-growing market, during the second conference on "Understanding the Market and Trade Opportunities with India." The event was hosted by the Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and focused on analyzing Iran-India economic relations, identifying trade and investment opportunities for 2026, and introducing major Indian trade exhibitions, including the Gujarat Trade Fair and petrochemical and chemical industry exhibitions.



India is one of Iran's largest customers in the petrochemical sector, although logistical and organizational challenges sometimes complicate Iran's participation in Indian trade events, such as hosting national pavilions.

Bamiri explained that Iran's exports to India are still heavily concentrated in traditional agricultural products, including pistachios, almonds, apples, kiwis, and dates. While these products have established demand, he stressed the need to diversify exports by introducing additional agricultural and processed goods, such as confectionery, sweets, chocolates, and other fruits.

"This diversification is only possible through a stronger and more visible presence at Indian exhibitions," he said, adding that trade fairs provide a crucial platform for introducing new products and building trust with Indian buyers.

He also called for reforms in Iran's trade policies to reduce reliance on traditional export models. India, he noted, consists of 31 states, some with populations exceeding 200 million people. "One Indian state alone can represent a market larger than many countries," Bamiri said. "Yet we have little to no presence there because we do not participate actively in regional trade events or fully understand local market dynamics."

Addressing bilateral challenges, Sinha, India's Commercial Counselor in Iran, expressed readiness to help resolve existing trade barriers between the two countries. He said discussions and correspondence are underway to address export-related obstacles, and the Indian Embassy is prepared to assist in improving trade, export, and import processes.

He noted that Iranian exports to India include nuts and fruits such as pistachios, almonds, kiwis, and apples, while pharmaceutical products are among the key goods imported by Iran from India. Highlighting India's strong trade ties with Europe and other regions, he expressed hope that these connections could also facilitate greater Iranian access to global markets.

The importance of structured planning for participation in international trade events was emphasized by Ali Rajabzadeh, organizer of the India Trade Opportunities Exhibition and Conference. He said Iran has increasingly turned its attention toward emerging markets in recent years, with India ranking as the world's fourth-largest economy.

"Despite India's economic size, Iran's share of this market is extremely small," Rajabzadeh said. He noted that in many countries, the continuity and growth of trade exhibitions are clear indicators of strong commercial relations. According to international trade experts, exhibitions are among the most effective tools for expanding cross-border commerce.

Rajabzadeh stressed that Iran must move beyond traditional trade practices. "An exhibition is an event, but benefiting from it is a process," he said. "This process requires planning before, during, and after participation." He added that post-event follow-up, network marketing, and systematic market-building are essential for turning exhibitions into tangible trade outcomes.

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Damaged Airports Restored Within 10 Days Following Zionist Regime Aggression

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development has announced a strong performance by the transportation sector during the recent 12-day war, reporting major growth across road, rail, and port operations despite security threats and airspace restrictions.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the renewal of allegiance by the country's transportation community to the ideals of Imam Khomeini (RA) at the Jamaran Hosseiniyeh, Farzaneh Sadegh said Iran recorded a 50 percent increase in road transport activity, a 15 percent rise in rail performance, and a 60 percent increase in the unloading of essential goods at ports during the conflict.

According to IRNA, the minister thanked Hojjat al-Islam Seyyed Hassan Khomeini for hosting the event and described the gathering as a symbolic meeting of a small segment of the nation's vast transportation workforce. "Today, only a drop from the great ocean of heroes in the transportation sector has gathered here," she said.

Sadegh recalled the historical significance of Jamaran, noting that during the eight-year imposed war, martyrs from road, rail, maritime, and aviation sectors—including drivers, pilots, road builders, and maintenance workers—pledged allegiance at this very location before heading to the front lines. Their families, she added, later reaffirmed that pledge in the same Hosseiniyeh.

Referring to Transportation Week, observed from 26 Azar to 1 Dey, the minister said the occasion commemorates a historic directive by the late Imam Khomeini that resulted in the rapid clearance of Iran's ports within less than a week through the collective efforts of drivers and transport activists.



security threats and drone sightings. "Even with Iran's airspace closed and under strict management, damaged airports were rebuilt in less than 10 days," she stated.

She added that following the restoration of airport infrastructure, operations resumed for the return of pilgrims and for Arbaceen Hosseini travel. According to the minister, pilgrims visiting the holy shrines reported higher levels of satisfaction compared to previous years.

Sadegh expressed appreciation for bus operators' unions, truck drivers across multiple specialties—including refrigerated, tanker, tractor, and trailer operators—as well as transport companies, terminals, roadside service providers, and logistics workers. She also praised rail sector employees, maintenance crews, train operators, and port and shipping workers, noting that those present at the ceremony represented only a small fraction of this extensive workforce.

Highlighting efforts in the aviation sector during the 1404 Hajj Tamattu, she said that despite flight limitations, a combination of road and rail transport was used to move pilgrims efficiently, with personnel working tirelessly to ensure continuity.

The minister stressed that these achievements were realized despite shortages and outstanding debts to contractors, workers, and engineers. "Without regard for delayed payments, they remained fully committed, and these impressive figures are the result of their selfless dedication," she said.

Sadegh also pointed to the role of road maintenance workers during recent natural disasters. Following red alerts issued by the Meteorological Organization for heavy rainfall in four southern provinces, road crews played a critical role in managing floods, snow, and icy conditions.

She concluded by saying that the performance of the transportation sector reflects only "a small glimpse of the greatness and sacrifice" of those who consistently support the Iranian people and the Islamic Republic in the most challenging circumstances.

Goods Transit Reaches 13.5m Tons Since Beginning of the Year



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A review of statistics on the foreign transit of goods through the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran shows that the volume of transit has reached 13.5 million tons during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration indicate that during the first eight months of the year (Farvardin to Aban 1404, corresponding to March–November 2025), Iran's non-oil exports amounted to 105.231 million tons, with a total value of approximately \$37 billion (\$36.997 billion). Compared with the same period last year, non-oil exports increased by 1.17 percent in terms of weight, while their dollar value declined by 3.48 percent.

Imports during the same eight-month period reached 25.823 million tons of goods, valued at \$39.54 billion. Although imports recorded a 3.03 percent increase in tonnage compared with the corresponding period of the previous year, their value declined by \$6.59 billion, representing a decrease of 14.29 percent. In the first eight months of the previous year (1403), Iran's imports had exceeded \$46.13 billion, highlighting a notable contraction in import value this year despite higher volumes.

Statistics show that during the first eight months of 1404, China was Iran's largest export destination, accounting for exports worth more than \$9.255 billion and holding a 25.02 percent share of the country's total export value. Iraq ranked second with \$6.719 billion and an 18.16 percent share, followed by the United Arab Emirates with \$5.216 billion (14.10 percent), Turkey with \$4.393 billion (11.87 percent), and Afghanistan with \$1.66 billion, representing 4.49 percent of Iran's total export value.

ICCIMA Expresses Readiness to Support Export Development of Knowledge-Based Companies



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has announced the Chamber's readiness to support knowledge-based companies in identifying target markets and expanding exports, stressing that the commercialization of science is one of the key drivers of national development.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 9th Young Thinkers and Scientists Festival, held at the University of Tehran, Samad Hassanzadeh emphasized the vital role of universities and scientific institutions in fostering hope and addressing societal challenges. He stated that scientific achievements should go beyond academic boundaries and contribute directly to solving real problems faced by society. According to him, the ultimate expectation is that research outcomes and scientific innovations will lead to tangible improvements in public welfare.

Hassanzadeh noted that the private sector firmly believes that scientific thinking and evidence-based approaches must guide executive management and national decision-making processes. Referring to remarks by Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, he said that there has been consistent emphasis on the country's need to draw upon the expertise of academic elites and intellectuals to address national challenges through scientific and rational solutions.

Highlighting the importance of social responsibility within the private sector, the President of ICCIMA said that elites, scholars, and university communities are among the most important target groups for private-sector engagement. In this context, empowering young people and academic talents has been identified as a strategic priority in the long-term plans of both the Board of Directors and the Assembly of Representatives of the Iran Chamber of Commerce.

UN Elects Former Iraqi President to Lead UNHCR

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations General Assembly on Thursday approved former Iraqi President Barham Salih as the next head of the UN refugee agency, the first from the Middle East since the late 1970s. The 193-member body elected the 65-year-old by consensus.

The 193-member world body elected the 65-year-old Kurdish politician as the UN high commissioner for refugees by consensus and a bang of the gavel by Assembly President Annalena Baerbock. Diplomats in the assembly chamber burst into applause as Salih's election became official.



Japan Hikes Interest Rates to 30-Year-High



TOKYO (Dispatches) - The Bank of Japan hiked interest rates to a 30-year high of 0.75 percent on Friday, the first increase since January, as it said the economy had shown signs of improvement.

The unanimous vote to lift the main borrowing rate from 0.5 percent came hours after official data showed the country's core inflation rate held steady in November but still well above policymakers' target.

The yen weakened slightly against the dollar after the widely expected announcement, which puts rates at their highest since 1995.

"Japan's economy has recovered moderately," bank officials wrote in a report explaining the decision. "While uncertainties remain regarding the US economy and the impact of trade policy in each jurisdiction, these uncertainties have declined."

Yields on Japanese government bonds have risen in recent weeks on worries about Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's budget discipline, while the yen has weakened.

The core consumer price index -- which excludes volatile fresh food -- came in at three percent in November, the same rate as the previous month and in line with expectations. However, it is well above the BoJ's two percent goal, as it has been for some time.

Takaichi, who formally took power in October, has made fighting inflation a major priority.

China Urges U.S. to Immediately Stop Arming Taiwan



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China told the United States on Thursday to "immediately stop" arming Taiwan after Taipei said Washington had authorized a \$11 billion weapons package to the island. Approved by the State Department but awaiting congressional approval, the sale would take effect in about a month, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry.

"China urges the United States to abide by the one-China principle ... and immediately stop the dangerous actions of arming Taiwan," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a press conference.

Washington approved \$11 billion-worth of arms to Taiwan on Thursday, announcing one of the largest weapons packages for Taipei as it seeks to deter a potential Chinese invasion.

While Washington is traditionally Taiwan's biggest arms supplier, remarks by US President Donald Trump raised doubts about his willingness to defend the democratic island.

Taiwan has ramped up its defence spending in the past decade as China has intensified military pressure, but Trump's administration has pushed the island to do more to protect itself.

The arms sale announced on Thursday, which still needs US congressional approval, would be the second since Trump returned to office in January, after the \$330 million sale of parts and components in November.

EU Leaders Agree Joint Borrowing to Fund Ukraine

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - European Union leaders decided to borrow cash to fund Ukraine's defense against Russia for the next two years rather than use frozen Russian assets, sidestepping divisions over an unprecedented plan to finance Kyiv with Russian sovereign cash.

"Today we approved a decision to provide 90 billion euros to Ukraine," EU summit chairman Antonio Costa told a news conference early on Friday morning after hours of talks among the leaders in Brussels. "As a matter of urgency, we will provide a loan backed by the European Union budget."

The leaders also gave the European Commission a mandate to keep working on a so-called reparations loan based on Russian immobilized assets but that option proved unworkable for now, above all due to resistance from Belgium, where the bulk of the assets is held.

The idea of EU borrowing initially seemed unworkable as it requires unanimity and Hungary's Russia-friendly Prime Minister Viktor Orban had opposed it. But Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic agreed to let the scheme go ahead as long as it did not impact them financially.

The EU leaders said Russian assets, totalling 210 billion euros in the EU, will remain frozen until Moscow pays war reparations to Ukraine. If Moscow ever takes such a step, Ukraine could then use the money to pay back the loan.

"This is good news for Ukraine and bad news for Russia and this was our intention," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said.

The stakes for finding money for Kyiv were high because without the EU's financial help, Ukraine would run out of money in the second quarter of next year and most likely lose the war to Russia, which the EU fears would bring closer the threat of Russian aggression against the bloc.

The decision follows hours of discussions among leaders on the technical details of an unprecedented loan based on the



said.

Several EU leaders arriving at the summit said it was imperative they find a solution to keep Ukraine financed and fighting for the next two years. They were also keen to show European countries' strength and resolve after U.S. President Donald Trump last week called them "weak".

"We just can't afford to fail," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who took part in the summit, urged the bloc to agree to use the Russian assets to provide the funds he said would allow Ukraine to keep fighting.

"The decision now on the table -- the decision to fully use Russian assets to defend against Russian aggression -- is one of the clearest and most morally justified decisions that could ever be made," he said.

frozen Russian assets, which turned out to be too complex or politically demanding to resolve at this stage.

The main difficulty was providing Belgium, where 185 billion euros of the total Russian assets in Europe are held, with sufficient guarantees against financial and legal risks from potential Russian retaliation for the release of the money to Ukraine.

"There were so many questions on the Reparations Loan, we had to go to Plan B. Rationality has prevailed," Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever told a news conference. "The EU has avoided chaos and division and remained united," he said.

With public finances across the EU already strained by high debt levels, the European Commission had proposed using the Russian assets for a loan to Kyiv or joint borrowing against the EU budget.

Using the latter option allowed Orban to claim a diplomatic victory.

"Orban got what he wanted: no reparation loan. And EU action without participation of Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia," one EU diplomat

Venezuela Not Intimidated by Trump Oil Blockade Threat

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela struck a defiant note, insisting its crude oil exports were not impacted by US President Donald Trump's announcement of a potentially crippling blockade.

Trump's declaration on Tuesday marked a new escalation in his months-long campaign of military and economic pressure on Venezuela's authoritarian leftist President Nicolas Maduro.

Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves, shrugged off the threat of more pain, insisting it was proceeding with business as usual.

"Export operations for crude and byproducts continue normally. Oil tankers linked to PDVSA operations continue to sail with full security," state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) said.

Trump said Tuesday he was imposing "A TOTAL AND COMPLETE BLOCKADE OF ALL SANCTIONED OIL TANKERS going into, and out of, Venezuela."

Referring to the heavy US military presence in the Caribbean -- including the world's largest aircraft carrier -- he warned "Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America."

Yesterday, he reiterated that U.S. forces would not "let anybody go in...that shouldn't be going through," and accused Venezuela once again of taking "all of our oil."

"They took all of our energy rights, they took all of our oil, from not that long ago, and we want it back," he said, apparently referring to the nationalization of Venezuela's oil industry.

Maduro held telephone talks with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to discuss what he called the "escalation of threats" from Washington and their "implications for regional peace."

Guterres urged both sides to "exert restraint and de-escalate tensions to



preserve regional stability."

Venezuela's economy, which has been in freefall over the last decade of increasingly hardline rule by Maduro, relies heavily on petroleum exports.

Trump's campaign appears aimed at undermining domestic support for Maduro, but the Venezuelan military said yesterday it was "not intimidated" by the threats.

The foreign minister of China, the main market for Venezuelan oil, defended Caracas in a phone call with his Venezuelan counterpart Yvan Gil. "China opposes all unilateral bullying and supports all countries in

defending their sovereignty and national dignity," he said.

Last week's seizure of the M/T Skipper, in a dramatic raid involving US personnel rappelling from a helicopter, marked a shift in Trump's offensive against Maduro.

In August, the US leader ordered the biggest military deployment in the Caribbean Sea since the 1989 US invasion of Panama -- purportedly to combat drug trafficking, but taking particular aim at Venezuela, a minnow in the global drug trade.

US strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific have left at least 99 people dead, with the latest strike yesterday claiming four more lives.

Caracas believes that the anti-narcotics operations are a cover for a bid to topple Maduro and steal Venezuelan oil.

The escalating tensions have raised fears of a potential US intervention to dislodge Maduro.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum waded into the dispute yesterday, declaring that the United Nations was "nowhere to be seen" and asked that it step up to "prevent any bloodshed."

The US blockade threatens major pain for Venezuela's crumbling economy.

Venezuela has been under a US oil embargo since 2019, forcing it to sell its production on the black market at significantly lower prices, primarily to Asian countries.

The country produces one million barrels of oil per day, down from more than three million in the early 2000s.

Capital Economics analysts predicted that the blockade "would cut off a key lifeline for Venezuela's economy" in the short term.

"The medium-term impact will hinge largely on how tensions with the US evolve -- and what the US administration's goals are in Venezuela."

Honduras Begins Partial Vote Recount in Trump-Dominated Election

TEGUCIGALPA (Dispatches)- Electoral authorities in Honduras on Thursday began a partial recount of ballots cast in November 30 presidential elections, in which a candidate backed by Donald Trump holds a slim lead.

The Central American country has not yet certified results from the election in which the US president backed Nasry Asfura, a 67-year-old right-wing businessman -- and threatened to cut aid to Honduras if he lost.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) announced a recount of some 2,800 tally sheets, representing nearly half a million votes, for "inconsistencies."

But the recount was delayed due to allegations of fraud by Asfura's rivals, which were dismissed by election observers from the Americas and Europe.

"In the presence of national and international observers, the special recount begins," CNE President Ana Paola Hall wrote Thursday on X.

Asfura, who represents the National Party, leads the count by 1.3 percentage points, or around 43,000 votes.

His closest rival is conservative television presenter Salvador Nasralla of the Liberal Party.

Rixi Moncada, a lawyer from the leftist ruling Libre Party, trails far behind



in third.

The CNE has until December 30 to announce the winner.

The head of the Honduran military, Hector Valerio, said Thursday that he too would "firmly" respect the official election outcome.

His assurances were seen as key, given the country's long history of coups.

In the most recent one in 2009, outgoing President Xiomara Castro's husband, ex-president Manuel Zelaya, was deposed by the military with the support of the political right.

Trump endorsed Asfura to "work together to fight the Narcocommunist" and has warned "there will be hell to pay" if his lead is overturned in the count.

The more-than-two-week wait for results has caused tensions.

Thousands of supporters of the ruling party staged a demonstration Wednesday in the capital Tegucigalpa to protest what they consider "fraud" in the vote.

A soldier was injured during the demonstration.

The day before, at least eight people were injured when police broke up a similar protest.



Safonov the Shootout Hero as PSG Sink Flamengo to Win Intercontinental Cup

AL RAYYAN (Dispatches) - Paris St Germain goalkeeper Matvey Safonov saved four penalties in a dramatic shootout to hand the French champions the Intercontinental Cup title after a hard-fought 1-1 draw with Flamengo in the final on Wednesday.

The Russian goalkeeper was a model of composure to deny four Flamengo penalty-takers as PSG secured a 2-1 victory in the shootout at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium.

It was PSG's sixth title in 2025, with their maiden Intercontinental Cup added to a trophy haul from a golden calendar year that already included Ligue 1, the French Cup, the Trophy of Champions, the Champions League and the European Super Cup.

Luis Enrique's team had taken the lead through Khvicha Kvaratskhelia in the first half, only for Jorginho to level for the Brazilian side with a penalty shortly after the hour.

Flamengo, who were gunning for a third major title this year after winning the Brazilian title and the Supercopa do Brazil, proved a tough nut to crack, once again showing the quality of South American football in the wake of the Club World Cup earlier this year.

"We can be proud of ourselves, we played a great match against a tough opponent," said PSG midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery.

"Now we have to continue like this because the toughest part of the season is still ahead of us."

Both teams traded early chances in an open first half, with PSG initially thinking they had taken the lead when Fabian Ruiz finished into an empty net after a poor clearance by Agustín Rossi.

The goal was overturned following a VAR review, the referee ruling the ball had gone out of play in the

buildup.

Flamengo responded by stepping up their pressing and began to unsettle the PSG back line, forcing Safonov into action when Bruno Henrique's shot was blocked and Erick Pulgar followed up with a long-range effort that the goalkeeper saved.

PSG were then dealt a blow on the half-hour when Lee Kang-in, struggling with a left-thigh injury, was forced to leave the pitch.

The breakthrough came against the run of play in the 38th minute as PSG struck on the counter. Senny Mayulu's diagonal pass released Desire Doue down the right and his low cross was only half-cleared by Rossi, allowing Kvaratskhelia to convert from close range with his left foot.

Flamengo nearly levelled before the interval when Pulgar met Giorgian de Arrascaeta's corner at the far post but headed narrowly wide, leaving PSG to reach the break holding a slender lead.

PSG appeared in control in the second half, until Marquinhos tripped De Arrascaeta in the box and Jorginho sent Safonov the wrong way with the resulting penalty to equalise in the 62nd minute.

Joao Neves and Doue had chances as PSG pushed for a second but Flamengo held firm and Luis Enrique replaced Doue with Ousmane Dembele.

Flamengo, however, threatened on the break and the French side were forced to defend desperately five minutes from time.

PSG had opportunities in quick succession through Neves, Dembele and Barcola in the first half of extra time but Flamengo were physically up to the task.

Man City Reach League Cup Semis, Late Newcastle Goal Downs Fulham

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester City eased into the semi-finals of the League Cup with a 2-0 home win over Brentford on Wednesday, and will meet holders Newcastle United who needed an added-time Lewis Miley goal to beat Fulham 2-1 at St James' Park.

Chelsea, who won 3-1 at Cardiff City on Tuesday, will face either Arsenal or Crystal Palace, who contest the last quarter-final next Tuesday, in the other two-legged semi-final.

Pep Guardiola made seven changes from the City side which won 3-0 at Crystal Palace on Sunday but the hosts had little trouble seeing off Brentford who offered very little going forward.

After a slow start under relentless rain, City began to create opportunities, Rayan Cherki dragging a shot wide and having another attempt parried away while Oscar Bobb wasted a decent chance after weaving his way into the area.

His tame effort was straight at the keeper and Bobb went off injured in the 19th minute to be replaced by Phil Foden, who himself made way near the end to allow 19-year-old Charlie Gray to come on and make his senior debut for City.



Brentford's Mathias Jensen forced City keeper James Trafford into a save with a free kick, the only time they really threatened in the first half and in the 32nd minute Cherki opened the scoring for the hosts.

A City corner was headed away but the clearance fell outside the area to Cherki, who chested the ball down before shifting it on to his right foot and letting fly with an unstoppable shot into the far top corner.

Cherki pulled out the Erling Haaland robot celebration, and then went to shake hands with the smiling City striker rested on the bench by Guardiola.

City wrapped up the win in the 67th minute when Savinho took the ball into the area and his shot took a wicked deflection off Kristoffer Ajer which sent the ball looping over the keeper.

Newcastle took the lead in the 10th minute when Fulham keeper Benjamin Lecomte pushed a low cross from Jacob Murphy into the path of Yoane Wissa, who marked his first start for the club by slotting home from close range.

NFL's Dallas Cowboys Top Forbes' Most Valuable Teams List



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The Dallas Cowboys retained their status as the world's most valuable sports team, according to the list published by Forbes on Thursday that was dominated by National Football League clubs.

The NFL's Cowboys, who unseated Spanish soccer club Real Madrid for top spot on the list in 2016, were valued at \$13 billion, a 29% jump compared to last year, Forbes said.

The National Basketball Association's Golden State Warriors (\$11 billion), NFL's Los Angeles Rams (\$10.5 billion) and New York Giants (\$10.1 billion), and NBA's Los Angeles Lakers (\$10 billion) rounded out the top five.

Forbes said 30 of the NFL's 32 teams were on its top-50 list which also included 12 NBA clubs and two each from Major League Baseball, Formula One, LaLiga and the Premier League.

The four soccer clubs on the ranking -- Real Madrid, Manchester United, Barcelona and Liverpool -- were down from seven in each of the past two years as England's Manchester City, Germany's Bayern Munich and France's Paris St Germain dropped off the list.

The New York Yankees (\$8.2 billion) led the way for MLB teams and were in a share of 10th on the list, while Real Madrid (\$6.75 billion) were the most valuable soccer club and ranked 20th.

Ferrari (\$6.5 billion) were the top Formula One team on the list and in a share of 26th place.

According to Forbes, the 50 top teams are worth more than \$353 billion, or an average of \$7.1 billion each, which is up 22% from 2024 and more than double the mark from four years ago.

Thunder Bounce Back From Rare Loss With 122-101 Win Over Clippers



OKLAHOMA CITY (Dispatches) - Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points before resting in the fourth quarter, and the Oklahoma City Thunder bounced back from a rare loss to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 122-101.

The Thunder lost to the San Antonio Spurs last Saturday for just their second defeat of the season, ending their team-record, 16-game win streak. They recovered on Thursday after some much-needed rest and improved to 25-2 overall and 13-0 at home.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 13 of 24 shots and had seven rebounds and six assists. It was his 98th consecutive game with at least 20 points, adding to the second-longest streak in NBA history.

Chet Holmgren scored 22 points and Jalen Williams added 20 for Oklahoma City.

James Harden, who leads the Clippers with 26 points per game, sat out with a bruised left calf. Without its star point guard, Los Angeles committed 28 turnovers, leading to 39 Oklahoma City points. Cason Wallace had five of Oklahoma City's 18 steals.

Oklahoma City committed just nine turnovers.

Kawhi Leonard scored 22 points and John Collins added 20 for the Clippers, have lost five straight and 10 of 11.

The Clippers led for most of the first quarter and the early part of the second before the Thunder found their rhythm. Holmgren scored 18 points on 7-for-10 shooting in the first half to help the Thunder take a 64-55 lead at the break.

Oklahoma City took control for good in the third quarter. Gilgeous-Alexander scored 19 points in the period to give the Thunder a 103-83 lead heading into the fourth. Oklahoma City shot 55.6% from the field in the period while outscoring the Clippers 39-28.

Meanwhile Jaren Jackson Jr. had 28 points and 12 rebounds to lead a balanced scoring attack and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 116-110.

Odermatt Takes Foggy Downhill for 50th World Cup Win

VAL GARDENA (Dispatches) - Marco Odermatt secured his 50th World Cup win when he took a fog-hit men's downhill at Val Gardena, Italy on Thursday.

The Swiss skier equals Italian Alberto Tomba's World Cup tally. The pair are level fourth in the all-time men's list behind Ingemar Stenmark (86), Marcel Hirscher (67) and Hermann Maier (54).

Mikaela Shiffrin holds the overall record with 105 World Cup wins.

"It's amazing to be on the same number as Alberto now," Odermatt said.

"And doing it here in Italy makes it even more special," he added.

The start of the competition was delayed for an hour and half and there was a further fog interruption after just 22 of the 67 competitors had completed their runs.



It took nearly four hours to complete the marathon event.

By that stage the 28-year-old, who won here last year, had already set the quickest time on a Saslong course that had been shortened to the super-G start gate due to tricky, warm conditions and was waiting for confirmation that he had equalled Tomba's tally.

Odermatt's victory comes less than two months from the start of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics on February 6.

"It was a long day, and a tough one too," said Odermatt.

"We had to be patient and keep our nerves in check."

"Everything was different to the training... (which) was pretty cold and aggressive. Now it's wet and different conditions."

"But my plan stayed the same, from all the lines. I could adapt very good and I'm super happy with the victory today."