

President Masoud Pezeshkian Has Welcomed an “Encouraging” Signal in Indirect Talks With the United States About Tehran’s Peaceful Nuclear Program While Expressing the Country’s Readiness for “Any Potential Scenario”

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi Has Consulted With his Omani Counterpart on the Arrangements for Holding the Next Round of Indirect Nuclear Negotiations Between the Islamic Republic and the United States

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### Chance Still Exists for Win-Win Solution to Iran’s Nuclear Issue



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says there is still “a good chance” for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear dispute based on a win-win outcome for all sides.

“One fact is there, that if they [the US] want to find a resolution for Iran’s peaceful nuclear program, the only way is diplomacy,” Araghchi said in an interview with CBS News aired on Sunday.

He added that there is still a “good chance” of having a diplomatic solution based on a win-win game, emphasizing, “A solution is at our reach.”

“So there is no need for any military buildup, and military buildup cannot help it and cannot pressurize us,” the top Iranian negotiator pointed out.

The interview comes as Iran and the US held a second round of indirect nuclear negotiations at the Omani consulate general in the Swiss city of Geneva on February 17. As in the previous round in the Omani capital of Muscat, the agenda of the talks focused primarily on the nuclear issue and the lifting of illegal US sanctions.

Following the talks, the Iranian foreign minister said the two sides agreed on a set of guiding principles to clear the path for future talks.

Separately, a senior US official, who spoke to Reuters on Wednesday, said Iran was expected to present a written proposal for resolving its dispute with the United States following the Geneva talks.

The US maintains that Iran must cease its nuclear program, whereas Tehran asserts that it is not pursuing nuclear weapons and says it is entitled to peaceful nuclear energy.

Washington began its war rhetoric against Iran after recent economic protests in the country, which were hijacked by foreign spy agencies and turned violent.

## Iran Does Not Benefit from Prolonged Negotiations

### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Ismail Baghaei, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, stated that Iran does not benefit from protracted negotiations, emphasizing that Tehran is currently in the stage of formulating its positions and hopes to hold another round of talks within the next two to three days.

Speaking during his weekly press briefing, Baghaei addressed the proposed Iranian text for the next round of nuclear talks and the possibility of reaching a temporary agreement. He said speculation surrounding negotiations is not unusual but cannot be confirmed, stressing that the technical details of any negotiation process are discussed inside the negotiation room. He added that a temporary agreement has no formal basis, noting that drafting negotiation texts is a joint process between the parties involved.

The spokesman reiterated that Iran is working to formulate its own views regarding the termination of what it describes as unjust sanctions and nuclear-related issues. He also said that Iran is well aware of the United States’ position, emphasizing that any negotiation must be a cooperative effort rather than one-sided pressure. Baghaei stressed that Iran remains committed to the diplomatic path because it believes in the legitimacy of its stance. He stated that Iran will continue negotiations as long as there is confidence that the process will lead to tangible results.

Regarding statements made by Rafael Grossi about inspections of nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, Baghaei said Iran has no preconditions for IAEA visits. However, he distinguished between general cooperation with the agency and inspections of damaged facilities, explaining that there is currently no established inspection method for such sites.

Baghaei also commented on reports concerning a possible visit by Ali Larjani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, to Oman, stating that the report must be verified and that he has no confirmed information about the trip.

In response to the designation of European military forces as “terrorist” organizations by the European Union, Baghaei said Iran’s stance was based on a resolution passed by the Iranian parliament. He argued that the EU decision violated fundamental principles of international law and that labeling official military forces of a sovereign state is unacceptable. He added that European forces operating in the region would now be viewed differently, warning that the designation may have practical consequences.

Baghaei also discussed Iran’s proposal presented during a nuclear disarmament meeting in Geneva, noting that the initiative has been discussed for decades and aims to promote global nuclear disarmament in line with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He said nuclear-armed states have continued to expand and modernize their arsenals, arguing that public demands for implementation of non-proliferation commitments are growing.

Addressing questions about Iran’s confidence in resisting U.S. pressure, Baghaei said Iran’s confidence comes from its history, culture, and perception of its rightful position. He rejected the concept of “surrender” in Iran’s diplomatic approach, stating that Iranian society has historically resisted submission. From the perspective of international law, he said, the notion of forcing surrender contradicts global legal norms since all countries are equal members of the United Nations and international relations must respect state sovereignty.

Responding to claims about institutional disagreements between Iran’s foreign ministry and



Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran

other national security bodies regarding negotiations, Baghaei said nuclear policy is implemented based on decisions made by the Supreme National Security Council, where all relevant institutions participate and express their views before final decisions are taken.

Regarding the potential adoption of the Additional Protocol, he said Iran previously implemented it voluntarily during the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action period. He added that any future voluntary commitment would depend on reciprocal steps related to sanctions relief. He described the protocol as a confidence-building instrument demonstrating the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program.

Rejecting allegations that Iran is intentionally prolonging negotiations, Baghaei said the claim has no basis. He emphasized that Iran is willing to continue talks without interruption if necessary, noting that negotiations held every ten days are not ideal. He stated that diplomatic talks are only useful if they lead to concrete outcomes and argued that rational policy requires accelerating efforts to lift sanctions.

On relations with the Taliban authorities, Baghaei said Iran’s relations with Afghanistan are based on mutual respect and shared cultural and religious ties. He highlighted common concerns such as security, narcotics trafficking, and water resource management. He added that discussions regarding official recognition of the Taliban are political and sovereign matters that will be announced when a final decision is reached.

Baghaei also responded to statements by Israeli officials regarding alleged plans to confront the so-called “Shiite axis.” Using a Persian proverb meaning “a camel dreams of seeing sesame seeds,” he dismissed such claims. He stated that there is no distinction between Shiite, Sunni, Arab, or non-Arab populations in the policy of Israel. He further claimed that Israeli leaders have repeatedly expressed ambitions for regional dominance, including references to territorial expansion ideas.

He warned that such rhetoric increases regional concerns about Israel’s intentions, urging countries in the region to cooperate more closely against what he described as dangerous strategic illusions before it becomes too late.

Baghaei also commented on statements suggesting that a better agreement than the 2015 nuclear deal is achievable. He said the primary duty of Iranian diplomacy is to secure the rights of the Iranian nation, emphasizing that any acceptable agreement must guarantee Iran’s nuclear and economic rights, including sanctions relief. He stated that building trust is possible if other parties seriously accept that Iran’s nuclear program is peaceful, noting that no diversion toward weaponization has been observed.

Regarding U.S. sanctions, Baghaei said the purpose of sanctions has become increasingly explicit, arguing that Washington aims to create pressure on Iranian citizens in hopes of generating public unrest against the government.

Addressing reports about the escape of militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria into Iraq, Baghaei said Iran remains concerned about any development that could encourage the expansion of terrorism in the region. He recalled the heavy costs paid by Iran, Iraq, and Syria in combating the extremist group and stressed that Iran has communicated its concerns to Iraqi authorities.

Concluding his remarks, the spokesman said Iran’s foreign policy focuses on protecting national interests while continuing diplomatic engagement. He reiterated that Tehran aims to avoid being distracted by secondary issues and will pursue negotiations that produce meaningful results.

### A Look at the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Nearly half a century of governance of the Islamic Republic has taken place on the foundation of a people-oriented Constitution, yet one structured around a Montesquieu-style separation of powers. Viewing governance strictly through three branches, conventionalizing the coercive power, failing to regard culture as an integrated power in itself, decentralizing education outside a unified power-based structure, and adopting a livelihood-centered and state-centered approach to the economy have all contributed to state-centric movements. Every few years, these movements have been directed along partisan and factional lines.

Of course, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a synthesis of a monotheistic ontology (God-centered) and a people-based methodology symbolized by republicanism. For this reason, one can observe a certain alignment—within both the written and unwritten lines of the text—with Western liberalism (which is founded upon humanism and anthropocentrism).

Thus, in some principles and concepts, similarities and overlaps with the values of Western liberal democracy can be observed. These commonalities appear mainly in the realm of “methods” and “citizens’ rights.” Entrusting cultural development entirely to the government without consistent supervision over its content and direction, or assigning education to the executive branch without aligning it with the necessities of the Revolution and national governance, as well as adopting a partisan and ideologically tinted approach to the economy—alongside pure capitalism without a focus on justice—have over the years led to the politicization of culture along factional lines, fragmentation of non-aligned educational content, and the emergence of a wealthy elite class immersed in affluence. This economic model has consistently created challenges across all sectors.

We remain committed to principles within this Constitution; yet instead of giving primacy to these principles in overarching content and expecting governments to pave the way for substantive implementation, we have made the executive administrator the very foundation of content itself.

Let us consider the following principles:  
A – Popular Sovereignty and Republicanism (Similar to Democracy)

Western liberalism emphasizes popular sovereignty and the social contract. In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this concept is embodied in the republican nature of the system:

Article 6:  
“In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the affairs of the country must be administered by reliance on public opinion, through elections: the election of the President, representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, members of councils, and the like.”

Article 56:  
“Absolute sovereignty over the world and humanity belongs to God, and it is He who has made man master of his own social destiny. No one can deprive man of this divine right...”

Although these principles are defined within a religious framework, in terms of their popular character and recourse to public opinion, they correspond with the democratic mechanisms of Western liberalism.

B – Fundamental Freedoms (Similar to Liberalism)  
Freedom is the core of liberalism. In Chapter Three (Rights of the Nation), the Constitution refers to a wide range of freedoms similar to those set forth in international charters (influenced by liberalism):

Article 23:  
The investigation of beliefs is forbidden, and “no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief.”

Article 24:  
Freedom of the press is guaranteed, “unless it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public.”

Article 27:  
Freedom of assembly and marches is permitted, “provided that arms are not carried and that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.”

Article 22:  
The dignity, life, property, rights, residence, and occupation of individuals are inviolable.

C – Human Rights and Human Dignity (Shared Concepts)  
Research indicates that in certain respects, the Constitution aligns with human rights positions (which have roots in liberalism):

Articles 19-21:  
Equality of individuals before the law, observance of women’s rights, and protection of mothers.

Article 32:  
The right to legal recourse and judicial security (arrests must be made according to law).

Article 38:  
Torture for the purpose of extracting confessions is forbidden. These principles display relative harmony with the liberal view of inherent human rights (regardless of gender, race, or religion).

D – Rejection of Domination and Independence (Similar to Anti-Colonial Principles)  
Interestingly, some principles of foreign policy in the Constitution (such as Articles 152 and 154) bear semantic resemblance to the outlook of early Iranian liberals during the Constitutional era, who sought to reject foreign domination and preserve independence. Although these principles are rooted in the Islamic concept of rejecting subjugation, in terms of “independence and freedom from foreign powers,” they share common ground with nationalist liberal ideals.

A General View  
In an overall assessment, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran shares similarities with liberalism in its instrumental and procedural aspects:  
The use of voting and elections  
Recognition of conditional freedoms  
Respect for citizens’ rights  
However, at the level of foundations, the difference is fundamental. In Western liberalism, human autonomy is the source of rights, whereas in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, divine authority forms the basis of action, and people’s rights are defined within the framework of Islamic criteria (Article 4).

In other words, in liberalism, freedom is unlimited unless it harms another person; but in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, freedom is limited by adherence to Islamic principles under the authority and supervision of a qualified Islamic jurist.

### Iranian Commander Dismisses U.S. Buildup of Warships as Theatrical Gesture



### IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - An Iranian military commander has dismissed as “theatrical” the US buildup of warships and fighter jets in the West Asia region over the past few weeks amid tensions over Tehran’s civilian nuclear program, stating that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has vigorously responded to such over-the-top maneuvers.

“Our nation knows very well that ships and other armament now deployed in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman waters have been cruising in different parts of the world for years,” Deputy Inspector of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Brigadier General Mohammad Jafar Asadi, said on Sunday.

He added that the deployment of ships in the region has entered the propaganda phase, and the response to such a theatrical move was well given by Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, who said lately that “Of course an aircraft carrier is a dangerous device, but more dangerous than the carrier is the weapon that can send it to the bottom of the sea.”

The senior commander went on to recall the failure of the enemies of the Islamic Republic over the past 47 years.

## Enemy Pursuing ‘Strategic Attrition’ to Weaken the System and Exhaust the People

### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The Commander-in-Chief of the Army said that the enemy’s actions are being carried out under a program described as “strategic attrition,” aimed at gradually weakening the Islamic system and wearing down the Iranian people.

Major General Amir Hatami, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, made the remarks on Monday at a graduation ceremony for doctoral and master’s students in defense management at the Army Command and Staff University (DAFOOS).

Congratulating the graduates, he stated that given today’s developments and transformations, the responsibility of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is undoubtedly decisive and critical.

Hatami recalled that in the past month, the enemy had repeatedly attempted to seriously harm the Iranian nation, the country, and the Islamic Republic, but had failed each time. “This makes the Army’s responsibility today even greater,” he said.

Referring to what he described as the enemy’s claims of invincibility, he dismissed them as false and futile. “This is the same enemy that fought for 20 years in Vietnam and Afghanistan and ultimately withdrew in disgrace. The same occurred in Iraq and other countries,” he said. “They enter with claims and intimidation, but always leave in humiliation.” He added that while the enemy’s defeat is inevitable, achieving it requires a clear understanding of the current global situation and steadfast resistance by the Iranian people.

The Army chief also pointed to what he called comprehensive efforts by the enemy to prevent correct decision-making, describing the situation as one of “uncertainty.” He said today’s warfare is far more complex than in the past, involving a hybrid war across political, economic, social, military, psychological, and cognitive arenas. “Not only we, but also our families and children are exposed to this war,” he added.

Hatami stressed that the way to overcome hybrid warfare is through proper understanding. “What can help us confront the enemy’s full-scale hybrid war is knowledge and awareness,” he said. He argued that the enemy seeks to impose its will through intimidation, threats, and limited operations, but emphasized the importance of recognizing the dimensions and objectives of the conflict in order to neutralize such plans.

Emphasizing the need to stand firm against enemies and their demands, he said that steadfastness is the key to confronting them. “The foundation of steadfastness is resistance, and the foundation of resistance is



Major General Amir Hatami, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran

correct understanding,” he noted. He added that guidance from the Commander-in-Chief plays a central role in identifying the right path.

Referring to recent remarks by Ali Khamenei, Hatami said the enemy did not expect to face such firmness despite deploying naval vessels, other weaponry, and issuing threats. He credited what he described as strong leadership and insight for delivering a firm response.

Hatami also addressed what he called the enemy’s miscalculation regarding Iran’s current position. “The enemy believes we are at a point of weakness and it is at a point of strength,” he said. “Our readiness and resolve demonstrate that it is mistaken. Iran is not a country that can be swallowed.” He added that millions are prepared to defend the country, describing martyrdom in the path of God as a high honor.

He further referred to what he described as an attempted “quasi-coup” during unrest in January, saying the enemy implemented its plans based on incorrect calculations but ultimately failed, though the events caused national mourning. “This recent sedition, which resembled a coup and was suppressed by the Iranian people, could have inflicted greater damage, but deep awareness and insight prevented that,” he said.

Hatami warned that other forms of conspiracy could emerge but asserted that they would again be met with decisive responses, citing mass public rallies in January and February as examples of thwarted plots.

Describing the enemy’s actions as part of a “strategic attrition” plan, he said the goal is to gradually weaken Iran. “The enemy seeks to exhaust the people, but with our awareness of its overall plan, we will prevent this objective from being realized,” he said, expressing confidence in success.

He added that the enemy aims to impose the cost of undermining territorial integrity on Iran, similar to developments in some regional countries, but stressed that the Iranian nation would not allow such plans to materialize.

“The divine promise is victory, and it will certainly include us, because we act sincerely for the sake of God,” Hatami said.

He concluded by emphasizing that continuing the path and ideals of the martyrs remains a responsibility, and that the Army, fully aware of its historic mission, will defend the country’s independence, territorial integrity, and the Islamic Republic until its last breath.

# IRAN NEWS



## Oil Minister Announces Record 730m Cubic Meters of Gas Production From SP

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Oil Minister announced that daily gas production from the South Pars Gas Field has reached a historic record of 730 million cubic meters, describing the achievement as a major boost for the country's winter energy management.

Oil Minister Mehdi Paknejad shared the news in a post on his official account on the social media platform X. "In the difficult conditions of sanctions, my colleagues in South Pars set a historic daily production record of 730 million cubic meters of gas, providing a reliable backbone for managing energy during the winter of 1404," he wrote.

## Transport Cooperation, Border Infrastructure Development Headline Tehran-Baku Talks



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Head of the Center for International Affairs at Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development has announced the commencement of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku, stating that expanding transport cooperation, completing border infrastructure, and strengthening cultural exchanges are the central themes of the meeting.

Amin Tarefeh said the session officially opened in the Azerbaijani capital and will focus on broadening bilateral collaboration across multiple sectors. He noted that final agreements reached during the discussions will be formalized in a memorandum of understanding to be signed by the heads of the joint commission representing both countries.

Tarefeh explained that during the meeting, both sides will engage in negotiations covering all areas of bilateral cooperation. The discussions will include reviewing existing programs and identifying capacities that should be realized and expanded by next year. He emphasized that the commission aims to outline practical steps for strengthening economic and cultural ties while accelerating joint development initiatives.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a comprehensive summary of the negotiations and agreements achieved in economic, cultural, and other fields of cooperation will be compiled and signed by the co-chairs of the joint commission.

Highlighting the growing momentum in relations between Tehran and Baku over the past year and a half, Tarefeh described transport and the development of shared border infrastructure as one of the most significant pillars of cooperation. He stated that notable progress has been made in this area, reflecting the commitment of both governments to improving connectivity.

"Border infrastructure between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan—both in the rail and road sectors—is undergoing expansion and transformation," he said. "This process can play a vital role in facilitating trade exchanges and boosting economic interaction between the two countries."

## Rasht-Astara Railway Remains Central to Iran-Russia Negotiations



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia have reached a shared understanding on the framework and technical requirements of the long-discussed Rasht-Astara railway project, bringing the two sides closer to signing an executive contract, a senior Iranian transport official said.

Houshang Bazvand, Iran's Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and CEO of the Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company, made the remarks following a recent joint meeting with a Russian delegation.

According to Bazvand, intensive rounds of negotiations have resulted in a common understanding between Tehran and Moscow regarding the cooperation framework, technical specifications, and implementation mechanisms of the Rasht-Astara railway project. He said the talks have clarified the path toward finalizing the executive agreement.

"The basis of cooperation is adherence to the agreed scope of work and implementation of the project within the predetermined financial ceiling," Bazvand stated. He emphasized that the financial cap has been mutually agreed upon and will not be altered.

He explained that the two sides have also agreed on mechanisms allowing for adjustments in quantities and pricing of executive components within the agreed framework and total budget, up until the completion of the design phase. This flexibility, he noted, is intended to ensure that the project proceeds smoothly in line with real-world conditions and technical requirements, without generating disputes.

# Revival of China-Iran Railway Line and Major Transport Projects Announced

### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development has announced the revival of key international rail connections, including the China-Iran freight route, while outlining major developments in ports, rail corridors, and aviation. She confirmed that the railway corridor passing through Iran now connects China to Europe, marking a significant step in strengthening the country's transit diplomacy.

Minister Farzaneh Sadegh detailed the government's latest actions in the fields of ports, rail transport, and aviation.

Sadegh stated that numerous memorandums of understanding have been signed in the port sector, including agreements worth approximately 200 trillion rials with private sector investors. These agreements involve key ports such as Shahid Rajaei Port, Port of Chabahar, and Amirabad Port, along with several others.

She highlighted what she described as a major development in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman region under the current administration, including the signing of a logistics site agreement at Shahid Rajaei Port with Kazakhstan. "What we are witnessing now is economic diplomacy in action," she said, emphasizing that transport and transit serve as the backbone of Iran's broader regional economic engagement.

The minister also announced the start of dredging operations in the Arvand River, marking the first such effort since the Iran-Iraq War. She described the project as highly significant for both Khuzestan province and the country as a whole.

Several wartime shipwrecks remain submerged in the river, including the large "Khanian" wreck. Authorities aim to remove the wreckage before the Iranian New Year. Currently, only vessels of 2,000 to 3,000 tons can navigate the river, but after dredging, ships of up to 15,000 tons will be able to pass.

Sadegh said President Masoud Pezeshkian personally follows up weekly on the development of suburban rail systems, particularly around Tehran and other major cities. She cited heavy traffic congestion, air pollution, and road accidents as major reasons for prioritizing commuter rail.

The ministry aims to resolve suburban transit challenges between Tehran and surrounding cities within the next 18 months. Coordination efforts are underway between the national railway company, municipalities, and the Interior Ministry to ensure efficient passenger distribution through low-emission buses, vans, and taxis.

On international rail corridors, Sadegh said Iran has intensified cooperation with neighboring countries including Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey.



She emphasized that the long-awaited Chabahar-Zahedan railway—considered a missing strategic link—will be completed by the end of the current year. The project has surpassed 80 percent physical progress.

Additional rail segments connecting Khash to Iranshahr and Chabahar to Nikshahr are also nearing completion, with track-laying progressing rapidly.

The minister confirmed that land acquisition for the Rasht-Astara railway route will be finalized this year. The project is of particular importance to Iran and Russia within the North-South Transport Corridor framework.

Regarding the Shalamcheh-Basra railway, she said demining operations have been completed on the Iranian side, and construction of a bridge over the Arvand River is expected to be finished before next year's Arbaeen pilgrimage. Iran is responsible for bridge construction, while Iraq will lay the track.

Sadegh announced the revival of the China-Iran freight train after years of suspension, noting that a substantial portion of imported solar panels has recently arrived via this route. The rail corridor now enables cargo movement from China through Iran onward to Europe.

She added that rail links between Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey have resumed, as has freight service connecting Uzbekistan through Turkmenistan to Iran and onward to the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, and India. Rail capacity from Russia through the eastern branch of the International North-South Corridor has also increased.

Passenger services such as the Tehran-Van train have resumed after years of inactivity.

Addressing aviation delays, Sadegh acknowledged that sanctions have impacted aircraft maintenance and fleet expansion. Nevertheless, nearly 2,000 seats have been added with private sector cooperation.

She stressed that while sanctions pose challenges, airlines must uphold passenger rights. The Civil Aviation Organization, she said, monitors airline performance and has required carriers to display passenger rights information at airports and onboard aircraft.

Despite existing fleet limitations, she emphasized the government's commitment to improving maintenance standards and reducing delays to better serve public demand.

# Lahouti Urges Three-Month Deadline for Exporters to Repatriate Currency

### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran Export Confederation has called on authorities to grant greater flexibility to genuine exporters, warning that short deadlines of three to five days for repatriating foreign currency earnings are unrealistic under current economic and sanctions conditions.

In recent days, text messages have reportedly been sent to exporters giving them just five days to settle outstanding foreign exchange commitments. According to reports, these notifications have been issued over the past 10 to 15 days and apply even to exporters with relatively small outstanding amounts, in some cases as little as \$30,000.

Speaking to ISNA, Mohammad Lahouti said the issue of returning export earnings to the country's economic cycle has been under discussion since 2018, when new foreign exchange regulations were introduced. Although various institutions have examined the matter and offered commentary, he argued that a comprehensive and effective resolution has yet to be achieved.

Lahouti categorized export activity into three main groups to clarify the situation. The first group consists of large enterprises, primarily state-owned or quasi-state entities. In these cases, he noted, the government has the ability to manage and determine the status of foreign currency returns through internal mechanisms and agreements.

The second group includes small and medium-sized private-sector exporters and what he described as "real economic actors." According to Lahouti, a significant number of these exporters have already fulfilled between 60 and 70 percent of their foreign exchange obligations. However, a portion—sometimes 20 to 30 percent or more—remains unsettled.

The third group involves so-called "single-use" or one-year commercial cards, through which substantial volumes of exports were conducted, but where the resulting foreign currency did not return to the formal economic cycle.

Lahouti emphasized that judicial and supervisory authorities were



justified in addressing violations in the third category. He noted that since 2018, exporters with outstanding currency obligations have received notifications from anti-smuggling authorities requiring settlement. In the case of state-affiliated companies, he reiterated, the government can resolve issues based on their particular structures.

However, he stressed that the primary concern lies with the second group—active, legitimate exporters who continue to operate production units and engage in export and import activities. For these businesses, he argued, the three- to five-day deadlines imposed via text messages are impractical.

"Given the country's sanctions environment and the complexities involved in transferring foreign currency, such short timeframes are simply not feasible," Lahouti said.

He explained that exporters often must rely on specialized and sometimes complicated channels to transfer funds or physically bring banknotes into the country. These processes are time-consuming and cannot realistically be completed within a few days.

Reflecting the position of the private sector and chambers of commerce, Lahouti called for a more flexible approach toward genuine exporters. While expressing full support for legal action against offenders and those misusing commercial cards, he proposed granting at least a three-month deadline to legitimate exporters with partial outstanding obligations.

Such an extension, he argued, would restore confidence within the export community and demonstrate that the government and judiciary stand alongside law-abiding businesses. In turn, exporters would be better positioned to return foreign currency earnings to the national economy through the most efficient available channels.

Lahouti concluded by reiterating that while enforcement against abuse is necessary, policymakers must differentiate between violators and active exporters who are committed to fulfilling their obligations but require a realistic timeframe to do so.

## Prolonged Stagnation More Dangerous Than Economic Crisis



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Ahmadreza Farshchian, Head of the Import Management Commission at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, has warned that continued economic stagnation and indecision pose greater risks to the country's economy than many overt crises, calling for urgent measures to restore trust to both the economy and society.

In an interview with Iran Chamber Online, Farshchian said the persistence of recessionary conditions and delays in decision-making have imposed heavy costs on economic activity. He emphasized that when businesses are unable to form a clear picture of the future, they lose the capacity to make firm decisions or take calculated risks, leading them to operate with extreme caution.

"When economic actors cannot see a clear horizon ahead, they inevitably slow down," he said. "This state of suspension and lack of decision-making can, in many ways, be more damaging than an explicit economic crisis."

Farshchian pointed to currency volatility and what he described as a "neither war nor peace" environment as key factors undermining investment in the production sector. According to him, the prevailing uncertainty has caused serious hesitation among investors and delayed critical decisions, resulting in a broader stagnation of economic activity.

He stressed that suspension and indecision carry costs that are often heavier than visible crises. "In such a situation, forward movement stops," he said. "While other economies continue to advance, standing still effectively means losing relative position. Even if there is no clear regression, inactivity reduces a country's share and standing among competitors."

## Commercial Vessel Traffic to Iranian Ports Continues Uninterrupted



### IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the Iranian Shipping Association and Related Services has confirmed that commercial vessels are continuing to sail from all import origins toward the ports of the Islamic Republic of Iran, dismissing claims of any disruption to maritime trade flows.

Speaking on Sunday in an interview with IRNA, Massoud Polmeh rejected reports suggesting that commercial ships had halted operations to and from Iran. He explained that the Industry, Mine and Trade Organization of Bushehr Province had sent a letter to the head of the Trade Promotion Organization claiming that ship movements between major port hubs and Iran had been suspended. The letter reportedly cited discussions from the Bushehr Chamber's Dialogue Council as its source.

Polmeh said it appeared there had been a misunderstanding regarding the council's discussions. As the sole private-sector representative body in the shipping and maritime services sector, the association categorically denies any interruption in cargo transport, he stressed.

"There has been no disruption in the process of transferring goods," Polmeh said. "Commercial vessel traffic from all import origins toward the ports of the Islamic Republic of Iran is ongoing, and there are no problems affecting the export and import of goods to and from the southern ports of the country."

## Mexican Army Says Drug Lord El Mencho Killed in Raid

GUADALAJARA (Dispatches) - The Mexican army announced that it had killed powerful drug lord Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera in an operation that sparked a wave of violence in various parts of the country. Oseguera, the 59-year-old leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, was wounded in a clash with soldiers in the town of Tapalpa, in Jalisco state, and died while being flown to Mexico City, the army said in a statement. He had a US\$15 million bounty on his head. Gunmen retaliating for the raid blocked more than 20 roads in western Jalisco state, which includes Tapalpa, with burning cars and trucks. The violence spread to other states as well.



## China Calls on U.S. to Cancel Trump-Era Tariffs Following Supreme Court Ruling



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China urged the United States to cancel unilateral tariffs announced by President Donald Trump after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down many of his measures, ruling he lacked authority under a 1977 law. Trump responded by unveiling new global import duties of up to 15% under different powers. The court ruled six to three on Friday that Trump does not have the authority to impose tariffs under a 1977 law he has relied on to impose sudden levies on individual countries, upending global trade. Trump reacted furiously, announcing first a new 10 percent global duty on imports under a different legal authority, before raising it to 15 percent on Saturday. China's commerce ministry said on Monday it was conducting a "comprehensive assessment" of the ruling's impact, and called on Washington to lift the tariffs. "China urges the United States to cancel its unilateral tariff measures on its trading partners," the ministry said in a statement. "There are no winners in a trade war and that protectionism leads nowhere." The new 15 percent global duties are due to kick in on Tuesday, and are expected to last 150 days with exemptions for some products. The Chinese foreign ministry also noted that it was paying "close attention" to potential moves by the United States to maintain increased tariffs.

## More Than 200 Venezuelan Political Prisoners Launch Hunger Strike



CARACAS (Dispatches) - More than 200 Venezuelan political prisoners were on hunger strike to demand their release under a new amnesty law that excludes many of them. The amnesty was approved by Venezuela's congress on Thursday as part of a wave of reforms encouraged by the United States after it ousted and captured former president Nicolas Maduro on January 3. The hunger strike began Friday night at the Rodeo I prison on the outskirts of Caracas. Inmates complained they would not benefit from the law because it excludes cases involving the military, which are the most common ones at that facility. "Approximately 214 people in total, including Venezuelans and foreigners, are on hunger strike," said Yalitzka Garcia, mother-in-law of a prisoner named Nahuel Agustin Gallo. Gallo, an Argentine police officer, is accused of terrorism, another category that is excluded. "They decided Friday to go on hunger strike because of the scope of the amnesty law, which excludes many of them," said Shakira Ibarreto, daughter of a policeman arrested in 2024. On Sunday, a team from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited the Rodeo I prison. "This is the first time they have allowed us to approach that prison," Filippo Gatti, the ICRC's health coordinator for Venezuela, told family members. "It's a first step, and I think we're on the right track."

# Lula Says World Needs Jobs and Peace, Not Trump's 15% Tariffs or Another Cold War

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva urged Donald Trump on Sunday to treat all countries equally after the US leader imposed a 15 per cent tariff on imports following an adverse Supreme Court ruling. "I want to tell the US President Donald Trump that we don't want a new Cold War. We don't want interference in any other country, we want all countries to be treated equally," Lula told reporters in New Delhi. The conservative-majority Supreme Court ruled six to three on Friday that a 1977 law Trump has relied on to slap sudden levies on individual countries, upending global trade, "does not authorise the President to impose tariffs". Lula said he would not like to react to the Supreme Court decisions of another country, but hoped that Brazil's relations with the United States "will go back to normalcy" soon. The veteran leftist leader is expected to travel to Washington next month for a meeting with Trump. "I am convinced that Brazil-US relation will go back to normalcy after our conversation," Lula, 80, said, adding that Brazil only wanted to "live in peace, generate jobs, and improve the lives of our people". Lula and Trump, 79, stand on polar opposite sides when it comes to issues such as multilateralism, international trade and the fight against climate change. However, ties between Brazil and the United States appear to be on the mend after months of animosity between Washington and Brasilia. As a result, Trump's administration has exempted



key Brazilian exports from 40 percent tariffs that had been imposed on the South American country last year. "The world doesn't need more turbulence, it needs peace," said Lula, who arrived in India on Wednesday for a summit on artificial intelligence and a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Ties between Washington and Brasilia soured in recent months, with Trump angered over the trial and conviction of his ally, the far-right former Brazil president Jair Bolsonaro. Trump imposed sanctions against several top officials, including a Supreme Court judge, to punish Brazil for what he termed a "witch hunt" against Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years in prison for his role in a botched coup bid after his 2022 election loss to Lula. Lula said that, as the two largest democracies in the Americas, he looked forward to a positive relationship with the United States. "We are two men of 80 years of age, so we cannot play around with democracy," he said. "We have to take this very seriously. We have to shake hands eye-to-eye, person-to-person, and to discuss what is best for the US and Brazil." Lula also praised Modi after India and Brazil agreed to boost cooperation on critical minerals and rare earths and signed a raft of other deals on Saturday. "I have a lot of affinity with Prime Minister Modi," he said. Lula will travel to South Korea later on Sunday for meetings with President Lee Jae Myung and to attend a business forum.

## EU Expects U.S. to Honor Trade Deal as Trump Hikes Tariffs

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Commission called Sunday for Washington to abide by the terms of the trade deal struck last year with the EU, as President Donald Trump announced new global tariff hikes a day after an adverse Supreme Court ruling. "A deal is a deal," said a commission statement. "As the United States' largest trading partner, the EU expects the US to honour its commitments set out in the Joint Statement -- just as the EU stands by its commitments," it added. "The European Commission requests full clarity on the steps the United States intends to take following the recent Supreme Court ruling on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)." Trump temporarily raised the global duty on imports into the United States to 15 percent on Saturday. The move delivered a fresh jolt of uncertainty just a day after the Supreme Court ruled much of his international tariffs campaign illegal. The EU and United States last year struck an agreement setting US tariffs at a maximum 15 percent on most European goods. "EU products must continue to benefit from the most competitive treatment, with no increases in tariffs beyond the clear and all-inclusive ceiling previously agreed," the commission said. It warned that "when applied unpredictably, tariffs are inherently disruptive, undermining confidence and stability across global markets and creating further uncertainty across international supply chains". The EU executive said it remained "in close and continuous contact" with Trump's administration and that EU Trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic had spoken with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce



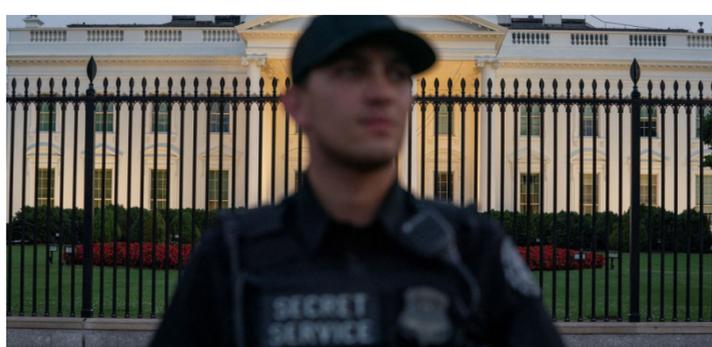
Secretary Howard Lutnick on Saturday.

Greer told US broadcaster CBS on Sunday that Washington's deals with the European Union, China and other partners remained in force despite the Supreme Court ruling. "So we're having active conversations with them. We want them to understand that these deals are going to be good deals," he told the "Face the Nation" programme. He added: "We expect to stand by them. We expect our partners to stand by them."

But European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde told the same show she was not sure what the consequences of the US court decision were. "I hope it's going to be clarified," she added. The European Parliament's trade committee had been due to approve the EU-US deal on Tuesday -- but the Supreme Court judgment casts doubt on that now happening. The committee's head, Bernd Lange, said he would call during a meeting of parliament's political groups on Monday for putting "legislative work on hold until we have a proper legal assessment and clear commitments from the US side". "Pure tariff chaos from the US administration. No one can make sense of it anymore -- only open questions and growing uncertainty for the EU and other US trading partners," Lange wrote. "Clarity and legal certainty are needed before any further steps are taken," he added. Analysts at ING bank wrote Sunday that even if Trump's new tariffs might be legally challenged, they could just be "smoke and mirrors" to buy time for another tariff option. That could be tariffs on the basis of unfair trade practices or trade agreements violations, for example, they wrote. "It now remains unclear whether the (European) Parliament will push for a full renegotiation of the deal," ING added. Even if they did however, the US could still use other tariffs "to pressure the EU to return to the negotiating table". The Supreme Court ruling was a stunning rebuke to Trump from a judicial body that has largely sided with him since his return to office. It marked a major political setback in striking down Trump's signature economic policy that has roiled the global trade order. Several countries have said they are studying the Supreme Court ruling and Trump's subsequent tariff announcements.

## Armed Man Shot Dead After Breaching Security at Trump's Mar-a-Lago

MIAMI (Dispatches) - U.S. Secret Service agents fatally shot a man armed with a shotgun who breached the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in the early hours of Sunday morning. Trump was in Washington at the time of the incident, which officials said happened around 1.30 am (0630 GMT). The suspect, a man in his early 20s, was spotted by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property, carrying a shotgun and a fuel can, the Secret Service said. Agents confronted the man and told him to disarm but he raised his gun. "The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items,'" Palm Beach County sheriff Ric Bradshaw told reporters. "At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Bradshaw said. A deputy and two Secret Service agents then shot him. The man was pronounced deceased and no US officers were injured. The Secret Service said no one under its protection was present in Mar-a-Lago at the time.



Bradshaw, the Palm Beach sheriff, identified the shooter as 21-year-old Austin Tucker Martin, a resident of a small town in North Carolina about 700 miles (1127 kilometers) north of Mar-a-Lago, according to the Washington Post. Martin was an illustrator of landscapes and golf courses, and had an older sister who died three years ago at the age of 21, though obituaries did not provide a cause of death, the Miami Herald reported. Trump, who often spends his weekends in Mar-a-Lago, has been the target of several assassination plots or attempts. Earlier this month, Ryan Routh, 59, who plotted to assassinate Trump at a Florida golf course in September 2024, two months before the US election, was sentenced to life in prison. Routh's planned attack on Trump came two months after an assassination attempt on the Republican leader in Pennsylvania, where 20-year-old Matthew Crooks fired several shots during a rally, one of them grazing Trump's right ear.

## Arsenal Beat Tottenham, Liverpool Leave It Late



LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal made an emphatic statement in the Premier League title race as they eased their recent jitters with a 4-1 rout of Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday restoring their five-point lead. After successive draws had raised doubts, two goals each from Eberechi Eze and Viktor Gyokeres gave Arsenal their biggest league win at Tottenham since a 5-0 victory in 1978. "We showed what we are made of, but we have to show it again and again," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "This is the Premier League, it will go all the way for sure. Ten games in the Premier League is a long way." Arsenal have 61 points from 28 games with Manchester City, who beat Newcastle United on Saturday to crank up the pressure, on 56 points having played one game fewer. Reigning champions Liverpool are not in the title race but boosted their hopes of a top-four finish as they nicked a last-gasp 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Nottingham Forest. Midfielder Alexis Mac Allister gave his side a scarcely-deserved win, rifling home a rebound in the 97th minute shortly after having a goal disallowed. "Today, I think we got more than we deserved. A draw would have been a fairer result of this game than for us to win it," Liverpool manager Arne Slot said. Liverpool are sixth in the table, level on 45 points with Chelsea and Manchester United, who are fourth and fifth. Forest are 17th on 27 points, two above the relegation zone.

In Sunday's other games, Crystal Palace eked out a 1-0 win over rock-bottom 10-man Wolverhampton Wanderers who had Ladislav Krejci sent off for picking up two yellow cards. Evann Guessand sealed it for Palace in the 90th minute, lifting his side to 13th in the table. Raul Jimenez struck twice as Fulham won 3-1 at Sunderland to move into the top half. After successive draws, most notably at bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers in midweek after leading 2-0, Arsenal responded to the barbs about them cracking under the pressure in superb style. Eze, who was snatched from under the noses of Tottenham in the summer transfer window, returned to rub salt into the wounds of Spurs for the second time this season. The England forward had not scored for Arsenal since a hat-trick in the reverse fixture in November but struck in each half while Gyokeres also underlined his growing confidence. Eze volleyed in a 32nd-minute opener only for Randal Kolo Muani to equalise two minutes later after a mistake by Declan Rice. Gyokeres restored Arsenal's lead shortly after the interval with a superb curled effort and Eze's second gave his side breathing space. Gyokeres then capped a fine display with his second, putting the icing on the cake in stoppage time. On his side's response after the crushing disappointment at Wolves, Arteta said: "There is no explanation how you draw that game. But it happened. Then you have to lift yourself up, you're angry, upset and ashamed. You have to bring everybody together."

## U.S. Beat Canada in Olympic Ice Hockey Overtime Thriller

MILAN (Dispatches) - The United States ended a nearly half-century wait for Olympic men's ice hockey gold with a 2-1 overtime victory against Canada in a thrilling final on Sunday, with Jack Hughes delivering their third title and first since 1980 with the winning shot. Hughes left it all - including at least one of his teeth - out on the ice in a nerve-jangling triumph exactly 46 years to the day since the iconic U.S. "Miracle on Ice" victory over the Soviet Union en route to gold in Lake Placid. It came down to three-on-three play where Hughes collected a pass from Zach Werenski and fired into the net one minute and 41 seconds into the extra period, flashing a bloody, chipped grin after receiving a high stick to the face in the third period. The goal resulted in gloves, helmets and sticks flying over the ice as his teammates ran to smother the American hero. "The best experiences I have are playing for my



country, playing to break the golden drought with this group of guys and for us to win gold here at the Olympics," said Hughes. He arrived at a post-game media conference speaking with a newly acquired lisp as the smell of celebratory beer wafted in the air. "Just an unbelievable moment," he added. Matt Boldy had put the U.S. ahead after six minutes with the Americans' first shot of the game before Canada levelled through Cale Makar to set up a nail-biting final period. U.S. goalie Connor Hellebuyck made 40 saves over the 60 minutes, a fitting end to a terrific tournament for the keeper who never let up a power play goal in Milan. Canada were missing captain Sidney Crosby, 38, who scored the overtime goal against the U.S. to secure gold on home ice at Vancouver 2010. Crosby left the quarter-final injured in a sad finish with fans wondering if it could be his last Games.

## Gu Becomes Most Decorated Freestyle Skier in Winter Olympics History

LIVIGNO (Dispatches) - Eileen Gu won the women's freeski halfpipe to end her wait for a gold medal at the Milan-Cortina Olympics, becoming the most decorated freestyle skier in the history of the Winter Games. The 22-year-old, who also won silver in slopestyle and big air in Italy, posted a best score of 94.75 at Livigno Snow Park to edge out China teammate Li Fanghui, who scored 93.00. Britain's Zoe Atkin took bronze. As in her previous competitions, Gu was forced to deal with self-inflicted pressure. The defending champion flunked her first run, scoring just 30.00, as world champion Atkin set the pace with 90.50. But Gu, who now has three Olympic golds and three



silvers in total, produced a dazzling performance in the second round to wow the judges. She punched the air, cheered by a sizeable group of Chinese fans, who stood behind a row of flags, and was awarded 94.00. Gu raised her game still further in her final run, scoring 94.75 to put her further out of reach and the remaining competitors could not catch her. US-born Gu was the darling of the 2022 Beijing Olympics, where she won two golds and a silver, and has again been one of the standout stars in Italy. The women's final was postponed from Saturday evening after heavy snowfall in the Italian Alps but Sunday's competition took place in dazzling sunlight.

## South Africa Thrash India to End 12-Match T20 World Cup Win Streak



AHMEDABAD (Dispatches) - South Africa ended India's 12-match winning streak at the T20 World Cup with a crushing 76-run win in Ahmedabad in the opening Group 1 Super Eights match. After a counter-attacking 63 by David Miller and some late hitting from Tristan Stubbs took South Africa to 187-7, the defending champions were all out for 111 in 18.5 overs, failing badly in their first chase of the tournament. Left-arm quick Marco Jansen finished with 4-22, while left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj took 3-24 as the South African bowlers exposed India's fragile batting line-up. "Great performance. Very different type of wicket to what we've had here, so great to see the boys assess that pretty early and adapt their skills to execute their plans," said South Africa captain Aiden Markram. "We're really pumped for the bowling group. They've been working hard, started the comp a bit tough, but the way they rocked up tonight was a great effort." The magnitude of the defeat means India will take a poor net run rate forward and that could prove pivotal if their Super Eights group is tight. Hot favourites to defend their crown on home soil, India will likely need to win their two remaining Super Eight games against Zimbabwe and the West Indies to have a chance of qualifying for the semi-finals. "We bowled really well, but we could have batted a little better," said India captain Suryakumar Yadav. "Sometimes you've got to think, if you're chasing 180-185, you can't win the game in the power play, but you might lose it. "We lost too many wickets in the power play." Both teams were unbeaten in the group phase and the game was a rematch of the 2024 T20 World Cup final in Barbados, which India won.

## Thunder Strike From Long Range to Halt Cavs' Seven-Game Win Streak



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Oklahoma City Thunder drilled 21 three-pointers in a 121-113 victory over Cleveland that halted the Cavaliers' seven-game NBA winning streak. Isaiah Joe scored 22 points and Cason Wallace added 20 points and 10 assists for the short-handed Thunder, who improved their Western Conference-leading record to 44-14 despite the absence of injured starters Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Jalen Williams as well as Ajay Mitchell and Alex Caruso. "It's a lot of fun just getting the ball rolling," said Wallace, who had just one turnover and excelled in a tough assignment of guarding James Harden. "Early game, so we tried to get our legs into it right from the jump. I feel like we came out and we had a little bit of momentum early in the game," added Wallace after a contest in which the Thunder scored their first nine points and led by as many as 23 in the first quarter. The teams traded the lead in the third, but Oklahoma City took the lead into the fourth and did not relinquish it. Seven Thunder players scored in double figures, with center Chet Holmgren contributing a 17-point, 15-rebound double-double. Harden and Donovan Mitchell scored 20 points apiece for Cleveland. In San Francisco, Golden State's Brandin Podziemski scored 15 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter as the Warriors beat the Denver Nuggets 128-117.