

Iran Plans to Maintain Heavy Subsidies for Wheat Imports Despite Dismantling a System That Offered Hard Currency at Ultra-Cheap Rates for Imports of Staple Foods

# IRAN NEWS

VOL. XXIX, No. 8456 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

[www.irannewsdaily.com](http://www.irannewsdaily.com)

In a Meeting With Iran's Envoy to the United Nations Office and Int'l Organizations in Vienna, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Emphasized the Continuation of Diplomatic Interactions and the Pursuit of Iran's Rights and Interests in Int'l Organizations

TUESDAY JANUARY 06, 2026 DEY 16, 1404

2

## DOMESTIC



\$120 Million Share of Shoe Exports; 700 Brands to Attend Footwear Exhibition

> SEE PAGE 2

3

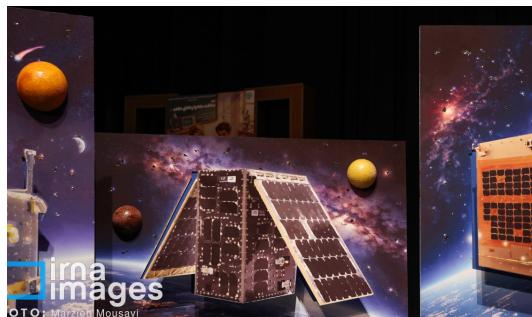
## INTERNATIONAL

Trump Warns Venezuela's New Leader of Severe Consequences If She Resists



> SEE PAGE 3

Three Iranian Satellites Successfully Enter Orbital Testing Phase



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

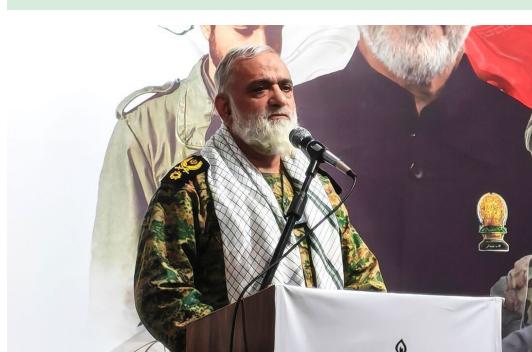
TEHRAN - The Iranian satellites Zafar, Paya, and Kowsar have successfully completed various stages of in-orbit testing during the first week following their launch, with technical assessments indicating that the evaluation and stabilization of their subsystems are proceeding as scheduled.

According to a report released on Sunday by the Iranian Space Agency and carried by IRNA, all three satellites have entered the subsystem performance evaluation phase, and their overall technical conditions have been reported as satisfactory. Due to an issue that occurred during the orbital injection of the Paya satellite by the launch vehicle, special focus was placed on stabilizing this satellite, and the necessary corrective measures were carried out with high precision.

The Paya satellite has successfully completed tests of its power supply and distribution, thermal management, telemetry and telecommand communications, navigation, stabilization, attitude control, and pointing subsystems. Testing of its imaging communication subsystem is currently underway.

The Kowsar satellite has also successfully passed tests related to power supply and distribution, thermal management, telemetry and telecommand communications, navigation, and stabilization. It has now entered the phase of testing its attitude control and pointing subsystems.

Appeasement Encourages the Enemy, Does Not Ensure Security



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, advisor to the Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), stated that appeasement, hesitation, and retreat in the face of the enemy neither create security nor deter aggression; instead, they embolden adversaries to increase pressure and attacks.

Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani in Jiroft, Sardar Naqdi emphasized that true security is maintained through steadfastness and decisive responses, not compromise.

"The experiences of Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, and other resistance fronts show that where there has been steadfastness, the enemy has retreated, and where there has been hesitation or delay, pressures have intensified," he said.

Highlighting the importance of national unity, Naqdi noted that as long as the people remain united, the enemy will not dare to attack, and the country's security is guaranteed.

He also underlined the role of politicians, stating that the primary condition for political activity is a firm belief in and practical commitment to the leadership of the Supreme Leader (Velayat-e Faqih).

## Iran Condemns U.S. "Abduction" of Venezuelan President, Demands Immediate Release

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the United States over what it described as the "abduction" of Venezuela's president and called for his immediate release, reiterating the country's stance on the sanctity of national sovereignty and international law.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei criticized repeated violations of international norms, emphasizing that such acts undermine global order and risk turning the world into a lawless environment dominated by the powerful. "The violation of a country's national sovereignty is inexcusable and contradicts all standards," Baqaei said. "The precedent set by such actions will haunt the international community. The principle of territorial integrity is a hard-won achievement of human civilization, enshrined in the United Nations Charter after two world wars. The U.S. action is condemned and those responsible must be held accountable."

Baqaei described last year as "the worst in terms of disrespect for the UN Charter, violations of international law, and impunity for heinous international crimes." Highlighting the ongoing violence in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, he called for a renewed commitment to ending the normalization of crimes worldwide and moving toward peace.

On Venezuela, Baqaei stressed that the matter concerns all UN member states committed to upholding international law. "Support from Iran is not about individuals but about principles. The president of a country has been abducted—this is illegal and shameful. He must be released. Many countries have taken a position, and the UN Secretary-General has a responsibility to uphold the Charter. A failure to act will implicate the entire international community."

Regarding U.S. accusations against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and the application of domestic laws to foreign nations, Baqaei said, "Domestic laws of one country cannot justify violations of another country's sovereignty. This is merely a pretext to justify illegal actions by the United States. We condemn violations of government sovereignty wherever they occur."

He also addressed U.S. President Donald Trump's comments on Greenland, warning that normalizing international law violations endangers all nations. "Iran maintains a principled stance on respecting territorial integrity. Unlike some European countries with selective approaches, our position is consistent: any infringement on state sovereignty is unacceptable."

Baqaei indicated that Iran's economic and diplomatic ties with Venezuela continue despite political upheavals. "Our relations are based on mutual respect and interests, and changes in a country's government do not affect ongoing cooperation."

On the broader Latin American region, he warned that unchecked bullying emboldens



aggressive actions. "All of Latin America is at risk. The international community must heed these warnings seriously."

Baqaei also commented on several other topics during the briefing:

U.S. Withdrawal from Ain al-Asad Base: He noted that Iraqi authorities explained the evacuation was part of agreements with foreign forces, requiring no further comment.

Iran-Israel Tensions: Responding to reports of Russian mediation, Baqaei emphasized that Iran does not trust Israel and will continue to protect its national territory. He accused the U.S. and Israel of using psychological warfare and media manipulation to pressure Iran.

Lebanon: Iran's new ambassador will travel to Lebanon in the coming weeks, continuing Tehran's

longstanding diplomatic relations with Beirut.

Yemen: Baqaei stressed the importance of Yemen's territorial integrity and hoped recent developments would lead to strengthened internal dialogue and regional stability.

Iran-Syria Relations: He stated that changes in government do not alter economic claims between countries.

Nuclear Oversight: Iran maintains regular communication with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), asserting its commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and safeguards while condemning attacks on its peaceful nuclear facilities.

Russia and the U.S.: He dismissed speculation about collusion over Venezuela, urging focus on the core issue: a foreign power using force to abduct a head of state.

Iranian Nationals in Venezuela: Baqaei confirmed that Iranian diplomats and citizens in Caracas are safe, and Iran continues to closely monitor the situation.

Baqaei accused the United States of prioritizing economic interests, notably Venezuelan oil, over democratic principles, describing this approach as a regression to practices seen nearly eight decades ago. He reiterated that Iran's foreign policy is grounded in mutual respect and national interest, not opportunistic interference.

"The world must recognize that failure to respond to violations of international law encourages further illegal actions. Upholding sovereignty and human rights is essential to prevent a global environment dominated by force," he said.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry's statements underscore Tehran's firm stance on defending international norms and resisting foreign interventions, while reaffirming its support for Venezuela amid heightened tensions in the region.

## Majlis Speaker Says Protests Must Be Heard

### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that public protests must be heard and addressed, stressing that under the government's new plan, preferential foreign exchange has not been eliminated but its benefits will instead be transferred directly to the people.

Qalibaf made the remarks during his pre-agenda speech at the open session of parliament on Sunday morning. At the outset, he offered condolences on the anniversary of the passing of Hazrat Zainab (peace be upon her), and referred to recent remarks by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution emphasizing the need to distinguish between legitimate protesters and rioters.

"The wise guidance of the Leader of the Revolution on separating the ranks of protesters from agitators and those seeking chaos is illuminating and instructive,"

Qalibaf said. "Protesters must be engaged in dialogue, their objections are legitimate, and every effort must be made to establish economic stability. The government's resolve is serious, and we hope that with the implementation of the measures that have been adopted, the rightful demands of protesters will be addressed."

He added that protest must be heard and should serve as the basis for changes in favor of the people. However, he stressed that those who are directly or indirectly connected to foreign intelligence services and are tasked with hijacking protests and turning them into unrest must be dealt with separately. "They must be confronted intelligently and effectively so that the security and peace of the people are not endangered," he said.

He said the Iranian nation has, throughout history, confronted mercenaries, traitors, and those who betrayed the country, adding that it will not take long before enemies, despite deploying their full intelligence, security, and media capacities, once again face defeat at the hands of the Iranian people.

Referring to global developments, the speaker of parliament said the world today is witnessing stark double standards. "On the one hand, the war criminals of the Zionist regime are slaughtering hundreds of thousands of women, children, and civilians in Gaza before the eyes of the world, depriving them of water and food, calling them animals, and openly boasting about genocide," he said. "Yet despite being condemned in international courts, they are applauded in the U.S. Congress for these crimes."



In contrast, Qalibaf said, the legally elected president of Venezuela has been abducted in blatant violation of international law. "Venezuela has not committed child-killing or genocide. Its only crime is possessing rich mineral and fossil resources and refusing to hand over control of them to the United States," he added.

He argued that the United States resorts to hard power whenever it finds soft power ineffective. "Now that it sees itself in decline and seeks to exploit its final opportunities to consolidate power and plunder resources before the emergence of a new era, it has been forced to turn into a 'madman,'" he said. "Today marks the end of the era of international law and the declaration of the law of the jungle in international relations."

He stressed that in a world with no red lines in the international system, remaining independent requires strength, and gaining strength requires unity and tireless effort. "A united and steadfast Iran is the nightmare of its enemies," he said.

Qalibaf outlined what he described as the pillars of national strength, including sacred unity, sustained economic growth, preserving people's purchasing power, neutralizing enemy efforts to destabilize markets, correcting managerial imbalances, creating shared strategic interests with other countries, and comprehensively strengthening Iran's defensive capabilities.

In the final part of his remarks, the speaker of parliament expressed gratitude to the government, particularly President Masoud Pezeshkian, for implementing the commodity voucher law. "There may be shortcomings in the method of implementation, but what matters is that the government of the Islamic Republic has taken a major step toward ensuring livelihood stability for Iranians," he said.

Qalibaf said people can be confident that their purchasing power for essential goods will be preserved. He emphasized that the government has committed to increasing the value of commodity vouchers in line with inflation and gradual price changes in future periods.

"This support, which today is delivered directly to the people, was previously monopolized by a limited number of individuals and companies," he said.

He concluded by stressing that the government must provide comprehensive information to the public and exercise precision in implementing the commodity voucher plan, while also correcting any shortcomings that arise during the course of its execution.

Pezeshkian: Listening to the People Is Key to Governance



### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian has stressed the necessity of continuous, transparent, and honest communication between officials and the public, stating that public awareness and transparency play a vital role in preventing dissatisfaction and social tensions.

President Pezeshkian made the remarks on Sunday during a meeting of the Cabinet. While expressing appreciation for the efforts and actions of ministers and executive bodies to improve people's livelihoods and manage the country's current conditions, he emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral participation and the involvement of all stakeholders in policymaking and decision-making processes.

Pezeshkian said that the existence of any problems or shortcomings in society is a direct result of performance and implementation. "Therefore, when decisions are being made, beneficiaries and implementers must be involved in all dimensions of the issue," he said, underscoring that inclusive decision-making leads to more effective governance and better outcomes.

Reiterating the need for sustained, transparent, and sincere engagement with the public, the president noted that informing and clarifying issues for public opinion can significantly help prevent the emergence of dissatisfaction and social unrest. He stressed that clear communication is a key component of social stability and public trust.

Iran Investments in Venezuela Face No Major Risk



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A member of Iran's parliament says the country is not concerned about the future of its investment projects in Venezuela, saying that any government that comes to power in the South American country should respect its international obligations.

Fada Hossein Maleki said on Sunday that Iran's investment projects in Venezuela are not extensive, adding that private investors would be able to continue their activities there.

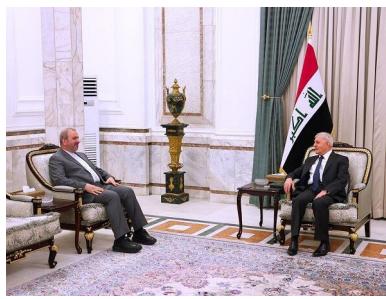
Maleki, who is a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that Iran has reduced its investments in Venezuela in recent years.

"Iran had invested in Venezuela for years, but this trend has not continued in recent years, and what remains, as far as I know, is limited to a factory and a few other things," he told the ILNA news agency.

The lawmaker said that Iran has not committed to major projects in Venezuela's oil sector, adding that manufacturing had been the main focus of Iranian investment in the South American country.

He said that Iran's Foreign Ministry would step up efforts aimed at protecting Iranian investors in Venezuela.

The construction arm of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said last month that it had withdrawn from a major subway project in Venezuela.



## Iran–Venezuela Bank Has Never Functioned as an Active Commercial Bank



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran–China Joint Chamber of Commerce has said that the Iran–Venezuela Bank has never effectively operated as an active commercial bank through which financial transactions between Iranian and Venezuelan traders are conducted.

According to ISNA, following reports of the arrest of Venezuela's president by the United States, concerns have grown over the future of Venezuela's economic relations with its foreign partners, particularly Iran. These political developments have once again brought Iran's investments in Venezuela under scrutiny by economic stakeholders. Questions have also been raised about the fate of Iranian companies' investments, Iran's financial claims and interests in Venezuela, and the status of the Iran–Venezuela Bank.

In this context, Majidreza Hariri, head of the Iran–China Joint Chamber of Commerce, said in an interview with ISNA that the Iran–Venezuela Bank has not had any effective activity in recent years and has not functioned as an active commercial bank. He noted that financial transactions between Iranian and Venezuelan traders have not been carried out through this bank.

## IRANTURKS 2026 Exhibition Opens a New Window for Iran–Turkey Trade



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A senior official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) said that Turkey, as one of Iran's key trading partners, has significant potential for expanding bilateral trade thanks to its transit position, geographic proximity, and cultural affinities, adding that the Iran–Turkey Trade and Investment Exhibition provides a practical platform to realize this potential.

According to the Public Relations Office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, Amir Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari, Deputy for International Business Development at the TPO, referred to the upcoming International Iran–Turkey Trade and Investment Exhibition to be held in Zanjan Province, describing it as one of the country's most important trade events of the year.

He emphasized that the exhibition offers a valuable opportunity to better understand the Turkish market, conclude trade agreements, and expand exports of Iran's competitive products.

Ghanbari noted that as the development of foreign trade and the expansion of non-oil exports have become key priorities of Iran's economy, holding specialized exhibitions focused on neighboring countries can play an effective role in facilitating direct engagement among economic actors.

He added that Turkey, as one of Iran's major trading partners, enjoys a unique position due to its transit advantages, shared borders, and cultural proximity, which together create strong capacity for boosting bilateral trade. In this context, the Iran–Turkey Trade and Investment Exhibition, scheduled to be held in Zanjan in Bahman (February), provides an operational framework to advance this objective.

Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari further announced that from February 4 to 7 (16–19 Bahman), one of the country's largest trade events, titled the Iran–Turkey Trade Exhibition, will be held at the Zanjan International Exhibition Center.

He said the event sends a positive and encouraging signal to Iranian economic and commercial players interested in expanding cooperation and developing trade activities with neighboring Turkey.

## Iran, Iraq Stress Continued Coordination to Bolster Regional Stability

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al Sadegh, and Iraqi President Abdul Latif Jamil Rashid have emphasized the importance of continued joint coordination between Tehran and Baghdad to strengthen peace and stability in the region. During a meeting in Baghdad on Sunday, the two sides discussed pathways to develop bilateral relations and expand cooperation across various fields, aiming to serve the aspirations of the two friendly nations, according to a report by the Iraqi News Agency (INA).

The meeting was focused on consolidating the foundations of regional peace and stability.

## \$120 Million Share of Shoe Exports; 700 Brands to Attend Footwear Exhibition



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - A member of the board of directors of the Iranian Footwear Industry Association said Iran's footwear exports amounted to \$120 million last year, adding that exports have declined by 20 percent so far this year compared to the same period last year.

Speaking at a press conference on the occasion of the Second International Footwear Industry Exhibition, to be held under the slogan "Let's Grow Together" from January 12 to 15 at Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Center, Javad Shabanzadeh expressed hope that holding the exhibition and expanding professional interactions would help boost export figures by the end of the year.

He said Iranian footwear is currently exported to 34 countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan, several regional states, and a number of African countries.

Shabanzadeh stressed the need to improve quality and competitiveness of Iranian footwear compared to foreign products, noting that the main objective of holding the exhibition is to focus on the footwear value chain, enhance the position of Iran's footwear industry, meet market demands, and strengthen competitiveness with other countries.

He added that around 70,000 invitations have been sent to specialized industry stakeholders in order to identify footwear sellers, traders, and manufacturers nationwide. He also noted that foreign participation has increased in this edition of the exhibition, with about 13 foreign companies in attendance.

According to Shabanzadeh, Iranian footwear manufacturers have shown strong interest in participating in the exhibition; however, executive constraints and capacity limitations mean that full coverage of domestic exhibitors is expected to be achieved next year.

He said that despite existing challenges, footwear producers and distributors continue their activities with determination, adding that nine previous editions of the exhibition were held in Qom Province, while this year marks the second time the event is being held in Tehran.

Referring to recent developments, Shabanzadeh noted that during the 12-day conflict, the footwear industry lost one worker who was employed at a production workshop.

Addressing challenges facing the industry, Shabanzadeh described shortages of raw materials as one of the most serious problems. He explained that the footwear industry serves as a driving force for nearly 70 other industries, as footwear production involves more than 3,100 different raw material items and components, ranging from plastic slippers to high-end leather shoes, using both domestic and imported materials of varying weights and categories.

He criticized current foreign exchange repatriation requirements imposed on footwear exporters, warning that discrepancies between official exchange rates and market rates encourage corruption. He expressed hope that new policymaking by the Central Bank would help revitalize exports in the sector and pave the way for 30 percent growth in footwear exports in 1405 (2026/27).

Shabanzadeh also pointed to the issue of smuggling, saying imbalances and shortages in foreign currency supply contribute to increased smuggling. Nevertheless, he noted that over the past three years, the entry of young and creative producers has helped revive domestic fashion and branding, with many footwear brands now operating under Iranian names and reducing reliance on foreign brands.

He emphasized that the footwear industry is among the least water-intensive sectors and one of the most employment-generating industries, employing around 500,000 people nationwide, making it the second-largest employment-generating industry in the country and strategically important for the government.

According to him, sustained efforts by industry stakeholders have helped consolidate Iranian footwear branding and restore the "Made in Iran" shoe label to its rightful position.

In the same event, Abbas Taghaddosi-Nejad, CEO of Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Center, said Iran produces around 270 million pairs of shoes annually. He put the global footwear industry's turnover at \$450 billion in 2025, adding that it is projected to rise to \$550 billion in 2026.

He noted that the footwear industry became industrialized in the 18th and 19th centuries and has a long historical background in Iran as well, with renowned brands such as Tabriz leather products. He said manufacturers participating in this year's exhibition will showcase their latest achievements.

Referring to challenges faced by guilds and market traders, Taghaddosi-Nejad expressed hope that continued follow-up by officials would lead to meaningful economic and commercial reforms in the coming year and help reduce pressures on businesses.

Highlighting the historic role of merchants and guilds in supporting the country, he said that during the eight-year war, much of the financial burden was borne by traders and guild members, who have consistently demonstrated their commitment to the Islamic Republic. He expressed hope that future developments would ease their difficulties, noting that improvements in their conditions would directly impact the country's overall economic performance.

## Eurasia Int'l Exhibition Serves as Platform for Implementing FTA



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of the Tehran International Exhibitions Company announced quantitative and qualitative growth in the fourth edition of the Eurasia International Exhibition, describing the event as the most cost-effective and efficient tool for the sustainable development of regional markets and for building trust among economic enterprises.

Sediq Beikzadeh said on Sunday that the Eurasia International Exhibition has gradually expanded in both scale and scope over successive editions. "We started in the first year with 4,000 square meters of net exhibition space. This increased to 8,000 square meters in the second edition and 10,000 square meters in the third. We expect this growth trend to continue in the fourth edition as well," he said.

Beikzadeh attributed the main driver of this expansion to the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU). He noted that with the agreement in place and tariffs reduced, more than 85 percent of trade facilitation capacity has been created. "In such an environment, the exhibition acts as the lowest-cost, most effective, and most sustainable instrument for market entry and expansion in Eurasian countries," he added.

The CEO identified EAEU member states, including Russia, as key export markets for Iranian products such as foodstuffs, construction materials, petrochemical products, and metals. He stressed that hosting the exhibition—featuring visiting Eurasian trade delegations alongside Iranian enterprises—marks the beginning of the practical phase following the signing of the agreement. "Face-to-face and business-to-business negotiations can lead to contract signings and expanded trade," he said.

Beikzadeh described the main challenge in trade with Eurasia as building mutual trust between enterprises on both sides. "We believe international exhibitions are the most suitable and effective

tool for creating this trust and facilitating the expansion of Iran's trade with the region," he noted.

Referring to the facilities provided for participants, Beikzadeh said foreign companies are generally hosted in the form of trade delegations, with minimal costs for accommodation and transportation. For domestic companies, he added, preferential discounts of at least 20 percent have been allocated through the capacities of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran and the Tehran International Exhibitions

Company, and these discounts will certainly be applied.

Beikzadeh also pointed to future opportunities, noting that stronger participation by Eurasian regional officials and the organization of training workshops alongside the exhibition could further pave the way for major agreements.

He said current regional conditions—particularly for countries such as Russia, which has lost access to European markets—present a valuable opportunity for Iranian economic players to replace European exporters. "This, however, requires aligning Iranian product standards with target market requirements in the medium term," he cautioned.

He added that beyond the five EAEU member states, the exhibition can also serve as a bridge to broader markets in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including Azerbaijan and others, thereby accelerating Iran's trade development across the region.

The fourth Eurasia International Exhibition will be held in Tehran from February 1 to 4 (12–15 Bahman) as part of efforts to implement the Iran–Eurasia Free Trade Agreement. The event will provide a valuable opportunity for Iranian and Eurasian economic actors, traders, and producers to explore existing capacities and further deepen trade cooperation and joint investment.

## The Economy Will Not Return to the Right Path Without a Fundamental Shift



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran–Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce and vice president of the Fars Chamber of Commerce has said that the country's economy will not be fixed without a fundamental change in direction, stressing that the draft budget for the coming year neither aligns with the Seventh Development Plan nor leads to welfare or inflation control.

In an interview with ISNA, Jamal Razaghi referred to the current state of Iran's economy and said that the country's economic situation cannot be corrected without a major structural shift.

Commenting on the proposed 1405 (2026/27) budget law, he added that the drafters of the budget can hardly be blamed, noting that under existing conditions it was practically impossible to draft a substantially different document. "If I were in their place, I could not have written something different either," he said.

Razaghi stated that the main objective of the national budget should be economic development and public welfare. However, he said the proposed budget neither conforms to the Seventh Development Plan—which targets eight percent economic growth—nor delivers welfare or curbs inflation.

"None of these outcomes will materialize, and once again we will face a budget deficit," he said.

He warned that such a deficit would once again force the government to resort to printing money, fueling further inflation. "A country that has experienced double-digit inflation for nearly 40 years should no longer repeat failed policies. It is time for change and for switching tracks," Razaghi added.

Referring to the government's revenue sources, the vice president of the Fars Chamber of Commerce said oil sales remain one of the main pillars of the budget. Given ongoing sanctions, he noted, both export volumes and prices must be viewed realistically; as a significant portion of Iran's oil cannot be sold freely and is often exported at discounted prices.

## Preferential Currency Not Eliminated



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance said the preferential foreign exchange policy has not been removed but shifted to the end of the consumption chain, describing the government's new approach as a step toward social justice and a form of citizens' entitlement for all residents of the country.

Speaking on Sunday evening during a televised program, Seyed Ali Madani-Zadeh outlined recent decisions by the government's Economic Coordination Headquarters and announced the continuation—and strengthening—of support measures under a new framework.

He said the livelihood plan unveiled earlier by the president is part of a broader package of approvals focused on ensuring basic living standards and food security. "I avoid calling this a subsidy; it is a form of citizens' right," Madani-Zadeh said, adding that the plan will be implemented for all Iranians residing in the country across all income deciles, in line with the administration's justice-oriented agenda.

The minister stressed that contrary to some perceptions, preferential currency has not been eliminated. "In fact, resources allocated to support livelihoods exceed what was envisaged in the 1404 (2025/26) budget law," he said.

## Havana Blasts U.S. Raid After 32 Cubans Killed in Maduro Capture

HAVANA (Dispatches) – The Cuban government said that 32 of its citizens were killed during the U.S. raid on Venezuela to extract President Nicolas Maduro for prosecution in the United States. Havana said there would be two days of mourning on January 5 and 6 in honor of those killed and said funeral arrangements would be announced. The Cuban government statement gave few details, but said all the dead were members of the Cuban armed forces and intelligence agencies. “True to their responsibilities concerning security and defense, our compatriots fulfilled their duty with dignity and heroism and fell, after fierce resistance, in direct combat against the attackers or as a result of bombings on the facilities,” the statement said.



# IRAN NEWS

## Maduro Supporters Call for His Freedom



CARACAS (Dispatches) - Around 2,000 supporters of ousted Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro demonstrated Sunday in Caracas to demand that he and his wife, who were nabbed by US forces and taken to a New York jail, be released.

A group of pro-Maduro paramilitaries and bikers accompanied the demonstrators, who waved red, blue and yellow Venezuelan flags.

“Free our president,” read a placard held by a man with a red flannel shirt which bore the image of Maduro’s predecessor and mentor, late socialist firebrand Hugo Chavez.

“Venezuela is no-one’s colony,” another placard read, a swipe at US President Donald Trump’s announcement Saturday that Washington would “run” Venezuela during an unspecified transitional period.

On Monday, Maduro was due in court in New York to face charges of “narcoterrorism” tied to alleged cocaine trafficking into the United States.

“The narcotics trafficker and terrorist is Trump,” Nairda Iriago, 56, told AFP angrily, accusing US forces, who carried out airstrikes to neuter Venezuela’s defenses while Maduro was being captured, of killing “innocent people.”

Venezuelan hospitals have refused to divulge the number of people killed or injured in the pre-dawn strikes.

Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said a “large part” of Maduro’s security team were killed “in cold blood,” as well as military personnel and civilians, but gave no figures.

## Scores of Yemeni Separatists Killed in Clashes and Strikes



ADAN (Dispatches) - At least 80 fighters from Yemen’s Southern Transitional Council (STC) have been killed in clashes with Saudi-backed forces since Friday, a military official said Sunday. The ongoing offensive, aimed at reclaiming territory seized by the UAE-backed STC, has also left 152 wounded and 130 captured. The Saudi-led coalition has stepped up strikes, particularly in Hadramawt, which it claimed to have recaptured on Saturday.

At least 152 members of the UAE-backed STC forces were wounded and 130 were taken captive, the official said, giving a preliminary toll of casualties since the start of the Saudi-backed operation.

Forces supported by Riyadh began operations on Friday to retake swathes of territory seized by the STC, which is backed by Abu Dhabi, as a struggle for dominance deepened a rift between the two Gulf allies.

Most of the casualties occurred in strikes by the Saudi-led coalition that targeted military camps held by the separatists, the official said, including Al-Khasha and Barshid military camps in Hadramawt province.

An official with the Saudi-backed forces told AFP later Sunday that at least 14 of their fighters had been killed in fighting and over 30 wounded during the offensive.

## Trump Warns Venezuela’s New Leader of Severe Consequences If She Resists

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Donald Trump threatened Sunday that Venezuela’s new leader will pay a “big price” if she does not cooperate with the United States, after US forces seized and jailed her former boss Nicolas Maduro.

If interim president Delcy Rodriguez “doesn’t do what’s right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro,” Trump told The Atlantic in a telephone interview.

U.S. forces attacked Caracas before dawn Saturday, bombing military targets and sprinting away Maduro and his wife to face federal narcotics trafficking charges in New York. The deposed leader is due to appear in a Manhattan court on Monday.

The Trump administration says it is willing to work with the remainder of Maduro’s government as long as Washington’s goals, particularly opening access to US investment in Venezuela’s enormous crude oil reserves, are met.

Opposition figure Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, in an Instagram post Sunday from exile in Spain, said the capture of Maduro was “an important step, but not enough” to return the crisis-hit nation to normal.

Gonzalez Urrutia called for the results of the 2024 election — which he claims to have won — to be upheld and for all political prisoners to be freed to ensure a “democratic transition.”

Venezuelans braced for the political aftermath of the stunning raid, in which US commandos swooped in on helicopters, backed by fighter jets and naval forces, to capture Maduro.

Residents queued up to buy food in grocery stores, and the masked and heavily armed police visible the previous day were gone, AFP correspondents said.

Some 2,000 Maduro supporters — including rifle-wielding men on motorcycles — rallied Sunday in Caracas, however, with crowds shouting and waving red, blue and yellow Venezuelan flags.

The Venezuelan military announced it recognised Rodriguez — previously Maduro’s vice president — as acting president, and urged calm.



No Venezuela death toll has been announced, but Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said a “large part” of Maduro’s security team were killed “in cold blood,” as well as military personnel and civilians.

Despite the success of the initial US operation, questions mounted over Trump’s strategy.

The Senate’s top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, told ABC News that Americans were left “scratching their heads in wonderment and in fear.”

Trump said Saturday the United States will “run” Venezuela, a South American country of about 30 million people.

And he told The Atlantic that “rebuilding there and regime change — anything you want to call it — is better than what you have right now.”

But Secretary of State Marco Rubio stressed Sunday that Washington is not seeking complete regime change or elections, but rather, “we’re going to make an assessment on the basis of what they do,” he told CBS News.

The United States is fighting drug traffickers, “not a war against Venezuela,” Rubio told NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

However, he said a large US naval presence would remain in the Caribbean to enforce a blockade of Venezuelan oil exports for “tremendous leverage.”

Trump has made clear Washington intends to call the shots in Venezuela, with a focus on securing access to the world’s largest proven oil reserves.

“We’re going to run the country” until a transition can be made, he said Saturday, also insisting that military “boots on the ground” remained a possibility.

In her first remarks since the US attack, Rodriguez struck a defiant note, saying Maduro was the country’s sole legitimate leader and that “we’re ready to defend our natural resources.”

Handcuffed and in sandals, Maduro was escorted by federal agents through a Manhattan US Drug Enforcement Administration facility late Saturday, a video posted by the White House showed.

## Denmark Blasts Trump’s Greenland Obsession

COPENHAGEN (Dispatches) - Denmark called on the United States to stop “threatening” Greenland Sunday as President Donald Trump told U.S. media he “absolutely” needed the territory, a day after Washington seized the leader of Venezuela.

Washington’s military intervention in Venezuela has reignited fears for Greenland, which Trump has repeatedly made clear he wants to become an annexed part of the United States.

Those fears were underscored by Trump’s comments to The Atlantic magazine and a social media post by the wife of his most influential aide showing Greenland in the colours of the US flag.

“I have to say this very clearly to the United States: it is absolutely absurd to say that the United States should take control of Greenland,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement late Sunday.

She called on Washington to stop “threatening its historical ally.”

The United States’ European allies were rattled by Trump sending in his military on Saturday to attack Caracas and grab Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro, who is now being held in New York.

Trump has said the United States will now “run” Venezuela indefinitely and tap its huge oil reserves.

In Greenland’s case, Trump has claimed that making the Danish territory part of the United States would serve US national security interests, given its strategic location on the Arctic.

Greenland is also rich in key critical minerals used in high-tech sectors.

Asked in a telephone interview with The Atlantic about the implications



Stephen Miller — posted the contentious image of the Danish autonomous territory in the colours of the US flag on her X feed.

Her post had a single word above it: “SOON”.

Greenland’s Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen called the post “disrespectful”.

“Relations between nations and peoples are built on mutual respect and international law — not on symbolic gestures that disregard our status and our rights,” he stated on X.

But he also said that “there is neither reason for panic nor for concern. Our country is not for sale, and our future is not decided by social media posts”.

Denmark’s ambassador to the US, Jesper Moeller Soerensen, reacted earlier on Sunday with his own post saying “we expect full respect for the territorial integrity” of Denmark, above a link to Katie Miller’s image.

Moves edging towards that goal by his government — including his appointment of an envoy to the Danish territory — have drawn the ire of both Copenhagen and the European Union.

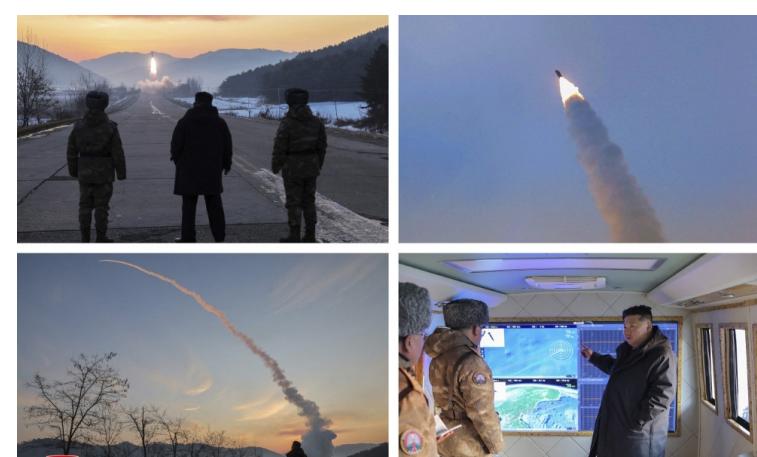
Stephen Miller is widely seen as the architect of much of Trump’s policies, guiding the president on his hardline immigration policies and domestic agenda.

Denmark’s ambassador gave a pointed “friendly reminder” in response to Katie Miller’s post that his country — a NATO member — has “significantly boosted its Arctic security efforts” and worked together with the US on that.

“We are close allies and should continue to work together as such,” Soerensen wrote.

Katie Miller was deputy press secretary under Trump at the Department of Homeland Security during his first term.

## Pyongyang Flaunts Hypersonic Missiles, Kim Warns Nuclear Forces Primed



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong-un oversaw the test-firing of “cutting-edge” hypersonic missiles to ready Pyongyang’s nuclear forces for war, state media said Monday.

Pyongyang said Sunday’s test was made all the more necessary by “recent geopolitical crisis” — a clear nod to this weekend’s events in North Korea’s socialist ally Venezuela.

Seoul and Tokyo said Sunday they had detected the launch from near Pyongyang of two ballistic missiles.

It was the country’s first test of the year and came just hours before South Korean leader Lee Jae-myung headed to Beijing for a summit.

Lee has said he hopes to use the visit to harness China’s clout over North Korea to improve Seoul’s ties with Pyongyang.

On Monday, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted Kim as saying the test showed “the readiness of the DPRK’s nuclear forces”, referring to North Korea by its official name.

“Important achievements have been recently made in putting our nuclear forces on a practical basis and preparing them for an actual war,” Kim was quoted as saying by KCNA.

Pyongyang’s activity, he said, was “aimed at gradually putting the nuclear war deterrent on a high-developed basis”.

“Why it is necessary is exemplified by the recent geopolitical crisis and complicated international events,” he said, a clear reference to Washington’s weekend capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

The operation represents a nightmare scenario for North Korea’s leadership, which has long feared a so-called “decapitation strike” of that kind and accused Washington of seeking to remove it from power.

Pyongyang has for decades justified its nuclear and missile programmes as a deterrent against alleged regime change efforts by Washington.

North Korea’s new weapon system using hypersonic missiles was first tested in October.

Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound and can manoeuvre mid-flight, making them harder to track and intercept.

They have been deployed to deadly effect this year on cities in Ukraine by Russia, with whom North Korea has deepened ties in recent years, and by Iran against Israel.



## Broncos Grab Top Seed While Panthers Reach NFL Playoffs

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Denver Broncos captured a top seed in the NFL playoffs while the Carolina Panthers backed into their first post-season berth since 2017 without taking the field on a hectic season-closing Sunday.

The Broncos (14-3) claimed the AFC top seed, a first-round bye and playoff home-field advantage by defeating the visiting Los Angeles Chargers 19-3.

Ja'Quan McMillian's 45-yard interception return touchdown gave Denver a 10-0 lead and Wil Lutz added field goals of 23, 26 and 41 yards in the second half to secure a triumph over the playoff-bound Chargers (11-6).

A Denver loss would have opened the door for New England, which routed Miami 38-10 as Rhamondre Stevenson and TreVon Henderson each ran for two touchdowns.

The Patriots (14-3) settled for the AFC second seed and will host the Chargers in their playoff opener.

Had Denver and New England both lost, the AFC South champion Jacksonville Jaguars (13-4) would have swiped the AFC top seed after routing the Tennessee Titans 41-7 to close the season on an eight-game win streak.

Trevor Lawrence threw for 255 yards and three touchdowns for Jacksonville, which will host Buffalo in a playoff opener next week.

Seattle (14-3) claimed the NFC top seed on Saturday with a 13-3 victory at San Francisco.

Carolina and Tampa Bay were relegated to spectators as their playoff fate was settled when the Atlanta Falcons beat visiting New Orleans 19-17.

Tampa Bay's 16-14 triumph over Carolina on Saturday left both clubs 8-9 and the Falcons matched them atop the NFC South division by beating the Saints.

In a three-way head-to-head results tie-breaker, the Panthers took the division crown and playoff spot, Tampa Bay having needed a Saints win or draw to reach the playoffs.

"Proud of everybody," Carolina coach Dave Canales said. "It took the whole season capturing opportunities to be in this position and we're ready to chase the next championship opportunity in front of us."

Atlanta's Zane Gonzalez kicked his fourth field goal, a 38-yarder, to give the Falcons a 19-10 lead with 2:52 remaining. New Orleans answered on Tyler Shough's 16-yard touchdown pass to Ronnie Bell with 1:11 to play, but the Saints could not recover an onside kick attempt and Atlanta ran out the clock.

The Los Angeles Rams will visit Carolina in next week's playoff openers.

The NFL's final playoff berth will be decided later when the Baltimore Ravens visit Pittsburgh for a winner-take-all showdown to decide the AFC North title. The loser misses the playoffs and the winner hosts Houston in a playoff opener next week.

The Texans (12-5) stretched their win streak to nine games by defeating Indianapolis 38-30, the Colts losing their seventh game in a row.

Chicago lost 19-16 at home to Detroit but took a second seed when Philadelphia lost 24-17 to Washington. That sends San Francisco to Philadelphia and Green Bay to Chicago for playoff openers.

Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett set an NFL record for quarterback sacks in a single season by taking down Cincinnati's Joe Burrow in the fourth quarter of Cleveland's 20-18 road victory.

Garrett raised his season total to 23 sacks, eclipsing the old record of 22.5 sacks shared by T.J. Watt from 2021 and Michael Strahan from 2001.

"I was nervous as hell," Garrett said. "I had a dream last night that I didn't get it and all the feelings that come with that. I woke up and I was sweating."

"I was like, there's no way I'm going to let that be my destiny, so I was fighting like hell to rewrite history."

## Managerless Chelsea stun City Late on



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City's Premier League title challenge suffered a huge setback as managerless Chelsea salvaged a dramatic 1-1 draw, while Harrison Reed's stunning last-gasp strike gave Fulham a 2-2 draw against Liverpool.

Manchester United boss Ruben Amorim sparked fresh talk about his future with a fiery press conference after his side rescued a 1-1 draw against bitter rivals Leedess.

But it was City's spluttering attempt to stop Arsenal running away with the title that took the spotlight as they fell six points behind the Gunners.

After Arsenal's 3-2 win at Bournemouth on Saturday, Pep Guardiola's second-placed side had no margin for error against troubled opponents at the Etihad Stadium.

Yet they stumbled in painful fashion as Chelsea midfielder Enzo Fernandez equalised deep into stoppage-time to cancel out Tijani Reijnders' 42nd-minute opener.

Just days after Chelsea parted company with boss Enzo Maresca, the Blues were managed by Under-21 coach Calum McFarlane.

McFarlane will never forget his first senior match as a manager after frustrating the decorated Guardiola.

But despite the damage McFarlane inflicted on Guardiola's title dreams, Strasbourg boss Liam Rosenior remains the leading candidate to replace Maresca on a permanent basis.

"Chelsea is a world champion team. It is not academy players there. Top class players. So to have control for 90 minutes against a team is so, so difficult," Guardiola said.

"We missed chances in the second half. Our talented players tried to finish the game but we could not do that."

## Bangladesh to Demand T20 World Cup Matches Be Moved Outside India



DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh will request their matches at next month's T20 World Cup be played in Sri Lanka, after India forced a Bangladeshi player to quit the Indian Premier League.

"We will not accept any insult to Bangladeshi cricket, cricketers and Bangladesh under any circumstances," said Asif Nazrul, Youth and Sports Adviser in the interim government, in a statement carried by the state-run BSS news agency Sunday.

"The days of slavery are over."

Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman was yesterday released by the Kolkata Knight Riders after the IPL team were "advised" by Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to do so, following tensions between the neighbouring nations.

Nazrul said he had ordered the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to write to the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"The board should inform that, where a Bangladeshi cricketer cannot play in India despite being contracted, the entire Bangladeshi cricket team cannot feel safe going to play in the World Cup," he wrote.

"I have also instructed the board to request that Bangladesh's World Cup matches should be held in Sri Lanka."

The T20 World Cup begins on February 7, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh are scheduled to play their four group matches in India.

Pakistan will play all their matches in Sri Lanka, part of a deal that allows both India and Pakistan to play at neutral venues in multi-nation tournaments.

Political relations between India and Bangladesh soured after a mass uprising in Dhaka in 2024 toppled then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, a close ally of New Delhi.

## Garcia Hat-Trick Powers Madrid Past Betis 5-1

MADRID (Dispatches) - Gonzalo Garcia bagged a hat-trick for Real Madrid as they beat Real Betis 5-1 to stay on La Liga leaders Barcelona's tail.

Spanish striker Garcia, filling in for the injured Kylian Mbappe, opened the scoring after 20 minutes and then volleyed home a superb second early in the second half to give Madrid a commanding lead.

Raul Asencio further extended Xabi Alonso's side's advantage before Cucho Hernandez pulled one back for Manuel Pellegrini's visitors, sixth.

Madrid youth academy product Garcia completed his hat-trick after 82 minutes with a clever flicked finish to delight fans at the Santiago Bernabeu, with Fran Garcia notching a late fifth.

Madrid, second, cut Barca's lead back down to four points after the champions edged Espanyol 2-0 in a Catalan derby on Saturday.

Atletico Madrid, fourth, were held 1-1 at Real Sociedad later on.

Madrid's victory eased the pressure on Alonso, who scraped through to 2026 at the helm despite reports he was on the verge of being sacked after a run of



inconsistent form.

With top goalscorer Mbappe sidelined with a knee sprain, Alonso turned to 21-year-old forward Garcia to replace him, as he did during the Club World Cup last summer.

Garcia's opportunities have been limited this season despite acquitted himself well in the United States and he proved himself again.

"These were three very special goals, my first hat-trick here at the Bernabeu, my first goals this season as well," he told reporters, before admitting he still faces a fight for minutes.

"In front of me I obviously have the best players in the world, like Mbappe, Rodrygo (Goes), (Jude) Bellingham, Vinicius," he continued.

"I just focus on myself, which means working day by day and taking the opportunities the coach gives me, like today, and I hope I can deliver and help my teammates every minute I get."

Madrid started strongly and took a deserved lead through Garcia's looping header from Rodrygo's free-kick.

## Pistons Top Cavs as Pacers' NBA Misery Continues



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Cade Cunningham scored 27 points and reserve Daniss Jenkins delivered a dazzling 25 as NBA Eastern Conference leaders Detroit held off Cleveland 114-110 on Sunday.

Down three key contributors in Tobias Harris, Jalen Duren and Caris LeVert, the Pistons came up with a big win against a Cavaliers team that had taken 13 of the prior 14 clashes between the two teams.

Star guard Cunningham added six rebounds, seven assists, two steals and a blocked shot. But Jenkins stole the show with a monster 21-point second quarter in which he made all seven of his shots -- including six three-pointers.

"My teammates were just finding me and I was open," said Jenkins, who is playing on a two-way contract. "I was given space and the key to the game was (if) you've got an open shot,

you've got to shoot.

"They packed the paint a lot, so I just stepped into it with confidence and let it slide."

The Pistons outscored the Cavs 47-28 in the period to seize control, erasing an early nine-point deficit to take a 10-point lead into halftime.

The Cavs, led by 30 points from Donovan Mitchell, whittled a 13-point deficit to two with 1:16 remaining and were within two again with 3.8 seconds left, but Jenkins made two free throws to seal it.

Detroit were a perfect 21-for-21 from the free-throw line, Cunningham making 11 and Jenkins five as they pushed their Eastern Conference lead over the New York Knicks to three games.