

# Leader: Gov't bodies should help not hinder private sector

## Economy Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised the performance of Iran's private sector that has led to its "satisfactory progress," despite extreme pressure and sanctions imposed by the West, urging government bodies not to hinder private sector.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in Tehran on Wednesday, during a meeting with a group of private sector manufacturers and economic figures. The Leader pointed to an exhibition that has been held in the Iranian capital to showcase the achievements of the country's private sector, under the banner of "Pioneers of Progress, a National Event of the Capabilities and Achievements of the Private Sector." The event was visited by Ayatollah Khamenei in person on Tuesday. "Yesterday's exhibition showed that the private sector has managed to reach an acceptable level of progress notwithstanding foreign pressures and sanctions and the threats of imposition of more sanctions," the Leader stated. Ayatollah Khamenei was referring to the illegal and unilateral economic measures that the United States and its Western allies began enforcing against the Islamic Republic in the aftermath of Washington's illegal and unilateral departure from a 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. After imposing the sanctions, the

Western trio of the UK, France, and Germany said they would pursue the US's return to the deal, but stopped short of enabling the prospect.

The deal's Western parties would, meanwhile, ramp up the sanctions at will in response to the legitimate retaliatory nuclear measures that Tehran has been taking in response to the Western non-commitment to contractual obligations.

## De-dollarization and BRICS

Ayatollah Khamenei also encouraged "maximum use" of the country's participation in the world's economic bodies such as the BRICS group of emerging economies.

"One of our problems arises from our dependence on the dollar. The BRICS' financial system and the financial transactions using the currencies of BRICS' member countries that are expected to take place contribute greatly to resolution of this problem."

The Leader, meanwhile, regretted that the country had failed to properly publicize its achievements across various sectors in a way that would do its progress justice.

"We have fallen short in the area of [properly] displaying our instances of progress," Ayatollah Khamenei noted. The Leader, therefore, advised implementation of "important" media projects towards enabling proper presentation of the country's advances to duly inform those seeking to engage

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses a group of private sector manufacturers and economic figures in Tehran, Iran on January 22, 2025.



in productive economic activity in the country, including youths and students.

Ayatollah Khamenei also encouraged similar media activism towards "realization of [the country's] dreams."

"This comprises a separate chapter,

which entails [those responsible] sitting down and engaging in discussions and reflections in this area."

Ayatollah Khamenei had named the Iranian calendar year of 1403, which ends on March 20, 2025, the year of "Surge in production through people's

participation."

Addressing the meeting, the Leader advised towards continuous economic progress and just distribution of such progress' rewards among the public so the people would sense its positive effect on their lives.

## Enemies to see Iran in 'weakest position' only in dreams: *Pezeshkian*

### Ahvaz oil desalination plant inaugurated



The photo shows Iran's largest oil desalination plant in Ahvaz, southwestern Iran, which was inaugurated remotely by President Masoud Pezeshkian on January 22, 2025.

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## Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday dismissed the notion that Iran had plunged to its "weakest position," saying the country would not end up in what its enemies were dreaming about.

"Our adversaries are assessing that Iran is now in its weakest position but they should only dream on that their plans will come true," Pezeshkian told a group of businesspeople and industry owners in Ahvaz during a visit to the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

"There is no way we will let Iran end up in the state they [enemies] imagine," Pezeshkian added.

He gave assurances that Iran would overcome challenges including energy shortages among others with the help of the people and the efforts of officials.

"We are working consistently and systematically to deal with shortages," Pezeshkian pointed out.

He noted that while his government inherited shortages in energy and other sectors, great efforts had been made to mitigate them, including preventing a potential gas and electricity crisis earlier this year.

He reiterated his commitment to utilizing all national resources to address shortfalls and improve conditions.

Pezeshkian further called for solidarity and collaboration to achieve progress, expressing confidence that with the support of the people, Iran could overcome its challenges and achieve regional leadership.

He acknowledged the complaints and demands raised by the public and business community, attributing many issues to inefficient structures inherited from previous administrations.

The president expressed frustration over the governments' underperformance in Khuzestan despite its abundant resources, including water, fertile land, underground resources, and access to the sea.

He stressed that such conditions are unacceptable and vowed to address these challenges by empowering local officials and leveraging capable individuals regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender.

Pezeshkian highlighted efforts to delegate authority to provincial governors, enabling them to collaborate with the private sector and local communities to resolve issues without

needing to refer them to Tehran.

Pezeshkian and his delegation arrived in Khuzestan for a two-day visit on Wednesday, marking the administration's fourth provincial trip.

The president was accompanied by several cabinet members, including the ministers of oil, energy, roads and urban development, cultural heritage, agriculture, welfare, and health, as well as deputies for rural development and women's affairs.

The large delegation underscores the government's commitment to the development and prosperity of Khuzestan.

## Oil desalination plant goes online

In another development on Wednesday, the largest desalination plant in Ahvaz began operations under Pezeshkian's directive and in the presence of the country's oil minister.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad stated that the plant will process salty oil from the Ahvaz oil field, raising the capacity to process salty crude oil by 110,000 barrels per day, IRNA reported.

Paknejad, for his part, emphasized that improving the quality of processed crude oil to meet export and refinery standards is a key aspect of the project.

The project, valued at 58 million euros, is expected to create 180 direct and 400 indirect jobs. Over 85% of the equipment was domestically produced, with 100% of engineering, construction, and commissioning services provided locally.

The plant's completion enhances the separation of oil and water, ensuring industrial wastewater meets environmental standards, thereby reducing pollution.

## Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan reach full agreement to complete INSTC: *Minister*

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Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq announced that a comprehensive agreement has been reached between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan to complete the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), one of the country's most important transit routes.

Speaking at the conclusion of the 16th meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Commission on Wednesday, Sadeq emphasized the critical role of the Rasht-Astara route in the corridor.

She noted that Azerbaijan, as a bridge between Russia and Iran, plays a key role in facilitating cargo transportation among the three nations.

Sadeq highlighted that trilateral meetings between Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia are underway to activate the INSTC, with a target of handling 15 million tons of transit cargo, and expressed hope that these efforts would yield results soon.

The minister also addressed the trade potential between Iran and Azerbaijan, stating that bilateral trade reached \$487 million in 2023, with Iran exporting \$473 million worth of goods and importing \$14 million from Azerbaijan.

In the first 11 months of 2024, trade volume rose to \$583 million, with



Iranian exports accounting for \$570 million and imports totaling \$12.9 million. Sadeq stressed that the two countries have the potential to significantly increase trade, setting a five-year target of \$10 billion.

Sadeq underscored the current administration's commitment to expanding bilateral relations and removing barriers to cooperation.

She expressed satisfaction with the successful hosting of the 16th Joint Economic Commission meeting in Tehran after a three-year hiatus and expressed hope that follow-ups on agreements in transportation, customs, energy, oil, gas, electricity, water, banking, preferential trade, and investment would open new avenues for collaboration.

The minister proposed drafting a roadmap to achieve the \$10 billion trade target and called for swift resumption of negotiations to boost trade volumes.

She emphasized that transit cooperation is a fundamental area of collaboration between the two countries, with significant untapped potential in rail, road, air, and maritime transport.

Sadeq acknowledged existing transit challenges but expressed optimism that comprehensive commission meetings would help resolve them.

She highlighted key infrastructure projects, including the inauguration of the second Astarachay Bridge last year, progress on the construction of Kalaleh border bridge, and ongoing road and rail projects such as the Aqband-Nakhichevan route via the Jolfa border and the Astara railway.

The meeting, held in Tehran after a three-year pause, brought together technical and expert groups from both countries to discuss economic, trade, cultural, transportation, tourism, energy and other areas of cooperation.