

Foreign Ministry Has Strongly Condemned the Israeli Regime's Earlier Deadly Attacks Against Western Yemen, Warning That Such Aggression Risks Exacerbating the Already Dire Situation in the Region

IRAN NEWS

Gov't Has Announced It Will Continue to Allocate Subsidized Currency to Rice Imports Despite a Request From the Country's Plan and Budget Organization to Stop the Allocation to Provide More Support to Domestic Rice Growers

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Iran-China Double-Stack Container Train Launched



TEHRAN - The Iran-China double-stack container train was launched in a ceremony attended by the CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways.

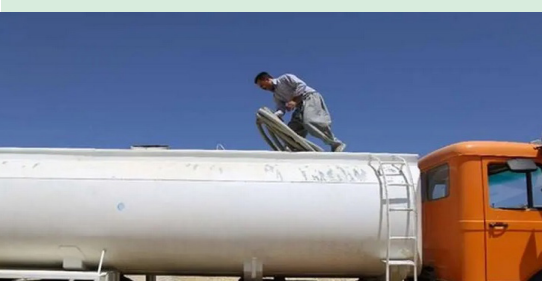
The ceremony was held at the Aprin rail dry port, where the first phase of the China-Iran-Europe rail corridor was also inaugurated.

Morteza Jafari, Deputy for Commerce and Operations of the Railway, stated at the inauguration ceremony of the Iran-China two-way container train and the launch of the first phase of the China-Iran-Europe rail project at the Aprin dry port: "In the first phase, the Iran to China train has been launched, and last week, the China-Iran train started transporting vehicles, which will arrive in Iran in two days and will be exchanged at Incheh Borun." He added, "Our plan in the first phase is to operate a train weekly from both sides with double-stack containers."

Jafari noted, "The transit time of this train is almost half that of transporting goods by sea, and it is also competitive in terms of tariffs." He expressed hope that the train service could be continuous, and in the near future, the train would run daily. The ceremony was also attended by the Chinese Deputy Ambassador, the Kazakh Ambassador, and the Turkmen Chargé d'Affaires. The Chinese Deputy Ambassador stated, "Bilateral cooperation between Iran and China in recent years has yielded positive results." He highlighted that the launch of this container train not only connects China to Central and Western Asia but also serves as a channel for developing Sino-Iranian cooperation and an opportunity for commercial, industrial, and cultural collaborations between the two countries. The Chinese Deputy Ambassador expressed hope for strengthened cooperation between the two countries in the near future within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative." Additionally, the Kazakh Ambassador expressed hope that this rail route would eventually connect to Turkey and the European Union. He pointed out that Kazakhstan is a neighbor to Iran via the Caspian Sea and is pursuing infrastructure projects in the ports of Anzali, Amirabad, and Caspian.

The Kazakh Ambassador hoped that this newly launched route, symbolizing the longstanding cooperation and friendship between these countries, would bring a bright future to the region and strengthen the relations and cooperation among these friendly countries daily.

Fuel Import Controls in Afghanistan Intensified



TEHRAN - Touching upon the latest situation of Iranian trucks stranded at the Mahirood border with Afghanistan and the reason for the halt of 400 trucks, Director General of the Office of Transit and International Transport of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization Javad Hedayati stated: "According to Afghanistan, the reason for stopping the trucks is the process of sampling the transported diesel, which apparently has been unusually prolonged."

He continued: "Iranian drivers have been stuck in Afghanistan for 15 days due to this sampling process."

Hedayati said: "Apparently, this issue has a precedent and has occurred again in the past two years. Recently, Afghanistan has imposed strict controls on imported fuel shipments, and the issue with the fuel carried by 400 Iranian trucks is not non-compliance with standards but rather the sampling of the fuel."

In response to the question of what actions the government has taken to reduce the waiting time for Iranian drivers, Hedayati emphasized: "The customs procedures are ongoing, and Iranian drivers are in Afghanistan. Once they enter the territory of the neighboring country, control falls outside the jurisdiction of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization. However, we have corresponded with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to investigate and resolve the issue, and the Ministry is following up with Afghanistan."

Hossein Mohammadian, a member of the joint Iran-Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce board, stated on Saturday that the 410 trucks, all driven by Iranians, are carrying fuel purchased by Afghanistan's private sector from Iraq. However, the quality of the fuel has not been approved in Afghanistan, causing the Iranian trucks to be stuck at the Mahirood border. Unlike Iran, fuel supply in Afghanistan is not managed by the government but by the private sector. Additionally, Afghanistan poorly adheres to certain standards and has a limited number of laboratories to test the quality of imported goods. These conditions tempt private sector traders to import lower-quality goods.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



Success of President, New Gov't, Success of All Iranians

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the success of the newly-elected President Masoud Pezeshkian in performing his duties is the success of all Iranians. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting with Members of the new Iranian Parliament in Tehran on Sunday. The leader noted that if the president succeeds in managing the country's affairs, improving the economy, advancing foreign relations and cultural issues, we all succeed. His victory is a victory for all of us. "Ayatollah Khamenei further called on the Iranian legislature and administration, as well as officials, to have a "united voice" in dealing with important issues to "disappoint" those seeking to sow discord among them. During this meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei stated: "The Parliament is not just an interrogative institution; it is also a responsive institution."

He added: "My strong recommendation is for constructive interaction between the Parliament and the new government. The success of the President and the new government is the success of all of us. Everyone should help the President fulfill his responsibilities toward the country. If we act in a way that helps the President succeed, that success is ours as well. If he achieves success in managing the country, advancing the economy, or in international and cultural issues, we all achieve success. His victory is our victory. This must be firmly believed."

The Supreme Leader continued: "On important issues, a unified voice must be heard from the country. There are times when the government, Parliament, and various officials must speak with one voice. Those who are listening carefully to find signs of disagreement and division should be disappointed; only one voice should be heard."

He emphasized: "The Parliament should not be a source of tension in public opinion. Negative portrayals and pessimism, which have sometimes been seen from some representatives, should be avoided. Although most representatives have consistently adhered to these important principles, it is a reality that deviations have been observed in some cases."

"Not only in the Parliament, but also in public appearances—many of you attend public gatherings, Friday prayers, and before sermons in various cities—or in the virtual space, which today influences much of our activities—your presence should be calming."

"Whenever you speak, express an opinion, or provide feedback, your audience should be reassured that you support unity, cooperation, and harmony among the forces. You should not convey messages contrary to this. This is important for maintaining the psychological security of the people."

The Leader added: The presence of the parliament in political and international matters is very important. A good example of the parliament's presence is the Strategic Action Law."

He also emphasized that the Gaza issue remains the top priority for the Islamic world and the parliament should not remain passive regarding this issue."

Ayatollah Khamenei then noted: The parliament's immediate task is to vote on the cabinet that Mr. Pezeshkian will present; this is an urgent and crucial task for you. Of course, the sooner the proposed cabinet is approved, after the necessary procedures, and the government can start working, the better it is for the country. However, in this regard, both you and the esteemed President-elect have significant responsibilities."

He then said: Who will lead in this field? In the fields of economy, culture, construction activities, and production, who will be the leader? The leader should be someone who is trustworthy, honest, devout, and fundamentally committed to the Islamic Republic and the Islamic system."

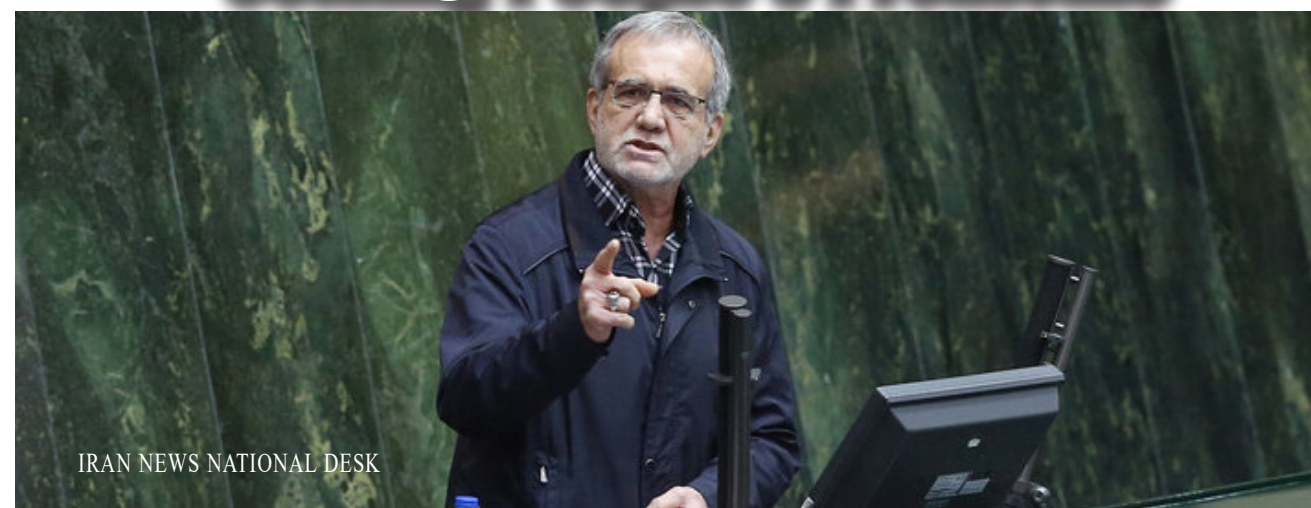
He reiterated: Faith is an important criterion. Hope for the future and a positive outlook are essential. Those who see the future as bleak cannot be entrusted with responsibility, especially critical and key responsibilities."

Majlis Speaker Calls for Examining Reasons for Decline in Turnout in Elections



TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker says the presidential election clearly demonstrated that the Islamic Republic has a deep belief in public participation. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, in his pre-speech remarks during the open session of the Majlis on Sunday stated: The honorable people of Iran, as in previous years, had a magnificent presence in the mourning ceremonies for Sayyid al-Shuhada and his companions, once again showing that we are the nation of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him). He then stated that the decline in voter participation must become a serious issue for us, emphasizing that we need to examine its dimensions and make decisions to address it. Qalibaf noted that social issues, due to their complexity, require expert examination. He added that we should leverage the changes brought about by the recent presidential election to address the reasons behind reduced participation, especially by solving economic issues affecting the people. The hope generated among voters for the winning candidate is a valuable opportunity that can be used for the country's progress. He further mentioned that we must be careful not to allow the 14 million people who did not vote for the winning candidate to become disillusioned. By considering these two issues, avoiding tension and conflict, and resolving the people's problems, we can hope to restore the motivation for participation among many who abstained from the recent election. The head of the legislative branch added that the election smoothly transferred the management of the country into the hands of the people, and it is essential for all of us to make increasing participation in future opportunities our primary goal. Naturally, the president elected by the people has the greatest responsibility in this regard, and everyone has a national and religious duty to assist him. He went on to say by noting that religious democracy is not completed by holding elections; rather, it gains meaning and begins anew, and it is our responsibility as officials to create conditions for sustainable public participation. He then pointed to the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza and said: "Recently, the Zionist regime has increasingly targeted civilians and infrastructure, while Western leaders remain silent in the face of the collapse of human civilization, relying on material interests and the influence of Zionist lobbies. The Zionist regime should understand that by intensifying attacks and in the shadow of the self-serving silence of Western countries, it cannot restore the security balance that has been disrupted and is now turning against it both in the media and on the battlefield."

All Our Efforts Are Focused on Solving People's Problems



TEHRAN - The President-elect stated: "All my efforts are aimed at moving forward with coordination, consultation, and unity, and addressing and solving the people's problems."

Masoud Pezeshkian was present at the public session of Majlis on Sunday, and stood at the speaker's podium at the invitation of the Majlis Speaker. He said: "I did not intend to speak in the Assembly; I came today to extend my greetings and gratitude, and hopefully, by joining hands, we will solve the country's problems." He continued: "As I mentioned in the debates and discussions in the Assembly, the country cannot be managed through conflicts and disputes. We must join hands to overcome the crises created for the country and the existing problems, and with coordination, consultation, and unity, move forward and address the people's issues." The President-elect added: "All my efforts will be to respond to the people and solve their problems and difficulties." Pezeshkian continued: "At this time, when the people have trusted us and given us responsibility, we do not consider ourselves to have become important." He added: "Due to the votes cast by the people, I will do my utmost to, with the help of representatives, officials, and various bodies in the country, respond to the people's needs. Certainly, anyone who wants to accept responsibility must be responsive to the people's needs."

Pezeshkian, referring to the words of Imam Ali (AS), reminded: "He advises piety, and piety, according to Hadith and the Quran, means to move without error in industry, agriculture, economy, and other sectors. Moving without error is like a tamed horse that can lead us to our final

goal." He continued: "Imam Ali (AS) says not to pursue worldly desires even if the world pursues you. Even if the world takes something from you, do not be sorrowful. If position, status, money, and power do not deceive us, then we can speak the truth, oppose the oppressor, and stand against oppression, being allies and supporters of the oppressed."

Pezeshkian emphasized: "This approach is embedded in our beliefs and convictions, and we must work to eliminate injustices and wrongdoings, creating a society where justice and fairness prevail." He stated that we should not use this opportunity to seek positions and worldly gains for our close ones, but rather use this opportunity to serve the people with the help of representatives and other responsible individuals, and he hoped that God would not let us fail these dear people.

The President-elect pointed out: "Despite the propaganda aimed at discouraging people from voting, the people came and gave a firm response to those inside and outside who were campaigning against voting."

He added: "We are the same as we were, and certainly, nothing has changed except that our responsibilities have increased. I hope that God helps us not to disappoint the people."

Pezeshkian thanked Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf for his necessary cooperation with the President-elect in various sessions and expressed hope that the next parliament and government can resolve the existing issues in the country.

Yemen Strikes Israeli Targets in Eilat With Ballistic Missiles



SANAA (Dispatches) - The Yemeni armed forces say they have targeted with ballistic missiles the port city of Eilat in the south of the Israeli-occupied territories as well as an American and an Israeli-owned vessels in the Red Sea following the regime's latest attack on the Arab country. The forces' spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree announced in a statement on Sunday that they carried out a specific military operation against important targets in the Umm al-Rashrash (Eilat) area "with a number of ballistic missiles and the operation has achieved its goals successfully." Saree also said the naval and the missile units of Yemen's Armed Forces conducted a joint military operation targeting the American ship "Pumba" in the Red Sea with a number of ballistic missiles and drones. "Yemen's Armed Forces affirm their full right to defend beloved Yemen against the American-British aggression, as well as against the Israeli aggression, and that this aggression will not deter the great Yemen from its solid stance towards the oppression of the Palestinian people," the spokesman said. Saree underlined that the Yemeni forces would continue their naval operations against Israeli, American, and British ships or those heading to Israeli ports until the regime's aggression stops and the siege on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip is lifted. "The Yemeni armed forces confirm that the response to the Israeli aggression against our country is inevitably coming and will be huge and great," he asserted. Israeli warplanes targeted on Saturday civilian facilities in the western Yemeni province of al-Hudaydah, killing three people and wounding more than 80 others.

IRAN NEWS



11m Tons of Livestock, Poultry Feed Annually Produced in Country

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The President of the Livestock, Poultry, and Aquatic Feed Association stated that currently, 11 million tons of livestock, poultry, and aquatic feed are produced annually by 866 feed factories in the country. Majid Movafegh Ghadiri on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the 23rd International Livestock, Poultry, and Related Industries Exhibition of Iran 2024, said: In 2023, about 55% of the raw materials and animal feed inputs of Turkey were imported, and in the same year, about 80% of our country's raw materials and animal feed inputs were also supplied through imports. He stated: This year, corn imports increased by 16%, soybean meal by 1200%, soybean grain by 18%, and barley by 37% compared to last year, and we hope that this level of imports continues. He clarified: According to statistics, each Turkish feed factory produced 61,000 tons last year, while in our country this figure was about 12,000 tons, which is a low number. Movafegh Ghadiri attributed the failure of the livestock and poultry feed factories to the lack of a cohesive and integrated strategy for enhancing production and trade, the absence of trade diplomacy, the weakening of financial exchanges, and the imposition of trade restrictions and prohibitions.

14th Gov't Will Facilitate Economic Development in Collaboration With the Private Sector



TEHRAN - President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian, in a meeting with private sector economic activists held at the Iran Chamber, said: "We must all adhere to scientifically-based and sustainable statements that do not change every moment. One cannot argue with knowledge and experience. Everyone should bow to reasonable and expert opinions." The president-elect, stating that the compilation of expert opinions will form the basis of the fourteenth government's actions, continued: "If someone shows us the right way, we must follow it. It is unjust to reject correct opinions and instead implement what we desire, rather than what is right and well-researched." In this meeting, attended by representatives of the Iran Chamber, the Cooperatives Chamber, and the Guilds Chamber, he addressed the economic activists, saying: "If the country is to progress, it will be with your help. We cannot expect an increase in production amid obstacles to production; there are brokers who do not pay taxes, but tax pressure is put on the producers." The president-elect, referring to the formation of a committee to draft an expert plan in the field of economics, continued: "In this committee, representatives from the private sector, universities, industry, relevant government organizations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be present to determine an expert economic roadmap. In this roadmap, the responsibilities of each sector, including the government, universities, chambers, and the private sector, will be specified. After determining the duties, the committee will meet every three months so each organization can report on the extent to which they have fulfilled their responsibilities and the progress made." Pezeshkian advised economic activists to move their businesses out of Tehran, saying: "We need to bring industry and the economy to coastal cities and areas near the sea. This will reduce production costs due to decreased import, export, and utility costs."

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Iran-Afghanistan Water Rights Negotiations on Helmand River Enter New Phase

TEHRAN - Isa Bozorgzadeh in an interview with ILNA discussed Iran's diplomacy concerning the Helmand River water rights and the water situation in Sistan and Baluchestan.

He noted that historically, Sistan's water was supplied by the Helmand River. According to a 1972 treaty, Iran's water rights from the Helmand were set at 820 million cubic meters annually, reduced from several billion cubic meters before the treaty. Previously, billions of cubic meters of water would collect in the Hamouns and be used throughout the year. When Iran's water rights from the Helmand decreased to 820 million cubic meters, Iran established the Chahmeh reservoirs to store this reduced amount, as these reservoirs are smaller than the Hamouns Pozak, Sabouri, and Helmand. This limited water was stored for use throughout the year.

Bozorgzadeh continued, explaining that without the Chahmeh reservoirs, the water would evaporate within 2 to 3 months, leaving Sistan's people without water. This system was in place for many years until the Kamal Khan Dam was inaugurated, which was poorly designed. It only had controlled gates on the main Helmand route and directed overflow towards the Goud-e-Zereh salt flat, leading to significant water wastage during floods and making Iran's water rights vulnerable.

The Water Industry spokesperson stated that Iran decided to change its water supply strategy, leading to the "Sistan Resilience Plan," approved and implemented by the current government. Before this

plan, water for Sistan's five counties and over 900 regional cities was supplied solely by the Helmand. This included Zone 2 of Zahedan, which also relied on the Helmand. Now, with disruptions in the Helmand's water supply, water provision for one million Iranians and Afghan migrants in the region was at risk. Consequently, Iran shifted to a multi-source water supply strategy.

Bozorgzadeh emphasized that these measures have reduced Iran's vulnerability to decisions by the opposite party, allowing for more logical and neighborly negotiations. He pointed out that although Iran now has various water management options, the Helmand's water rights remain irreplaceable and are the right of the people of Iran and Sistan-Baluchestan.

The water from the Helmand is used for agriculture and making the region more livable, including controlling dust and reducing respiratory health issues during the 120-day winds in Sistan and Baluchestan.

Bozorgzadeh highlighted that negotiations regarding Hamoun water rights continue, stressing the importance of mutual benefits with Afghanistan. He proposed joint projects to reduce the suffering caused by economic hardships and dust storms affecting both sides.

Iran also seeks to re-engineer the Kamal Khan Dam to prevent water wastage and environmental disasters in both Iran and Afghanistan, improving economic and social welfare for the region.

30% Growth in Iran's Exports to the UAE



TEHRAN - The West Asia Office of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization reported on the trade trends between Iran and the UAE in the first three months of this year. The report states: In the first quarter of 2024, Iran's exports to the UAE amounted to 1.704 billion dollars, showing an increase of 411 million dollars, which indicates a 30% growth compared to the same period last year. According to the report, the top 10 major export items from Iran to the UAE include various petroleum gases, aromatic substances, other petroleum oils, bitumen, organic chemical products, other petrochemicals, other petroleum-based products, various metal industries, tomatoes, and copper cathodes. The value of Iran's imports from the UAE in the first quarter of 2024 was announced to be 4.491 billion dollars, witnessing an increase of 361 million dollars, indicating a 9% growth in imports from this source during this period. The main items imported from the UAE during this period include mobile phones, precious metals, corn, processed industries, livestock and poultry feed, oilseeds, textile products, chemical fertilizers, and power plant equipment. It is noteworthy that the UAE was the primary source of imports to Iran in 2023, and the imported goods through this country are mostly not produced in the UAE. Due to issues arising from sanctions and financial transfers, the documents have been changed to register the UAE as the origin of imports. In April, 2024, a rare United Arab Emirates-Iran joint economic commission convened in Abu Dhabi as Tehran sought to bolster economic ties with Persian Gulf states amid mounting U.S. pressure. That was the first meeting in 10 years for the bilateral joint economic cooperation commission, with Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehdi Bazrjani and Emirati Minister of Economy Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri in attendance.

Iran Can Turn From a Gasoline Importer to an Exporter

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Mohsen Johari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the CNG Industry Association, stated in an interview with Tasnim News Agency's economic reporter: "As the thirteenth government is in its final days and everyone is awaiting the formation of the fourteenth government to take over the executive management of the country, daily gasoline consumption has surpassed 120 million liters, with record-high consumption levels on some days."

He added: "This level of consumption indicates that the country's gasoline imbalance is at least between 10 to 15 million liters per day. This imbalance is managed through both increasing domestic gasoline production with the help of petrochemical units and through imports and barter." Johari explained that "gasoline imports represent a significant foreign exchange expenditure for the country's economy." He noted that the gasoline imbalance worsens yearly, but despite clear solutions, no practical steps are taken to address the issue. The Chairman of the CNG Industry Association identified utilizing the CNG industry's capacity as the primary solution for resolving the gasoline imbalance. He said: "Among all the types of fuels that can be used in urban and intercity transportation in our country, the best type of fuel is CNG." He continued: "The vast gas reserves and the extensive gas pipeline network across the country provide a unique capacity for the development of the CNG industry. Today, with 2,500 stations, we have the capacity to supply 50 million cubic meters of CNG daily, equivalent to 50 million liters of gasoline. However, unfortunately, more than half of this capacity remains unused." Johari announced that the daily consumption of CNG in the country is 21 million cubic meters and said: "Currently, 21 million liters of gasoline are being replaced daily by 21 million cubic meters of CNG. Without the CNG industry, the country's gasoline consumption would have reached 150 million liters per day."

He added: "The infrastructure to realize the untapped potential of CNG in the country exists, and without any significant cost, just with proper policy-making, the current gasoline imbalance can be resolved in a short time by developing CNG."

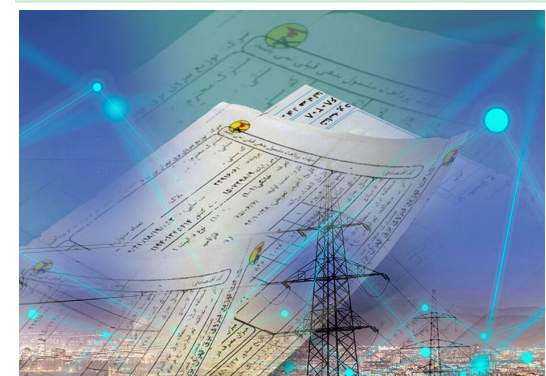
Johari emphasized: "Currently, we are operating at about 40 to 45 percent capacity of the stations. If policymakers pay attention to the existing potential of the CNG industry, we can use the remaining more than 55 percent capacity to resolve the gasoline imbalance without any new investment."

The Chairman of the CNG Industry Association highlighted that the fourteenth government is expected to use CNG capacity to address the gasoline imbalance in the initial months of its tenure and then, by taking steps to reform gasoline consumption through scrapping old cars and motorcycles and developing public transport, allocate the saved gasoline for export.

He added: "The 2019 Supreme Economic Council's resolution to convert public fleets, including taxis and pickups, to CNG dual-fuel remains effective, and the fourteenth government can use this resolution to increase CNG's share in the transportation sector and reduce gasoline consumption." He continued: "In fact, the fourteenth government can easily turn Iran from a gasoline importer to a gasoline exporter by developing CNG and adhering to existing legal solutions, thereby resolving one of the most significant vulnerabilities in the country's economy, which is the fuel imbalance in the transportation sector."

Johari mentioned that CNG can also replace part of diesel consumption, stating: "Diesel vehicles can also diversify their fuel consumption, thereby reducing their consumption; indeed, the CNG industry can help address the diesel imbalance as well."

Power Supply to Various Sectors Depends on Consumption Management



TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Minister of Energy stated that due to an unprecedented rise in temperatures over the next two weeks, the country's electricity consumption needs will see a significant increase. He emphasized that power supply to various sectors can be achieved through consumption management. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, in a meeting on managing electricity consumption during the hot season at the National Dispatching Center of the Iran Grid Management Company, attended by senior officials of the electricity industry, said: "As weather reports indicate, we will witness an unprecedented rise in temperatures across the country over the next two weeks. This simultaneous temperature rise in different parts of the country will lead to a significant increase in electricity consumption demand." He continued: "The establishment of a heat dome and the severe temperature increase is not limited to Iran; the entire West Asia region is facing these conditions. Reports show that some Persian Gulf countries, despite having suitable infrastructure in the electricity sector, have had to implement power outages." The Minister of Energy noted that despite the substantial increase in temperatures, the national power grid in Iran remains stable. Mehrabian said: "Given the special conditions we are in, all sectors of the electricity industry, including power plants, the transmission sector, and the distribution sector, are on full alert and are making every effort to maximize electricity production and distribution to various consumption sectors." He continued: "In the production sector, we are at the highest possible capacity serving various sectors." Regarding the meeting on managing electricity production and consumption at the National Dispatching Center on Saturday morning, the Minister noted: "In this meeting, the country's electricity production capacity through various power plant units such as thermal, renewable, nuclear, and hydroelectric was reviewed. It was decided that the limited units that are out of operation due to maintenance will return to production by tomorrow noon, ensuring we serve the various electricity-consuming sectors with the highest possible capacity."

Unifying Exchange Rates Will Increase Inflation

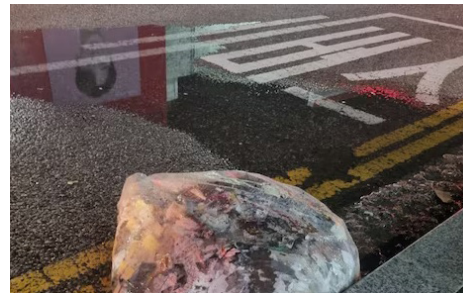
TEHRAN - The representative of Tehran to Majlis, regarding the potential unification of exchange rates under the new government, said: "This action will lead to higher prices because we have previous experience with such policies in the country. It would be better for the government to follow a policy of removing the dollar from Iran's economy, which would strengthen the national currency and reduce inflation."

Kamran Ghazanfari commented on President Pezeshkian's economic approach: "We have to wait and see whom he will appoint for various ministries. However, the initial positions Pezeshkian took after the election results regarding Hezbollah, Hamas, Russia, and China were positive. They continue the foreign policy of the Raisi government. We hope this trend is not temporary and that foreign policy continues on this path." He emphasized: "Regarding domestic policies and economic policy, Pezeshkian repeatedly stated during the election debates that he does not have a specific idea and needs to consult experts' opinions. Therefore, it is still unclear what he intends to do. However, a report has been published indicating that he plans to use Tayebnia as the Minister of Economy or as a significant member of the cabinet. If this is true, considering Tayebnia's recent statements about unifying exchange rates, we should expect increased inflation. Previous governments, due to improper currency policies, have never managed to maintain a single exchange rate for more than a short period. After that, multiple exchange rates would reappear, and the free market rate would become the official rate, while a new, higher free market rate would emerge. This situation resulted in severe inflation for the people."

The Tehran representative in Parliament stressed: "If the new government follows this policy and does not pursue removing the dollar from Iran's economy, the outlook will not be good. The fact is that eliminating the dollar benefits the people and the country and will reduce inflation. Currently, the government uses national currencies in its trade transactions with some countries, for example, with Russia and China. But this trend should be expanded to include other major trading partners." Ghazanfari continued: "Bilateral monetary agreements are essential in this context. Removing the dollar strengthens the national currency. Russia did this after the US and Europe imposed sanctions in recent years. After the start of the Ukraine war, the West sanctioned Russia, causing the ruble's value to fall. In response, Russia told Europeans that gas purchases must be made in rubles. This action not only compensated for the 20% drop in the ruble's value but also increased its value compared to before the sanctions. We should do something similar with major buyers of our oil, gas, and petrochemical products. For instance, we could require 50% of the payment for exported goods to be made in rials. This action will ultimately reduce inflation."

North Korea Floats Trash Balloons Towards South

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korea on Sunday was floating balloons carrying trash towards South Korea, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. South Korea's military on Friday resumed its round-the-clock loudspeaker broadcast campaign targeting North Korea in response to what it called the "despicable, shameful and vulgar" launch of balloons by Pyongyang carrying trash across the border. Since May, North Korea has been floating thousands of balloons with bags of trash attached to them, which have become a new source of tension between the two Koreas.



Trump Mocks Democrats, Insults Pelosi



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden vowed on Friday to continue his campaign for reelection even as more fellow Democrats in Congress urged him to end his floundering campaign, fearing that it could cost the party dearly in the Nov. 5 election.

More than one in 10 congressional Democrats have now publicly called on the 81-year-old incumbent -- who is isolating at his Delaware home with a case of COVID -- to drop out following a disastrous June debate against Republican Donald Trump that raised questions about Biden's ability to win or to carry out his duties for another four years.

Biden remained defiant, saying he would resume campaigning soon. "I look forward to getting back on the campaign trail next week to continue exposing the threat of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda while making the case for my own record and the vision that I have for America," he said in a statement, referring to a policy plan developed by Trump's conservative allies.

The divide among Democrats stood in sharp contrast to the scenes that played out this week at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where former party rivals united around Trump, who accepted the Republican nomination in a rambling speech that featured his familiar mix of grievance and bombast. So far, 32 of the 264 Democrats in Congress have openly called for Biden to end his campaign, while other senior Democratic leaders have pushed him behind the scenes to do so, according to sources and media reports.



Bangladesh Police Open Fire on Protesters Defying Curfew

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh police fired live rounds at protesters in the capital Dhaka, an AFP journalist at the scene saw. At least one person was wounded among thousands present in the residential neighbourhood of Rampura for the demonstration, held in defiance of a government curfew imposed to contain growing civil unrest. Streets of the capital Dhaka were almost deserted at daybreak, with troops on foot and in armoured personnel carriers patrolling the sprawling megacity of 20 million. Thousands returned to the streets later in the day in the residential neighbourhood of Rampura, with police firing live rounds at the crowd and wounding at least one person. "Our backs are to the wall," protester Nazrul Islam, 52, told AFP at the scene. "There's anarchy going on in the country... They are shooting at people like birds." Hospitals have reported a growing number of gunshot deaths to AFP since Thursday. "Hundreds of thousands of people" had battled police across the capital on Friday, police spokesman Faruk Hossain told AFP. "At least 150 police officers were admitted to hospital. Another 150 were given first aid treatment," he said, adding that two officers had been beaten to death. "The protesters torched many police booths... Many government offices were torched and vandalised." This week's violence has killed at least 115 people so far, according to an AFP count of victims reported by police and hospitals, and poses a monumental challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's autocratic government after 15 years in office. A government curfew went into effect at midnight and the premier's office asked the military to deploy troops after police again failed to subdue widespread mayhem. "The army has been deployed nationwide to control the law and order situation," armed forces spokesman Shahadat Hossain told AFP. The curfew will remain in effect until at least 10.00am (12.00 noon Malaysian time) Sunday, private broadcaster Channel 24 reported. A spokesman for Students Against Discrimination, the main group organising the protests, told AFP that two of its leaders had been arrested since Friday.

A second senior official from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was arrested in the

early hours of Saturday, party spokesman Sairul Islam Khan told AFP.

Hasina had been due to leave the country on Sunday for a planned diplomatic tour but abandoned her plans after a week of escalating violence. "She has cancelled her Spain and Brazil tours due to the prevailing situation," her press secretary Nayeemul Islam Khan told AFP.

Near-daily marches this month have called for an end to a quota system that reserves more than half of civil service posts for specific groups, including children of veterans from the country's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan. Critics say the scheme benefits children of pro-government groups that back Hasina, 76, who has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition. Hasina's government is accused by rights groups of misusing state institutions to entrench its hold on power and stamp out dissent, including by the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists. Since the first deaths on Tuesday, protesters have begun demanding Hasina leave office.

"It's not about the rights of the students anymore," business owner Hasibul Sheikh, 24, told AFP at the scene of the Rampura protest. "We are here as the general public now," he added. "Our demand is one point now, and that's the resignation of the government." Pierre Prakash of Crisis Group told AFP the lack of competitive elections since Hasina took office had led to mounting public frustration.

"With no real alternative at the ballot box, discontented Bangladeshis have few options besides street protests to make their voices heard," he said.

Hospitals and police reported an additional 10 deaths to AFP on Saturday from clashes the previous day, with 105 other deaths reported since Tuesday.

Police fire was the cause of more than half of the deaths reported so far this week, based on descriptions given to AFP by hospital staff.

Israel Kills Dozens as It Steps Up Gaza Bombardment

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israeli forces pounded several areas across the Gaza Strip on Saturday, killing at least 39 Palestinians, according to health officials, as tanks advanced deeper into western and northern Rafah.

Among those killed on Saturday were local journalist Mohammad Abu Jasser, his wife and two children in an Israeli strike on their home in the northern Gaza Strip, a medic said.

Gaza's Hamas-run government media office said Abu Jasser's death raised to 161 the number of Palestinian media personnel killed by Israeli fire since Oct 7.

Just before midnight, an Israeli air strike on an encampment housing displaced Palestinian families killed at least 10 people, medics and Hamas media said.

In Al-Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, an Israeli air strike killed three people and wounded eight others, medics said.

Earlier in the day an Israeli missile struck a multi-floor building in the camp, and wounded several people, including two local journalists, rescue workers said.

In Rafah, where Israel said it aimed to dismantle the last battalions of Hamas' armed wing, residents said tanks advanced deeper into northern areas of the city and took control of a hilltop in the west, amid fierce gun battles with Hamas-led fighters.

The army said troops continued operations in Rafah, eliminating many gunmen over the past day in the area of Tel Al-Sultan on the western side of the city. In central Gaza, the military said it conducted raids on militants' infrastructure.

The military also said it hit a structure used by Palestinian militants in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza Strip, saying gunmen were operating from a humanitarian area, and accused Gaza militants of exploiting civilian structures and population for military purposes, an allegation Hamas and other groups reject as false to justify such attacks.

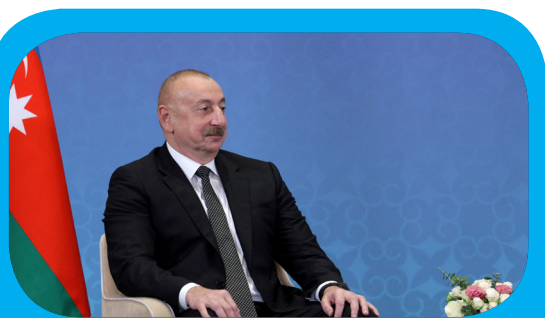
A ceasefire effort led by Qatar and Egypt and backed by the United States has so far failed due to disputes between the combatants, who blame each other for the impasse.

Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas after its fighters killed 1,200 people and took more than 250 hostage in an Oct. 7 attack, according to Israeli tallies. At least 38,919 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive since then, Gaza health authorities say.

On Tuesday, Israel said it had eliminated half the leadership of Hamas' military wing and killed or captured about 14,000 fighters since the start of the war.

Israel says 326 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Hamas does not release casualty figures and said Israel exaggerates its reports to give the impression of a "fake victory".



Azerbaijan's President Pledges to Help French Territories Secure Independence

SHUSHA (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev pledged on Saturday to help France's overseas territories secure independence, the latest in a series of incidents pitting his ex-Soviet state against Paris over long-running conflicts in the Caucasus region.

Aliyev accuses France of interfering in its affairs over its contacts with Armenia, against which it has waged two wars in 30 years linked to disputes over Baku's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In recent months, Azerbaijani leaders have focused on France's South Pacific territory of New Caledonia, gripped by weeks of violence over the objections of Indigenous Kanak activists to a contentious electoral reform.

Aliyev made his latest comments at a media forum days before the opening of the Olympic Games in Paris and just after the staging in Baku of a congress bringing together pro-independence groups from New Caledonia and other French territories.

"We will support you until you are free," Aliyev told the forum, citing French territories that he said were still subject to colonialism.

"Some countries are still suffering from this. The Comoros islands, Mayotte are still under colonial rule. It has been our duty to help these countries liberate themselves from this revolting remnant of the past."

Earlier this week, an "initiative group" staged a congress in Baku attended by pro-independence groups from New Caledonia and other French territories, including Corsica and Caribbean and Pacific islands.

French media accounts of the meeting said participants sharply criticised French authorities and an Azerbaijani delegation was invited to visit New Caledonia.

France accused Azerbaijan in May of meddling and abetting unrest in New Caledonia by flooding social media with what it said were misleading photos and videos targeting French police.

Azerbaijan has denied the allegations.

French Police Clash With Demonstrators at Grain Port Protests

PARIS (Dispatches) - Five protesters and a police officer were injured during a mobilization against irrigation reservoirs being built on France's Atlantic coast. Critics of the massive infrastructure projects say that they will benefit larger agricultural producers at the expense of small farmers.

Environmental protesters clashed with police in France's western port of La Rochelle Saturday, AFP journalists saw, as conservationists and small farmers mobilised against massive irrigation reservoirs under construction.

A 2,000-strong march, one of two through the city, was turned back and broke up at around 2:00 pm (12:00 GMT) after being charged by police.

Running battles erupted around barricades and burning rubbish bins as some threw projectiles and police fired tear gas grenades.

"We were in the demo, they started blocking ahead and behind. They isolated us off to one side to charge everyone else," said Lilia, a 25-year-old who declined to give her second name.

A police source told AFP around 400 participants in the march were so-called "black bloc" far-left radicals.

Prosecutors in La Rochelle said one policewoman suffered burns and five lightly-wounded demonstrators received medical care.

Several shops were damaged or looted, along with bus shelters and advertising hoardings.

The second more peaceful march, made up of around 3,000 people including some families, moved from the city centre towards the commercial port.

Some used kayaks or inflatable boats to approach the La Pallice agricultural export terminal, singled out by organisers as the target for the demonstrations.

By 3:00 pm, around 3,500 people from the two marches were still gathered at the seashore, a police source said.

Police had earlier Saturday used tear gas to clear around 200 people who entered the terminal at dawn, including farmers with old tractors.

That confrontation broke up mostly peacefully.

The protests in the city on France's Atlantic coast were intended to show that new "reservoirs aren't being built to grow food locally, but to feed international markets," said Julien Le Guet, a spokesman for the "Reservoirs, No Thanks" movement.





LeBron Saves Team USA From South Sudan Shock in Olympic Warm-Up

LONDON (Dispatches) - South Sudan's basketball team nearly delivered a stunning upset to a United States team of NBA superstars on Saturday before losing 101-100 in an Olympics warm-up game in London.

LeBron James, 39, the all-time NBA scoring leader, registered a game-high 25 points, including the deciding points on a driving layup with eight seconds remaining at the O2 Arena.

South Sudan, who led 58-44 at half-time, took a late lead after an 8-0 scoring run and were poised to pull off one of the greatest shocks in international basketball before James saved the day.

"The ending was good for us -- just to feel that, to feel what it's going to feel like in Paris," US coach Steve Kerr said.

"Good experience for us. Good reminder that when we play against teams, it's the biggest experience of their lives and we have to expect everyone to play like that."

J.T. Thor, who has played for the NBA's Charlotte Hornets for the past three seasons, sank a three-pointer with 20 seconds remaining to put South Sudan into a 100-99 lead.

After James made the winning shot, South Sudan had one final possession but Carlik Jones missed a jumper with six seconds remaining and Wenyen Gabriel missed on two put-back attempts before the final buzzer.

"South Sudan was amazing," Kerr said. "I did not do a great job of preparing my team. We did not focus enough on what they are capable of and that's on me."

"I think that really allowed South Sudan to gain confidence early."

"Once we turned it up in the second half, they had already knocked down a bunch of threes and were feeling really good about themselves."

It was James who sparked a 23-5 US run from late in the third quarter to early in the fourth.

"We have to continue to take a step forward," said James, a two-time Olympic champion and four-time NBA champion.

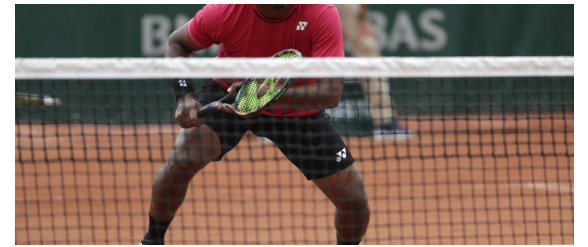
"A lot of these teams that we're playing have been practising either one month or months in advance and we have maybe two weeks together."

"So every game, every film session, we get an opportunity. We have to try to make the most of it, not taking any steps back."

Cameroon-born Joel Embiid, who became a US citizen in 2022, added 14 points and seven rebounds for the Americans.

Anthony Davis came off the bench to produce 15 points and 11 rebounds for the US squad of NBA stars.

India's Paes, Amritraj Make History Joining Tennis Hall of Fame



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Former doubles world number one Leander Paes and tennis broadcaster, actor and player Vijay Amritraj became the first Asian men inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday.

The first inductees from India were joined by British tennis journalist and author Richard Evans in enshrinement ceremonies at the Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island.

Paes recounted his youth playing football and hockey before turning to tennis and eventually following his hockey-captain father as an Olympic medalist.

"It's my greatest honor to be on this stage with not only these legends of the game, people who have inspired me every single day of my life -- not because you've only won Grand Slams, not because you've shaped our sport but every single one of these people have shaped the world we live in," Paes said.

"I would like to thank you so much for giving this Indian boy hope."

Amritraj, 70, played from 1970 until retiring in 1993, winning 15 ATP singles titles and 399 matches and being ranked as high as 18th in the world and helped India to the Davis Cup finals in 1974 and 1987.

"I am humbled and honored to join this incredible and exclusive group that have brought glory to our sport," Amritraj said.

After his playing days, Amritraj has helped humanitarian causes, backed ATP and WTA events in India and has acted in the James Bond and Star Trek movie series.

Nadal Makes First Final in Two Years at Bastad

BASTAD (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal reached his first final since winning the 2022 French Open, defeating Croatian qualifier Duje Ajdukovic in a three-set tussle in Bastad ahead of the Paris Olympics.

A day after his four-hour quarter-final victory, the 22-time Grand Slam champion was again tested by Ajdukovic, the world number 130 who had won just two tour-level matches before this week.

The Spaniard rebounded from dropping the opening set to prevail 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, returning to the final of a tournament he won as a teenager on his last appearance in 2005.

"It was a very tough match. It was very difficult honestly, but I found a way to survive and be through to the final after a long time without being in a final, so that's great news and I'm very happy with that," said Nadal.

The 38-year-old will play Portuguese seventh seed Nuno Borges, who overcame Argentina's Thiago Agustín Tirante 6-3, 6-4, as he goes in search of the 93rd singles title of his career.

His most recent triumph came two years ago at Roland Garros, when he won the tournament for a record-extending 14th time.

"It's always a great feeling to be back in the final. I won four matches in



a row, something I wasn't able to make happen since two years ago," said Nadal, whose ranking has tumbled to 261 after a string of injuries.

"A lot of things happened... I'm still in this process of recovering a lot of things I lost because I had a very important hip surgery almost one year ago, so things are not going that easy."

"But I'm fighting. I've fought during the whole tournament to be where I am today. Matches like yesterday and today help to improve a lot of things on court, so I'm happy with that. Let's see if I'm able to play a little bit better tomorrow."

Nadal struggled early against the 23-year-old Ajdukovic as he fell 3-0 and a double break down in the opening set, but he fought his way back with two breaks in the second after another poor start.

The former world number one appeared in complete control in the third set when he surged 3-0 ahead only to lose his serve twice in succession, suffering a repeat of the stumble that nearly cost him on Friday.

He broke again in the seventh game and then resisted two more break points in the next, eventually securing victory with a comfortable hold two games later.

Verstappen Is No Longer the Leader of the Pack



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Max Verstappen conceded he is no longer leading the pack and feels as if he and Red Bull are "chasing" after he qualified third for the Hungarian Grand Prix behind McLaren duo Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

The three-time world champion and series leader has claimed only one pole position in six Grands Prix as Red Bull's grip on a substantial performance advantage has disintegrated and rival teams have drawn level or passed them.

Verstappen has taken 40 pole positions in his career, but only one - in Austria - since dominating the early season races by taking seven in succession before his spell was broken by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc at the Monaco Grand Prix.

"I love competition," he said on Saturday. "But I like being on top of the competition. At the moment, I feel like we are chasing and having a few more difficult weekends."

"I don't back out of a fight, but it's just a tricky situation I guess."

In spite of his declining fortunes in qualifying, he has managed - without tangible support from struggling teammate Sergio Perez - to remain a strong contender in races and starts Sunday's contest with an 84-point lead ahead of Norris in the drivers' title race.

However, Red Bull have begun to appear increasingly stretched and desperate in a bid to defend their titles as their performance superiority ebbs away, as the Dutchman admitted when he welcomed the team's major upgrade package this weekend.

"Let's see," he said, when asked about his prospects in the race. "The last few races, the McLaren especially has been really good in the race even compared to qualifying."

"Today was a lot colder than expected, I guess, with the clouds and the rain, and tomorrow is going to be quite a different day so I just hope that will help us."

The changing weather conditions have influenced and affected recent results as Mercedes won in Austria and Britain, but struggled in the heat at the Hungaroring where McLaren shone on Saturday.

"I tried," said Verstappen. "The whole weekend we have been a little bit behind and I think that was also the case in qualifying."

Pogacar on Brink of Third Tour de France Victory



NICE (Dispatches) - Tadej Pogacar won for a fifth time on this year's Tour de France, moving to the brink of a third title, with an "out of this world" performance ahead of defending champion Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel. With just Sunday's concluding time trial to come, two-time champion Pogacar has a five minute 14-second lead over Vingegaard as he effectively made sure of becoming the first man in 26 years to capture the Giro d'Italia-Tour de France double in the same season. "Tomorrow can still be dangerous so I will try and come safely into Nice," said Pogacar, who rode most of the stage aided by teammates, likely to conserve energy for the last day. "I wanted to ride and finish with the team," he said, knowing he will finish alone Sunday. The Slovenian won the Tour de France in 2020 and 2021 before his attack-minded tactics backfired as Vingegaard beat him into second place in 2022 and 2023. "Five wins! If you had told me that before the Tour then I would not have believed you," said Pogacar. "It's out of this world, I'm super happy." The day's action started in Nice and culminated on the tough Col de Couillole climb. Evenepoel's Quick Step team set the tempo and attacked Vingegaard in an attempt to take second place overall. Instead Evenepoel dropped around 53sec on the Dane, making it less likely the Belgian can claim second place after Sunday's time trial, where he is favourite for the stage win. Vingegaard said he had not been targeting a win on Saturday's penultimate stage after admitting on Friday that his title hopes were over when Pogacar also pocketed the 19th stage. "I was riding more to put more time into him (Evenepoel) rather than going for the stage today. He's the best time triallist in the world so you never know," said the 27-year-old Dane. "I felt really bad yesterday, completely empty, so to bounce back like this is really nice." Evenepoel virtually guaranteed third place overall and the white jersey as best young rider. Olympic champion Richard Carapaz, regarded as the most combative rider on the 2024 Tour, will win the climb points jersey. "We were letting the breakaway go, we had (teammate) Marc Soler in the breakaway and gave him carte blanche."