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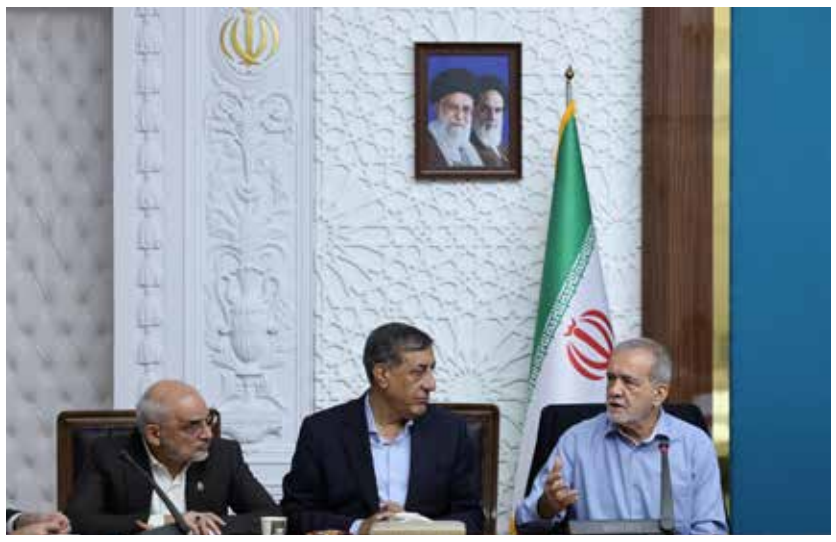
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Pezeshkian urges overhaul of targeted aid



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian(R) speaks during a Government Information Council meeting in Tehran on November 1, 2026.
president.ir

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for an overhaul of Iran's subsidy system, ordering the government to redirect public funds from wealthier citizens to low-income households and cut living costs in deprived and border regions.

The government launched a food voucher program in January, replacing a targeted subsidy scheme that had been in place since 2010 under which every individual received a monthly cash handout.

Last week, the government raised monthly payments under the food voucher program by 50%, giving 15 million rials each to nearly 40 million people. The program aims to help households buy a range of essential food items.

Speaking at a meeting of the Government Information Council on Sunday, Pezeshkian said public resources belonged to all citizens and should be distributed according to household income and need, rather than equally.

"The government has a duty to direct its support toward those who genuinely need it," he said, arguing that people with sufficient financial means should not receive assistance intended for vulnerable families.

Pezeshkian called for the use of international experience to identify wealthier beneficiaries and remove them from welfare lists. He said low-income and vulnerable households should take priority, particularly women-headed families, orphans, people without family support, unemployed people and families without adequate income.

The criteria for identifying these groups were clear, he said, adding that explaining the priorities could help build public support.

Acknowledging limited state resources, Pezeshkian said the government could not afford to provide broader assistance to every social group and should focus first on those in greatest need.

He also criticized the distribution of energy subsidies, saying it was unacceptable for wealthier people to benefit from subsidized water, electricity and natural gas while poorer households lacked adequate support.

"The government should stop subsidizing those who did not need assistance and redirect the savings to low-income groups," he said.

Pezeshkian also called for inflation and living costs in deprived and border provinces to be lower than in Tehran.

"The residents of less-developed areas should have access to essential goods at lower prices, with measures to maintain price stability," he added.

He referred to consultations with the Mostazafan Foundation and the Basij Organization, urging them to help develop practical measures to cut basic goods prices in disadvantaged regions. Such efforts must move beyond planning and produce concrete results, he said.

Pezeshkian said the Government Information Council had a key role in explaining the government's support policies and preparing the public for subsidy reforms.

"Dialogue and clear explanations of the rationale behind the changes were essential to securing public acceptance," he said.

He urged government agencies and other sectors of society to work together to ease economic hardship and ensure a fairer distribution of national resources. The government, he said, must not allow vulnerable households to bear the burden of inflation and rising living costs.

Iran eases currency rules to boost tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is introducing new measures to facilitate travel for foreign visitors and support its tourism industry, including a currency exchange system at entry points and 123 trillion rials (about $45 million) in loans for tourism and handicrafts businesses, the tourism minister said.

Reza Salehi-Amiri outlined the measures at a meeting with tourism associations in Tehran on October 31, 2026.

He identified Iraq, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Tajikistan as priority markets for attracting visitors, IRNA reported on Sunday.

A finalized mechanism will allow foreign tourists entering Iran by air, land or sea to exchange currency at banks at the unofficial market rate, subject to a 2% commission.



Foreign tourists visit Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, central Iran.
BORNA NEWS AGENCY

"Bank Shahr, Bank Mellat and Bank Refah are ready to provide the service. Each visitor may bring up to $10,000, with a separate allowance for every family member," he said.

The government also plans to provide about $45 million in support loans. Thirty percent will go to ecotourism projects and 70% to handicrafts, he added.

Iran also plans to expand regional travel links. Salehi-Amiri said the country and Iraq aimed to reach 10 million tourist exchanges between them.

"Tehran plans to facilitate overland travel from Iraq through western border crossings and connect visitors to domestic flights to Mashhad in the northeast, Isfahan in central Iran, Shiraz in the south and northern destinations," he said.

Coordination is under way with governors in Ilam and Kermanshah in western Iran and West Azerbaijan province in the northwest, he added.

Restoring international flights and lifting travel warnings are essential to reviving tourism, he said. Flights to China and Russia are operating, but expansion requires further permits and coordination.

A regulation establishing a Health Tourism Steering Council has been approved after two years of consultations.

Iran has about 800 museums, nearly 300 managed by the ministry. Some remain closed for security reasons but are expected to reopen within five days of receiving clearance. Salehi-Amiri said protecting cultural heritage takes priority over revenue.

Iran renews push for Masouleh's UNESCO listing

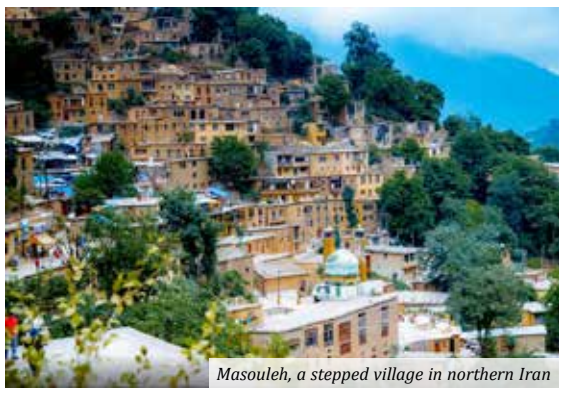
Arts & Culture Desk

An ICOMOS expert is conducting a field assessment of Masouleh, a stepped village in northern Iran, as the country seeks to advance the town's nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status, three years after the bid was deferred for further work.

Shaiful bin Shahidan, an evaluator for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), said the assessment would examine Masouleh's historical, cultural and architectural features against World Heritage criteria.

He described the 2023 deferral as an opportunity to document more fully the town's outstanding universal value, authenticity and distinctive characteristics, rather than a setback.

Masouleh's proposed cultural landscape lies in the Alborz Mountains in northern Iran. It reflects a long history of semi-nomadic pastoralism, mining and metalworking, alongside the town's distinctive stepped architecture and traditional livelihoods.



Masouleh, a stepped village in northern Iran

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee deferred the nomination at its 45th session in 2023, asking Iran to reconsider the scope of the proposed site and clarify the themes that could support a stronger case for its outstanding universal value.

The committee also called for greater community involvement in heritage management and a clear development strategy to ensure tourism does not undermine the area's social and economic fabric.

Shahidan said a comprehensive report based on the field assessment would be submitted to ICOMOS for review once the expert process was complete. The findings and supporting documents would then be examined under the organization's procedures.

A decision on whether to inscribe Masouleh on the World Heritage List will be made through UNESCO's formal process after the expert review.

Vietnam, Kashan discuss trade in local products

Arts & Culture Desk

Vietnam and the central Iranian city of Kashan have discussed expanding trade ties, with a focus on local products including rosewater, carpets and mineral goods, alongside Vietnamese coffee, cashew nuts and electrical products.

Vietnamese Ambassador to Iran Luong Ngoc Nguyen raised the potential for commercial cooperation during a meeting with Kashan Governor Mojtaba Raei on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The discussions highlighted opportunities to connect Kashan's traditional industries and local products with Vietnamese markets, while exploring potential trade in goods from both sides.

Nguyen said Vietnam could also benefit from Kashan's carpet industry and that efforts would be made to introduce the historic Iranian city to the Vietnamese public.

Raei called for joint meetings between economic delegations to identify areas of cooperation and strengthen commercial ties. He also proposed that Vietnam help restore one of Kashan's historic houses and turn it into a "Friend's House".

Kashan, known for its rosewater production and carpet-making tradition, has a population of more than 364,000. The city lies about 200 kilometers north of Isfahan, in central Iran.



Vietnamese Ambassador to Iran Luong Ngoc Nguyen (3rd L) holds a traditional souvenir from Kashan as he poses for a photo with Iranian officials in Kashan on November 1, 2026.
IRNA