



Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard, one of the Friday Prayer Imams of Tehran

Cleric Confirms Iran Government Spent Two-Thirds Of Reserve Fund

Sunday, 01/14/2024

Economy & Environment Iran

Interim Friday Prayer Imam of Tehran, Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard, stated that the government has not returned \$100 billion it withdrew from Iran's National Development Fund (NDF).

This is tantamount to two-thirds of Iran's aggregate reserve fund which was estimated to be as high as \$150 billion.

"Even the resources granted by the NDF to the private sector have not been reimbursed," added Aboutorabi-Fard, who holds a considerable sway in Iran as he is a member of the inner circle of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

The NDF was established in early 2000s to save part of oil revenues for future generations and Iran's development.

He criticized Iran's oil-based economy in which prices of goods are fixed by the state. He emphasized that the country's economy needs to move away from its dependency on oil and fossil fuels revenues towards knowledge and technology.

"The share of research in Iranian companies should be four percent today, whereas it is less than one percent," Aboutorabi-Fard warned.

According to a report by the Iranian parliament's research center released in August, as stringent international sanctions struck Iran during 2011-2013, the administration of former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad initiated **withdrawals from the NDF**.

Despite the end of sanctions in 2015 after a nuclear agreement, withdrawals from the NDF persisted throughout President Hassan Rouhani's two terms (2013-2021). In his initial presidential tenure, \$30 billion was withdrawn. However, as former US President Donald Trump abandoned the JCPOA and re-imposed sanctions, the Islamic Republic increasingly relied on its reserves, resulting in a negative cash flow in the NDF.

The pace of withdrawals accelerated further under the hardliner president Ebrahim Raisi.

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