

The Director of Iran's Interests Section in Washington, Abolfazl Mehrabadi, Says Around 50 Iranian Prisoners Have Left the United States for Their Home Country Following the Strict Immigration Policies of President Donald Trump's Administration

IRAN NEWS

The Chief Justice of Iran's Alborz Province Says a Court Has Begun Hearings Into the Case of a Dual Citizen Arrested During the Israeli-U.S. Aggression of June Against the Country on Charges of Spying for the Tel Aviv Regime

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Gov't Strategy Focuses on Attracting Investment From Iranians Abroad



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Aref, announced on Monday that the administration's top priority is creating favorable conditions for investment by Iranians living abroad. Speaking at the First Conference on Ranking Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Aref emphasized that the government will ensure investors' capital is fully protected and that they can benefit from returns in any manner they choose, in accordance with existing laws.

Aref highlighted the pivotal role of SMEs in Iran's industrial development, describing them as essential building blocks for larger enterprises. "This year is the year of investment for production," he said, noting that investment poses a key challenge for the country, particularly within the small and medium enterprise sector. The conference, he added, is aimed at implementing the government's economic priorities for the year.

The Vice President outlined the government's development strategy for the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade (MoMT), which focuses on several key pillars: expanding value chains, investing in emerging technologies, upgrading industrial and mining infrastructure, restructuring strategic frameworks, and enhancing smart systems. He stressed that SMEs are central to employment creation and economic growth, and that many have become knowledge-based enterprises, capable of driving innovation and adapting rapidly to market changes.

Aref emphasized that effective use of SMEs could address the country's unemployment challenges and attract both domestic and foreign investment. He pointed out that small and medium industries, whether located in industrial towns or elsewhere, constitute the backbone of Iran's economy. Their flexibility, cost-efficiency, and agility enable them to respond more quickly to market demands than larger companies.

Russian Senators Dismiss Attempts to Reinstate Sanctions on Iran as Invalid



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Two Russian senators have strongly rejected the European Troika's attempts to restore sanctions against Iran as "invalid," warning that such moves lack any legal or political credibility.

Konstantin Kosachev, Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council, and Grigory Karasin, Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Council, made the remarks on Monday during a meeting with an Iranian parliamentary delegation.

The Iranian parliamentary delegation, headed by Ebrahim Azizi, Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament, is in Moscow to attend the 18th General Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Parliamentary Assembly.

Kosachev strongly condemned the hostile actions of the West toward Iran, stating that, in Russia's view, the validity of sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 expired on October 18, 2025, and therefore any attempt by European states to revive these sanctions lacks credibility.

Tehran, Baku Pledge to Strengthen Bilateral Relations and Maintain Ongoing Dialogue

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - In a significant diplomatic move aimed at reinforcing regional cooperation and stability, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi announced on Monday that Iran and Azerbaijan have agreed to continue consultations and exchange visits to resolve differences through dialogue. The announcement was made during a joint press conference with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Baku.

Addressing reporters, Araqchi emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue between Tehran and Baku, acknowledging that while the two countries share many common interests, there are also differences that require careful management. "We share many common interests in bilateral cooperation, but there are also differences and misunderstandings that need to be addressed through dialogue," he said. He highlighted the progress made in political relations over the past year and expressed optimism about further high-level exchanges, including potential visits to Tehran by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Bayramov.

Araqchi underscored that both nations must protect their bilateral relationship from external interference and work collaboratively to enhance mutual cooperation. He reaffirmed Iran's support for the 3+3 regional cooperation framework, which brings together Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia with their neighbors Iran, Russia, and Turkey. Backing Baku's proposal to host the next 3+3 meeting, with the subsequent session scheduled for Yerevan, Araqchi described this initiative as "a step that can strengthen the mechanism and make it more effective."

Focusing on regional security, the Iranian foreign minister stressed that stability must primarily be ensured by local countries themselves, cautioning that foreign interference could destabilize the region. He also addressed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, voicing Iran's support for efforts to halt violence against Palestinians, provide aid to affected populations, and uphold their sovereign right to determine their future.

During his visit, Araqchi held separate meetings with key Azerbaijani officials to discuss multiple avenues of cooperation. In discussions with Azerbaijani Parliament Speaker Sahiba Gafarova, he highlighted the importance of parliamentary collaboration and people-to-people ties, noting that legislative bodies play a critical role in strengthening bilateral relations.

In talks with Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, Araqchi underlined that agreements reached in Baku would enhance cooperation across several sectors, including economy, trade, transportation, transit, energy, water management, and cultural tourism. Mustafayev, reflecting on



the historical and cultural bonds shared by the two nations, stressed the importance of implementing agreements previously signed by the presidents of both countries. These included seven cooperation documents finalized during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Baku in April.

The discussions between Iranian and Azerbaijani officials also focused on practical measures to deepen ties, including expanding economic and commercial cooperation, improving border infrastructure projects, and increasing connectivity through additional flights. Both sides expressed a shared determination to foster stronger cooperation across all areas of common interest, signaling a commitment to long-term partnership.

Analysts view the renewed engagement between Tehran and Baku as a significant step in regional diplomacy. The 3+3 framework, which aims to facilitate multilateral cooperation in the South Caucasus, has gained traction as a platform for promoting dialogue and conflict resolution among neighboring states. By supporting this mechanism and advocating for local ownership of security, Iran and Azerbaijan are signaling a shared commitment to fostering stability and sustainable development in the region.

In addition to economic and political discussions, the meetings highlighted cultural and social dimensions of the bilateral relationship. Officials from both countries agreed to pursue initiatives that strengthen cultural tourism and people-to-people connections, recognizing that long-term stability and mutual understanding are rooted not only in politics and trade but also in shared history and cultural exchange.

The joint press conference in Baku reflected a careful balance of diplomacy, emphasizing both the opportunities and challenges facing Iran and Azerbaijan. While differences exist, both sides agreed that dialogue, mutual respect, and regional cooperation are the foundations for a stable and prosperous relationship. Araqchi's visit marks another milestone in the ongoing efforts to expand collaboration and enhance ties between the two neighboring countries, reinforcing the strategic importance of maintaining open communication channels and sustained engagement.

As Iran and Azerbaijan continue to navigate regional complexities, Monday's announcements signal a commitment to proactive diplomacy and a forward-looking partnership, one that seeks to combine economic growth, security cooperation, and cultural exchange into a comprehensive framework for bilateral and regional stability.

Implementation of FTAs Marks a Turning Point in Belarus-Iran Relations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, Seyed Mohammad Atabak, announced on Monday that the implementation of free trade agreements and the establishment of a free economic zone represent a historic milestone in the commercial and economic relations between Iran and Belarus.

Speaking at the 18th Meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Belarus, Atabak emphasized that this development will create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth and constructive regional collaboration.

According to the minister, both countries must place new forms of economic and commercial cooperation high on their agenda. He noted that while trade exchanges between Iran and Belarus are already in place, the current volume of trade falls short of the capacities and potential that exist on both sides. "We must increase commercial interactions in line with our mutual capabilities and the level of synergy between Iran and Belarus," he stated.

Atabak highlighted the need to strengthen cooperation in key sectors—including customs, banking, and academia. He added that as the ministry responsible for organizing the Joint Commission, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade will take necessary steps to establish the legal infrastructure and finalize the required agreements to support these initiatives.

He pointed to the importance of forming specialized working groups in areas such as economics, trade, agriculture, and logistics, arguing that these teams can help resolve existing issues. "There are several outstanding matters between the two countries. We expect these to be addressed so that banking issues, letters of credit, visa procedures for traders, and transportation challenges faced by drivers can be resolved efficiently," he explained.

The minister stressed that the chambers of commerce of both nations must play a more active role in increasing awareness among business owners and industrial stakeholders. He called for the creation of advisory councils and the holding of exhibitions to further deepen bilateral cooperation. Atabak also underlined Iran's strategic logistical position, noting that it enables Belarus to access various markets through Iranian border terminals, facilitating the display and distribution of Belarusian goods. This logistical advantage, he said, can transform the trade landscape for both countries.

He expressed confidence that the current meeting reflects the strong political will of both nations to pursue comprehensive cooperation. He voiced hope that the agreements reached during the commission's sessions will lead to tangible expansion in bilateral ties.



The minister added that the negotiations held in this round of talks are expected to reinforce collaboration across industrial, commercial, agricultural, transportation, and health sectors.

Turning to existing challenges, Atabak stressed the urgent need to resolve banking issues between Iran and Belarus. He noted that industrial matters are being closely followed by the Belarusian Minister of Industry, but emphasized that "financial obstacles must be addressed without delay."

He further pointed out that work on transit corridors and logistics routes linking the two nations is underway. "We hope these corridors will be completed soon so that rail transport no longer poses an obstacle to trade," he said.

Referring to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) standards, Atabak stated that adopting common standards—particularly in pharmaceuticals—will support stronger commercial relations. He also mentioned that academic cooperation and mutual recognition of educational qualifications will continue to be pursued.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Atabak formally invited the Belarusian Minister of Industry to attend the Eurasia Exhibition in Iran on February 1, 2026, along with an accompanying delegation. Meanwhile the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, referring to the expansion of industrial, agricultural, and technological cooperation between Iran and Belarus, said that the support of the leaders of both countries and the efforts of their industry ministers have strengthened bilateral economic and political relations.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan-Dehnavi, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and President of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, speaking at the 18th Joint Commission between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Belarus—held with the participation of the industry ministers of both nations—stated that this commission has further advanced economic and political relations between the two countries.

He noted that the backing of the two nations' leaders, along with the efforts of both sides' industry ministers, has paved the way for broad cooperation in areas such as transportation equipment, agriculture, medical equipment, mining machinery, power plant equipment, energy, and agricultural products. He added that significant collaboration has already taken shape in these fields, and that discussions and exchanges of views will continue in sectors including industry, investment, standards, and agriculture.

The Deputy Minister emphasized that these talks create a foundation for expanding relations between the two countries.

Crescent — An Irreparable Betrayal

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

On Saturday (December 6, 2025), the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced in a public statement that it acknowledges and regrets the confiscation of its administrative building in central London, known as the "Iran Oil Company House."

The matter goes back to a final court judgment:

The Court of Appeal of England and Wales, in commercial matters, issued a ruling ordering the confiscation of the building—valued at about £100 million (US \$125 million)—in favor of the Emirati company Crescent.

This building was seized as part of NIOC's \$2.7 billion debt to Crescent Petroleum.

The debt stems from a 25-year gas sales contract signed in 2001 to supply gas from Iran's Salman field to Sharjah. NIOC refused to fulfill that contract, leading to an international arbitration ruling in favor of Crescent.

Iran claims that the building's owner is the Oil Industry Employees Pension & Welfare Fund, a private entity independent of NIOC. But UK High Court judge Nigel Teare ruled that the ownership transfer was "sham" and done with the intention of "evading payment to creditors," and therefore declared the true owner to be NIOC.

NIOC has called the ruling "unfair and biased," stating that legal and international efforts to overturn the decision are ongoing.

The Vice President for Legal Affairs, Majid Ansari, expressing regret, confirmed the company's total debt as \$2.7 billion, and noted that the legal proceedings for "Crescent II and III" are still ongoing. He expressed hope that through diplomatic means or settlement, the confiscated building might be recovered.

The case is currently filed with the UK Supreme Court for final review. This stage may determine the building's ultimate fate, though the process is typically lengthy.

Why Bijan Zangeneh, during his tenure as Oil Minister, allowed such a damaging outcome has been a topic of discussion in Iran for years, yet no clarity has been provided.

We all hope that expediency in the judicial system will come to an end, and that justice will finally find its platform.



Cloud Seeding Not the Sole Objective of Atmospheric Water Organization



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Energy, Abbas Ali-Abadi, emphasized that the country's Atmospheric Water Organization is not focused solely on cloud seeding operations, highlighting its broader mission of scientific research, technological development, and resource management. He made the remarks during a parliamentary session on Tuesday, addressing questions from Hamed Yazdian and 47 other members of parliament regarding the organization's performance since its inception up to the 1403–1402 Iranian water year.

Ali-Abadi opened his remarks by expressing gratitude for parliamentary support during periods of drought and energy imbalances, describing the nation's resilience and management of atmospheric resources as "critical strategic priorities." He explained that the organization was established through national initiative with backing from parliament, the government, and specialized institutions. "The goal of this organization has not been limited to cloud seeding operations; it has been to create a national capacity for atmospheric monitoring, develop advanced technologies, and scientifically utilize atmospheric resources," he said. He credited the late General Amirali Hajizadeh for providing intellectual and moral support that facilitated the organization's progress.

IRAN NEWS



Iran Offers Parliaments of Member States of Collective Security Treaty

MOSCOW (IRNA) - The head of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament, in a speech at the 18th general session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, put forward proposals aimed at strengthening cooperation with the member states of the organization.

Speaking at the meeting, which was hosted by the Russian State Duma, Ebrahim Azizi said that the illegal and brutal sanctions of the United States and the European Union have jeopardized public health and the provision of medicine for certain patients in some member countries, and have become one of the clear manifestations of economic terrorism and a gross violation of civil rights.

MoU Signed to Expand Trade Cooperation Between Qazvin Province and Brazil



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A framework for cooperation and operational steps to expand trade relations between various industrial and economic sectors in Iran's Qazvin Province and relevant sectors in Brazil has been agreed upon.

According to Iran Chamber Online, the agreement was reached during a meeting attended by Brazil's ambassador to Iran, the governor of Qazvin Province, the president of the Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce, and the head of the Qazvin Chamber of Commerce. The ambassador's one-day visit, which included intensive meetings with local business leaders and tours of exemplary commercial units, provided a unique opportunity to explore avenues for bilateral trade cooperation. This visit — the first official provincial trip by André Veras, Brazil's new ambassador to Iran — was regarded as a successful example of coordination between public and private sector organizations and the effective use of economic diplomacy to advance national commercial interests.

During a formal bilateral meeting between the governor of Qazvin and the Brazilian ambassador, held in the presence of the heads of the Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce and the Qazvin Chamber of Commerce as well as other provincial officials, the two sides discussed ways to expand bilateral trade, economic cooperation, and cultural ties. The governor presented an overview of Qazvin's position in Iran's industrial, agricultural, and commercial landscape and called for closer collaboration among all parties, as well as support from the ambassador and the Brazilian government to activate the province's cooperation potential.

The Brazilian ambassador emphasized his key priorities, particularly introducing the capacities of bilateral relations to Brazilian traders and business organizations. He highlighted the need for Iran and Brazil — both developing countries — to share experiences and help build the infrastructure necessary to unlock existing opportunities.

Iran and Turkey Explore Strategic Tech-Sector Partnership



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - As part of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce's sideline program during its visit to the Plast Eurasia 2025 exhibition in Istanbul, the chamber's delegation held a meeting with officials from the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO), emphasizing the need to strengthen economic ties, expand bilateral trade, and leverage shared capacities between the two countries.

During the joint meeting, both sides highlighted the long-standing commercial links between Iran and Turkey and agreed to enhance industrial cooperation, hold B2B meetings, and exchange specialized delegations.

Mehmet Akif Meral, Director of International Affairs and the EU Department at the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, introduced the chamber as an institution founded in 1923 with 23,000 members. He assessed ISO's past cooperation with Iran positively, noting that a delegation had visited Iran in 2013 and that numerous meetings had been held in recent years in the fields of technology, energy, and industry.

Meral added that ISO maintains extensive ties with Europe and neighboring countries and actively participates in international exhibitions and projects — including major plastic and packaging events in Chicago and the Netherlands.

Referring to global trade shifts following new U.S. tariff policies, he outlined ISO's efforts to mitigate their impact on Turkish manufacturers by providing market-consulting services, specialized training, and e-commerce development programs. He also noted that 40% of Turkey's exports are destined for Europe, with ISO playing a key role in maintaining those relations.

Hervik Yarijaniyan, Chair of the Industry and Mining Commission of the Tehran Chamber, pointed to the long history of trade between Iran and Turkey but stressed that current levels of economic exchange are not satisfactory. He called for closer coordination between the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and the Istanbul Chamber of Industry and invited the Turkish side to send an industrial delegation to Tehran.

Italian Companies Express Readiness to Expand Cooperation With Iran's Health Sector

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a joint webinar attended by senior managers and experts from Iran and Italy's pharmaceutical, medical equipment, and dental industries, Italian companies declared their readiness to deepen cooperation with Iran in the health sector. The event was held with the participation of Mohammad Abdezzadeh and Abolfath Sanei, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce's Health Economy Commission.

The Iran-Italy webinar, focused on "underexplored opportunities in the health sector," was organized through the joint efforts of the Tehran Chamber's International Affairs and Trade Development Department, the Health Economy Commission, and the Syndicate of Iranian Pharmaceutical Industries. Supported by the Italian Embassy in Tehran and the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), the session created a platform to examine untapped capacities, challenges, and new pathways for collaboration between the two countries in a sector largely exempt from international sanctions.

Opening the event, Giuseppe Lamacchia, Director of the Italian Trade Agency's Office in Iran, evaluated his organization's experience in Tehran positively. He emphasized that pharmaceuticals and medical equipment are not included in major sanctions lists, creating favorable conditions for expanding bilateral cooperation. Lamacchia announced that preparations have begun for a formal and organized Italian pavilion at the IranPharma 2026 exhibition.

Ahmad Pourfallah, President of the Iran-Italy Chamber of Commerce, recalled the long history of cooperation between the two countries, noting that the chamber was established to promote bilateral trade and represents a broad range of small, medium, and large companies across industrial, agricultural, and service sectors.

Pourfallah identified the lack of cooperation in supplying spare parts, dispatching technicians, and difficulties in financial transactions as key barriers to trade expansion. He described the webinar as "a meaningful step" toward strengthening collaboration and supporting humanitarian principles.

Following him, Lorenzo Galanti, Director General of the Italian Trade Agency, praised the high level of Iranian participation and expressed hope that these interactions would lead to joint projects and concrete actions.

Pier Luigi D'Agata, Secretary General of the Italy-Iran Chamber of Commerce and Industry, noted that bilateral trade exceeded USD 500 million in 2024 and emphasized that the similar structures of the two chambers create strong foundations for expanding joint activities.



Sergio Longoni, Banking Attaché of Italy's Central Bank at the Consulate in Istanbul, focused on financial and regulatory issues. He underscored that pharmaceuticals and health-related goods are not classified as sanctioned items under international law, meaning collaboration in this sector is legally feasible. However, he stressed the need for Italian companies to be fully aware of the risks associated with Iran's FATF "red list" status.

Massimo Fracchi, a trade finance expert, added that banks in both countries must find mechanisms to ensure transparent payment flows to enable a revival of cooperation similar to previous years.

Mohammad Abdezzadeh, Chair of the Health Economy Commission of the Tehran Chamber and President of the Pharmaceutical Industries Syndicate, presented an overview of Iran's pharmaceutical sector. He stated that Iran is ready to cooperate with Italian companies in joint production, technology transfer, product registration, and market development.

He noted that the Iranian market continues to show strong demand for European products and that the Iranian Food and Drug Administration has established clear pathways to facilitate international collaborations.

Abolfath Sanei, Vice Chair of the Health Economy Commission, highlighted the gap between Iran's current number of hospital beds and global standards, describing this need as a major potential area for cooperation.

He stated that Iran's medical equipment market includes about USD 2 billion in equipment sales and approximately USD 500 million in modernization and advanced technologies annually—figures that represent significant opportunities for Italian investors.

In the final section of the meeting, Dr. Ahmad Atash-Hoosh outlined Iran's regulatory processes for registering pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. He emphasized that despite sanctions, European companies have maintained a consistent presence in Iran's health market over the years. According to him, Iran's import infrastructure, distribution networks, and legal frameworks are fully prepared for new partnerships.

Representatives from Italian health-sector associations then presented reports on Italy's pharmaceutical and dental industries and reaffirmed the readiness of Italian companies to expand cooperation with Iran.

Iran, Zimbabwe Urged to Form Joint Business Council

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Zimbabwe should move toward joint investment and sustained commercial exchanges, and establishing a joint business council could help advance shared priorities, the vice president of the Iran Chamber of Commerce said during a high-level meeting in Tehran.

Speaking at a session with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Zimbabwe, Ghadir Ghiyafteh emphasized that the two economies can operate as complementary partners. Highlighting Iran's 22 million educated youth, vast mineral reserves, and strong high-tech and mining industries, he noted that Zimbabwe—a young nation with a GDP of \$53 billion and 6.6% growth—also benefits from significant agricultural and mining potential. "Together, these capacities create promising prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation," he said.

Ghiyafteh underscored Iran's expertise in mining, mineral industries, and power generation—including electric, thermal, and solar plants—as well as pharmaceuticals and medical technologies. Iranian products in these fields, he said, are competitive and high quality. Combining Iran's technology and experience with Zimbabwe's natural resources and youthful workforce could result in a strong private-sector partnership.

He identified mining and mineral processing as Iran's primary proposal for bilateral cooperation. Joint investment in the sector, particularly in downstream mineral processing, would be profitable for both sides, he said. Agriculture, food industries, and the supply of agricultural machinery offer additional opportunities. Establishing processing units near Zimbabwean farms, he added, could generate stable employment and deepen economic ties.

Ghiyafteh also referenced energy and infrastructure projects as areas of interest, including construction of power and gas plants, combined-cycle stations, electricity transmission lines, and small to medium solar plants for Zimbabwe's mines and industrial zones. Iran also has strong capabilities in pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and healthcare training.

Proposing the creation of an Iran-Zimbabwe Joint Business Council, Ghiyafteh said Iran is ready to prepare a list of priority



private-sector projects and dispatch evaluation teams to Zimbabwe to move cooperation into an operational phase in the coming months.

Bahram Shakouri, head of the Iran Chamber's Mining and Mineral Industries Commission, said Zimbabwe's rich geological potential provides fertile ground for cooperation. Iran's strengths in exploration, extraction, and especially mineral processing could support significant joint developments.

Shakouri noted that investor interest from Iran is strong, but reducing policy risks in Zimbabwe would help attract capital and technology more efficiently. He announced that an Iranian delegation specializing in mining will visit Zimbabwe in the coming months and requested detailed information on investable projects to help refine the mission's agenda.

Tim Bindi, Zimbabwe's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, said his country is shifting toward a market-driven economic model, with the government focused on enabling private-sector activity. Zimbabwe aims to create favorable conditions and guarantees for joint investments and foreign participation.

Calling Zimbabwe's farmland highly fertile, he emphasized opportunities in agricultural mechanization and irrigation systems, targeting both domestic needs and potential exports to Iran. He also welcomed Iranian participation in mineral exploration, extraction, and processing, and expressed interest in Iranian companies helping build power and gas plants to address Zimbabwe's infrastructure and energy deficits.

Bindi highlighted Zimbabwe's strategic role as a gateway to African markets. As a member of regional economic blocs—including COMESA and the Southern African Development Community—the country provides Iranian firms with broad market access.

Encouraging cooperation in pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, he invited Iranian businesses to engage in Zimbabwe's economic projects and expressed hope that an Iranian trade delegation would attend Zimbabwe's international trade fair in April 2026.

Head of ICCIMA Warns SME Recession Threatens 8% Growth Target



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The president of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has warned that rising taxes and penalties for late payments risk pushing many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) into shutdown or partial inactivity—deepening the country's economic recession and jeopardizing the Seventh Development Plan's goal of 8% growth.

Speaking at the inaugural SME 100 ranking conference, attended by the First Vice President and the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, Samad Hassanzadeh said SMEs make up about 99.5% of all Iranian businesses and account for 85% of national employment, according to chamber data and national statistics.

Hassanzadeh noted that micro-enterprises with one to nine employees represent 96.5% of all firms, but emphasized that economic competitiveness and productivity are driven primarily by medium-sized enterprises, which in many countries act as the engine of large industries. He argued that Iran's SME development model must gradually increase the share of medium and large firms.

He said Iran's current industrial development cannot rely solely on the expansion of micro and small firms, as economies of scale and lower production costs are achieved more effectively through larger enterprises. Despite this, he added, current regulations incentivize firms to remain small because they receive more exemptions and financial benefits.

Hassanzadeh also referenced Article 132 of the Direct Tax Law, which grants zero tax to companies with more than 50 employees if they double their workforce—yet said the provision has never been successfully applied in any Iranian enterprise.

He announced that the Iran Chamber's Research Center, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry, Small Industries Organization, and other bodies, has drafted an SME Development Law, submitted as a bill to Parliament. While many countries have legislation supporting SMEs, Iran still lacks adequate legal frameworks, resulting in fragmented development policies.

Direct Flight to Boost Isfahan-Kurdistan Trade



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A joint meeting between business representatives from Isfahan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq highlighted the need to expand industrial, commercial, cultural, and tourism cooperation between the two regions.

According to the Public Relations Office of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, participants in the meeting described Isfahan as a strategic city for strengthening business ties and facilitating the presence of Iraqi traders, tourists, and students. They also emphasized the importance of launching a direct Isfahan-Sulaymaniyah flight, calling it a crucial step for easing travel and boosting economic and cultural exchanges.

Mohammadreza Gol-Ahmad, Chair of the Corporate Social Responsibility Commission and a member of the Isfahan Chamber's Board of Representatives, highlighted the province's vast economic and cultural potential. He noted that Isfahan, with its rich historical heritage and significant archaeological sites, is highly attractive to visitors—particularly for its renowned handicrafts.

He added that Isfahan is one of Iran's major industrial hubs, home to some of the country's largest manufacturers across various sectors. According to Gol-Ahmad, Isfahan offers a comprehensive environment for becoming familiar with a wide range of industries.

Lula Orders Road Map to Cut Fossil-Fuel Use in Brazil

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva ordered his cabinet on Monday to craft a road map to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, a promise the country made as host of United Nations climate talks last month.

Lula tried to broker a global deal on a road map to phase out oil, gas and coal at the COP30 talks, but was stymied by opposition from producers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia.

Brazil, itself a major oil producer, nevertheless committed to presenting a plan to end its use of fossil fuels, and called on other countries to do the same.

In a decree, Lula gave his finance, environment and mining ministries 60 days to draw up guidelines on a "gradual reduction in dependence on fossil fuels in the country."



Powerful Quake Off Northern Japan Injures Dozens and Triggers Tsunami



TOKYO (Dispatches) - A 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck off northern Japan late Monday, injuring at least 23 people and triggering small tsunami waves along the Pacific coast. Authorities warned of aftershocks and a heightened risk of a major quake as damage assessments continued into Tuesday.

The Japanese government was still assessing damages from the tsunami and late-evening quake, which struck at about 11:15 p.m. in the Pacific Ocean, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) off the coast of Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of Japan's main Honshu island.

"I've never experienced such a big shaking," convenience store owner Nobuo Yamada told public broadcaster NHK in the Aomori prefecture town of Hachinohe, adding that "luckily" power lines were still operating in his area.

A tsunami of up to 70 centimetres (2 feet 4 inches) was measured in Kuji port in Iwate prefecture, just south of Aomori, and tsunami levels of up to 50 centimetres struck other coastal communities in the region, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said 23 people were injured, including one seriously. Most were hit by falling objects, NHK reported, adding that several people were injured in a hotel in Hachinohe and a man in Tohoku was slightly hurt when his car fell into a hole.

The meteorological agency reported the quake's magnitude as 7.5, down from its earlier estimate of 7.6. It issued an alert for potential tsunami surges of up to 3 metres (10 feet) in some areas and later downgraded this to an advisory.

Thailand-Cambodia Fighting Spreads Along Contested Border



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thailand said it was taking action to expel Cambodian forces from its territory on Tuesday, as renewed fighting between the two Southeast Asian neighbours spread along the disputed border.

Each side has blamed the other for the clashes, which have derailed a fragile ceasefire brokered by U.S. President Donald Trump that ended five days of fighting in July.

Cambodia's Defence Ministry said two civilians had been killed overnight, taking its death toll to six. One Thai soldier has died in the fighting.

In a statement on Tuesday morning, the Thai Navy said Cambodian forces had been detected inside Thai territory in the coastal province of Trat and military operations were launched to expel them, without providing further details.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said late on Monday that Thailand "must not use military force to attack civilian villages under the pretext of reclaiming its sovereignty".

Earlier, Cambodia said it had not retaliated even after its forces came under sustained attack.

The Thai Navy said Cambodian forces were increasing their presence, deploying snipers and heavy weapons, improving fortified positions and digging trenches, adding it saw the actions "as a direct and serious threat to Thailand's sovereignty".

LONDON (Dispatches) - European leaders rallied behind Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday night amid hopes they might finally achieve a breakthrough to allow Ukraine access to billions of pounds of frozen Russian assets.

Despite vociferous support for the Ukrainian president, who has come under heavy pressure from Donald Trump to cede territory in order to bring the war to a speedy end, there was still no agreement on the thorny question of turning immobilised assets into a loan for Kyiv.

But Downing Street said "positive progress" was made on the issue during crisis talks hosted in Downing Street with Zelenskyy, France's president, Emmanuel Macron, and the German chancellor, Friedrich Merz.

They were joined on a call by the leaders of seven other European countries, a senior representative from Turkey, and NATO and EU chiefs. During the meeting, leaders "underscored the need for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine" including "robust security guarantees" against further Russian aggression, Downing Street said.

The leaders agreed that "now is a critical moment" for Ukraine and vowed to ramp up support for Kyiv and increase economic pressure on Moscow "to bring an end to this barbaric war".

The European show of support came after sharp criticism from President Trump, who said he was "a little disappointed" in Zelenskyy, claiming he had not read the US proposal for a peace deal. He insisted without evidence that "his [Ukrainian] people love it" and that Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, was "fine with it".

The discussions follow US efforts to push through a peace deal that has triggered widespread concerns because it is seen by many critics as favouring positions held by Russia.

Downing Street is hoping for a breakthrough on a deal to seize billions in Russian state assets held by European banks and funnel it to Ukraine.

No 10 said the talks on Monday had yielded "positive progress" in the lengthy effort to use "immobilised Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine's reconstruction". More than £180bn of Russian assets has been frozen in European banks and financial institutions since Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

EU leaders will meet on 18 and 19 December in an attempt to sign off on a long-awaited European Commission proposal to funnel £78bn of the frozen assets into a "reparations loan" that would go to Kyiv next year.

The unprecedented proposal hinges on the idea that Moscow would eventually pay Kyiv reparations for the colossal damage caused by the fighting. Kyiv would use the reparations from Moscow to repay the loan to the EU, ensuring that the financial institutions holding the assets would get the money back.

Though a majority of EU countries support the plan, it has met strong resistance from Belgium. About £160bn of



Russian assets are immobilised at Euroclear, a central securities depository in Brussels, and the Belgian government is concerned that it will bear liability for any seizure and face retaliation from Moscow.

The UK is prepared to hand over £8bn of assets frozen in Britain to support Ukraine but wants to do so in conjunction with other European countries.

Starmer is set to discuss the issue on Friday with his Belgian counterpart Bart De Wever, who has come under pressure from other EU leaders. A spokesperson for the Belgian prime minister said he would be meeting Starmer in Downing Street to discuss "priorities like migration, supporting Ukraine, European security and mutual economic growth".

The meeting will come a week after Merz flew to Brussels in an effort to persuade De Wever to drop his opposition to the reparations loan plan.

British, French, German and Ukrainian national security advisers have been instructed to continue discussions on the US-proposed peace plan this week.

Zelenskyy, who has warned that his country "can't manage" without European and American support, said the talks had been productive and had made a "small progress towards peace". He said that Ukraine-Europe plans for a peace deal should be ready by tomorrow to share with the US.

US officials claim they are in the final stage of reaching an agreement but there is little sign that either Ukraine or Russia is willing to sign the existing framework deal drawn up by Trump's negotiating team.

Among the sticking points is a Russian demand that Ukraine give up large swathes of territory in exchange for peace but Zelenskyy said last night that Kyiv had no legal or moral right to do this.

"Russia is insisting that we give up territories, but we don't want to cede anything," Zelenskyy said at a press conference.

"There are difficult problems concerning the territories and so far there has been no compromise."

The foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, was due to meet her US counterpart, Marco Rubio, for further discussions on Monday, with the Foreign Office saying the two sides would "reaffirm their commitment to reaching a peace deal in Ukraine".

The talks follow the publication of a US national security strategy, which spells out the Trump administration's core foreign policy interests.

The document released on Friday by the White House said the US wanted to improve its relationship with Russia after years of Moscow being treated as a global pariah and that ending the war was a core US interest to "re-establish strategic stability with Russia".

Trump Says Europe Heading in Bad Directions



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump warned Monday that Europe was heading in "very bad directions," in a fresh broadside just days after his new security strategy slammed the continent over mass migration.

Trump hit out at a "nasty" \$140 million fine by the European Union against tech tycoon Elon Musk's X social network -- while admitting he didn't know much about it -- before widening his attack.

"Look, Europe has to be very careful. (They're) doing a lot of things. We want to keep Europe Europe," Trump told reporters at the White House.

"Europe is going in some bad directions. It's very bad, very bad for the people. We don't want Europe to change so much. They're going in some very bad directions."

The Republican's comments follow criticism in the new US national security strategy released last week of Europe as being over-regulated and facing "civilizational erasure" from migration.

In extraordinary language aimed at close allies, the strategy said Trump's administration would be

"cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations."

Trump and the Europeans are also increasingly at odds over US plans to end the war in Ukraine, with fears in Europe that Washington aims to force Kyiv into surrendering land to Russia.

The Kremlin welcomed the changes to Trump's strategy, saying on Saturday it was "largely consistent" with Russia's vision.

Trump's position towards Europe echoes that of Musk, the president's former ally, who has repeatedly aired inflammatory claims about migration in the EU.

Musk said after X was fined for breaking the EU's digital rules that the bloc should be "abolished." Brussels dismissed his statements as "completely crazy."

When asked about the fine, Trump said that "I don't think it's right" before clarifying that "Elon has not called me to ask for help on that one" and saying he would get more details later.

Syria's Sharaa Vows to Promote Coexistence

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa vowed to usher in an era of justice and coexistence a year after the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets to mark the anniversary.

Sharaa's Islamist-led alliance launched a lightning offensive in late November last year and took Damascus on December 8, bringing a sudden end to more than five decades of Assad family rule and over a decade of civil war.

Jubilant crowds thronged the streets of the capital and other major cities, many people waving Syrian flags, AFP correspondents said, after mosques in the Old City began the day broadcasting celebratory prayers at dawn.

"Today, with the dawn of freedom, we declare a historic break with that legacy, a complete dismantling of the illusion of falsehood, and a permanent departure from the era of despotism and tyranny, ushering in a bright new dawn -- a dawn founded on justice, benevolence... and peaceful coexistence," Sharaa said in a speech to mark the occasion.

His speech was followed by continued celebrations across Syria with fireworks exploding above the massive crowds who chanted along to revolutionary songs played over loudspeakers.

Sharaa also reaffirmed "our commitment to the principle of transitional justice to ensure accountability for all those who violated the law and committed crimes against the Syrian people".



Multi-confessional Syria's fragile power transition has also been shaken by sectarian massacres in the country's Alawite coastal heartland and deadly clashes in Druze-majority Sweida in the south.

The authorities announced investigations after some government forces or allies were implicated in the violence.

The civil war, which erupted in 2011 with the Assad government's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protests, killed more than half a million people and displaced millions.

Tens of thousands of people are still missing, many after disappearing into the former government's prisons, with families awaiting justice for Assad-era atrocities.

"What happened over the past year seems like a miracle," said Iyad Burghol, 44, a doctor, noting major developments including President Donald Trump's embrace of Sharaa, a former jihadist who once had a US bounty on his head.

After years of war and economic crisis, people need basics like electricity "but the most important thing to me is civil peace", Burghol told AFP.

Sharaa has made progress abroad like restoring Syria's international standing and winning sanctions relief, but he faces major challenges at home including gaining people's trust, guaranteeing security, rebuilding institutions and keeping his fractured country united.



Fernandes Double Helps Man United to 4-1 Win at Wolves

WOLVERHAMPTON (Dispatches) - Manchester United climbed to sixth in the Premier League on Monday as captain Bruno Fernandes scored twice to help them claim a comfortable 4-1 victory at bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers whose calamitous season gets bleaker by the week.

Dispirited Wolves fans spent most of the first half chanting in protest at the club's Chinese owners Fosun and their mood worsened when Fernandes gave United a 25th-minute lead.

To their credit Wolves showed some enterprise and they were cheered off at halftime after Haiti international Jean-Ricner Bellegarde fired home an equaliser in stoppage time.

Bryan Mbeumo restored United's lead with a tap-in after 52 minutes and Mason Mount's composed finish made it 3-1 just past the hour mark. Fernandes completed the job for United with a penalty after VAR spotted a handball.

When nine minutes of stoppage time were announced the Wolves fans still inside Molineux booed and sang 'blow the whistle'.

Ruben Amorim's United have 25 points from 15 games while Wolves's club-record eighth successive league defeat, and 13th of the season, left them marooned on two points and in danger of setting some unwanted Premier League history.

Their tally of points is the joint-lowest after 15 games in the history of England's top four tiers and they are without a league win since April, losing 16 and drawing three since.

Wolves are now 13 points from the safety zone and the talk is not if they will be able to mount an escape bid but whether they can surpass the lowest-ever Premier League points haul of Derby County who managed only 11 in 2007-08.

While Wolves are looking down, United are beginning to look up and while there were times in the first half when they looked vulnerable, their second-half display was silky.

They ended up with 27 goals attempts, the most since Amorim took charge, and could have won by a larger margin.

"Attacking with freedom. I thought some of the combinations going forward were crisp, were sharp and that's what we can do," said Mount, who dispatched a sweet first-time volley from Fernandes's chipped ball into the area.

Fernandes had opened the scoring by scooping a shot past Sam Johnstone in the Wolves goal despite falling over.

United lost some control though and Wolves levelled just before the interval when Bellegarde fired home after David Moller Wolfe's shot had bounced into his path.

It was the first goal Wolves had scored for 540 minutes but after a brief burst of joy the gloom once again descended in the second half when Diogo Dalot squared for Mbeumo to score.

After Mount's goal, Fernandes bagged his second of the night with a typically confident penalty after Yerson Mosquera was adjudged by VAR to have handled a goal-bound shot.

Wolves were jeered off and manager Rob Edwards, who replaced Vitor Pereira last month, said he could not blame them.

"There was an anger in the stadium. The lads are trying. The supporters are angry and I get it," he said.

"It's the toughest league in the world and we came into a team who hadn't won since April. I wasn't anticipating a quick turnaround."

With a trip to Premier League leaders Arsenal next, things are likely to get worse before they get better for the Midlands club.

Suns Snap Timberwolves' 5-Game Win Streak With 108-105 Victory

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Mark Williams had 22 points and seven rebounds, and the Phoenix Suns overcame Anthony Edwards' 40 points to snap the Minnesota Timberwolves' five-game winning streak with a 108-105 victory Monday night.

Collin Gillespie added 19 points and Dillon Brooks had 18 for the Suns, who stunned Minnesota with a late rally in their previous meeting but had an easier time Monday. Phoenix never trailed by more than two points in its final tuneup before traveling to league-leading Oklahoma City on Wednesday for an NBA Cup quarterfinal game.

Edwards shot 15 for 21 and Julius Randle had 21 points, but the rest of Minnesota's top players struggled. Naz Reid was 2 for 12 off the bench and Jaden McDaniels and Donte DiVincenzo both went 1 for 7.

Rudy Gobert was having a good night until he was ejected in the third quarter for a flagrant foul. He finished with 15 points and eight rebounds.

In the Suns' 114-113 home victory on Nov. 21, they became the first team since January 2022 to win in regulation after trailing by



eight or more points within the final minute.

This time, the Suns blitzed the Wolves with a 14-3 spurt to start the fourth quarter, turning an 84-all tie into a 98-87 lead. Minnesota got back in it and had a chance to tie, but McDaniels missed a 3-pointer with 3.7 seconds to play.

Meanwhile Jamal Murray scored 34 points, Nikola Jokic

finished with 28 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds and the Denver Nuggets held on to defeat the Charlotte Hornets 115-106 to extend their franchise record to road winning streak to 10 games.

Tim Hardaway Jr. had 14 points off the bench for the Nuggets (17-6), who are off to their best start in franchise history.

Miles Bridges finished with 24 points while Brandon Miller added 16 for the Hornets, who played without six players due to injuries including their top two point guards, LaMelo Ball and Collin Sexton. Rookie Liam McNeeley added a boost off the bench with a career-high 13 points for the Hornets, making 4 of 5 shots from 3-point range.

Murray, who had 52 points on 10 3-pointers last week's 135-120 win over Indiana, erupted for 23 points in the first quarter Sunday but the Nuggets still trailed 58-57 at halftime.

That all changed in the second half Jokic began to take over, using his versatility to score and create for the his teammates.

Fritz to Headline \$1m MGM Slam in Las Vegas



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Eight of the world's elite men's professional tennis players, including American Taylor Fritz, will compete for a \$1 million prize pool at the MGM Slam in Las Vegas next year.

The exhibition in March will feature a 10-point tiebreak knockout format. Fritz, the world number six and highest-ranked American, will headline the event. He will be joined by compatriot Tommy Paul, who is currently ranked 20th.

Also competing are Norway's Casper Ruud, Australia's Nick Kyrgios, Brazil's Joao Fonseca, France's Gael Monfils, Italy's Lorenzo Musetti and Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik.

In its third year, the MGM Slam has featured several high-profile match-ups, including last year's showcase between Aryna Sabalenka and Naomi Osaka, and one of Rafael Nadal's final appearances before his retirement.

The event comes at a time when tennis is facing criticism over its relentless tour schedule.

In March, the Professional Tennis Players' Association (PTPA) filed a lawsuit against the sport's governing bodies, including the ATP and WTA, labelling the crowded calendar unsustainable.

Nevertheless, exhibition matches continue to be scheduled.

World number one Jannik Sinner and second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz, who have won nine of the last 10 Grand Slam titles between them, will meet in South Korea in January.

The exhibition, which takes place eight days before the Australian Open, has featured tennis greats such as Roger Federer, Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Maria Sharapova.

Meanwhile Anastasia Potapova has become the latest Russian-born tennis player to switch international allegiance after the world number 51 said her application for Austrian citizenship was approved.

Potapova, 24, has been playing on the WTA Tour as a neutral athlete after Russian and Belarusian players were banned from competing under their own flags following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

NFL Admits Officiating Error in Ravens' Loss to Steelers



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Baltimore Ravens coach John Harbaugh thought game officials got two out of three crucial calls correct in Sunday's 27-22 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers. Unfortunately for the Ravens, the NFL felt differently in all three cases.

Two calls late in the game were reversed after initially being called in the Ravens' favor. Meanwhile, league officials admitted on a phone call with the Ravens Monday morning that Alex Moore's crew erred on a key penalty call.

In his Monday press conference, Harbaugh revealed that he, general manager Eric DeCosta and former referee and current Baltimore staffer Tony Michalek had spoken with the NFL's senior vice president for officiating administration Perry Fewell, as well as NFL rules analyst and former referee Walt Anderson.

Fewell admitted that game officials incorrectly called an unnecessary roughing penalty on Ravens' Travis Jones as he rushed a field goal attempt late in the second quarter. The penalty took Chris Boswell's field goal off the board and gave the Steelers first-and-goal at the 6-yard line. Pittsburgh scored a play later, hence a 13-3 deficit turned into a 17-3 hole for Baltimore.

Jones, who attempted to rush between the snapper and left guard, did make contact with long snapper Christian Kuntz, but it was not forcible contact to the head/neck area.

"That's the rule," Harbaugh said. "It's not whether you run a player over trying to block a field goal -- that has nothing to do with it. It's forcible contact to the head and neck area."

Carragher Calls Salah a Disgrace After Rant at Liverpool Boss Slot

LONDON (Dispatches) - Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher labelled Mohamed Salah "a disgrace" after the Egypt star's stunning outburst at Reds boss Arne Slot.

Salah said he had been "thrown under a bus" and had no relationship with Slot after he was left on the bench for last Saturday's 3-3 draw at Leeds.

It was the third successive game that Salah had been kept out of the starting line-up by Slot amid the forward's loss of form this season.

In response to Salah's astonishing rant to reporters, Liverpool axed the 33-year-old from the squad for Tuesday's Champions League clash at Inter Milan.

Speaking on Sky Sports' Monday Night Football, Carragher, a 2005 Champions League winner with Liverpool, said: "I



thought it was a disgrace what he did after the game.

"Some people have painted it as an emotional outburst. I don't think it was. I think whenever Mo Salah stops in a mixed zone, which he has done four times in eight years at Liverpool, it's choreographed with his agent to cause maximum damage and strengthen his own position.

"He's chosen this weekend to do this now, and he's waited I think for a bad result... everyone involved with the club (feeling) like they're in the gutter, and he's chosen that time to go for the manager and maybe try to get him sacked."

Salah is a two-time Premier League champion with Liverpool and has also won the Champions League during his iconic eight-year spell at Anfield.