

Minister of Agriculture Gholam-Reza Nouri-Ghezeljeh Said That Iran’s Voting Right Has Been Restored Following the Partial Repayment of Its Debt to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Ending a 15-Year Suspension

IRAN NEWS

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Is Set to Hold Talks With Top Officials in Egypt and Lebanon to Discuss Bilateral Relations and Regional Crises During His Upcoming Two-Leg Trip

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Uranium Enrichment Iran’s Redline, Cornerstone of Nuclear Industry



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of Iran’s nuclear organization has underlined uranium enrichment as an essential and non-negotiable element of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear industry.

Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), made the remarks during a televised interview, whose contents were published on Monday.

“Enrichment is the foundation and cornerstone of the nuclear industry, and a red line for the Islamic Republic,” he noted.

“No one can tell Iran that it does not have the right to enrich [uranium],” the official said, adding that the imperative “is none of anyone’s concern, and has its own framework and requirements.”

The comments concerned the United States, the Israeli regime – Washington’s closest regional ally – and some other Western officials’ insistence on Iran’s reducing its enrichment levels to “zero.”

Washington has verbalized the demand on multiple occasions, including during its April-present indirect talks with Tehran.

Iranian authorities have, however, unexceptionally ruled out the prospect.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi recently reiterated uranium enrichment’s indispensable role in the country’s peaceful nuclear activities, adding that the Islamic Republic would keep up its peaceful enrichment activities with or without a deal with the US.

Eslami also addressed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)’s report on the Islamic Republic’s nuclear activities, expressing dissatisfaction with the document’s political nature and citing Western and Israeli footprints in its development.

He noted that the document had been devised in line with “the same maximum pressure policy” that the United States was leading against the country with the help of its allies.

Iraq Says U.S. Sanctions Blocking Turkmenistan’s Gas Flow Via Iran



BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi authorities say U.S. sanctions on Iran have prevented the Arab country from accessing gas supplies from Turkmenistan.

Iraqi Ministry of Electricity spokesman Ahmad Musa said that U.S. sanctions on Iran have restricted Iraq’s access to Iranian electricity supplies as well as to gas supplies from Turkmenistan that were supposed to reach the Arab country via the Iranian pipelines.

Musa told the Iraqi News Agency (INA) that the restrictions had caused Iraq to lose nearly 5 gigawatts (GW) of its electricity generation capacity for this summer, which he said was meant to reach 27 GW.

He said that Iraq has been unable to compensate Iran for transit fees related to gas supplies from Turkmenistan because of US sanctions, losing an electricity production capacity of 4 GW.

Under a gas swap contract signed last year between Iran, Iraq, and Turkmenistan, the Arab country was supposed to receive up to 20 million cubic meters (mcm) per day of gas via the Iranian pipelines.

Musa said that restrictions on direct electricity imports from Iran had also disrupted 1 GW of Iraq’s power supplies.

Iran supplies up to 50 mcm of natural gas and 1 GW of electricity to Iraq every day.

The United States announced in early March that it had revoked a waiver from its Iran sanctions that allowed Iraq to pay for electricity imports from its eastern neighbor.

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesman emphasized on Monday that any proposal from the United States containing “radical and maximalist demands” that ignore Iran’s legitimate rights and interests will not receive a positive response from Tehran.

During a weekly press conference on June 2, spokesman Esmail Baghaei addressed questions regarding a document recently handed over to Iran by the U.S. through indirect negotiations. “Receiving a text does not imply approval or even acceptance of its contents,” he clarified. “Any proposal that disregards Iran’s rights will undoubtedly be rejected.”

Baghaei began the session by highlighting recent diplomatic activities. Turning to nuclear issues, Baghaei criticized a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), claiming it was influenced by political pressure from certain Western countries. “The report largely reiterates old issues and exaggerates some technical matters,” he said. “It’s clear that the content was shaped by political agendas rather than objective assessment.”

He warned against what he called a “pattern” of Western states using international institutions to advance political objectives. “Such manipulation undermines the credibility of the IAEA, a scientific body that should remain impartial,” he added.

Despite these criticisms, Baghaei affirmed Iran’s continued cooperation with the IAEA under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). He noted that the agency still maintains oversight of Iranian nuclear activities, including access for 125 inspectors, while dismissing concerns over Iran’s revocation of a few individual accreditations as overblown.

Responding to a question from IRNA regarding the recently submitted U.S. document—described by Iranian officials as containing “U.S. proposal elements”—Baghaei reiterated that such exchanges are routine in diplomacy. “This does not mean we accept or even consider the proposal acceptable,” he stated. He added that Iran will evaluate any suggestions in accordance with its national interests and principles.

He stressed that Iran’s stance on key issues such as uranium enrichment and the lifting of sanctions remains unchanged. “Our red lines are based on logical, legal, and national needs,” Baghaei said. “Any future understanding must reflect the substance of the five previous rounds of

Iran’s Strategy Is to Deepen Ties With Venezuela Through the Private Sector

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized the need to expand trade relations between Iran and Venezuela during a meeting with a large group of Iranian and Venezuelan businesspeople in Caracas. He stated that Iran’s definitive strategy is to prioritize private-sector engagement in bilateral relations, underscoring the importance of using national currencies and BRICS financial systems for trade between the two nations.

Qalibaf, who is on a tour of Latin America, met with Iranian private-sector producers, entrepreneurs residing in Venezuela, and Venezuelan traders on Sunday evening local time. He remarked, “Today, the foremost battle our enemies are waging against us is an economic war—and in this war, businesspeople and economic actors are the commanders. Our role in parliament and government is to support them.”

He reiterated that strengthening ties with Venezuela is a clear and unwavering policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He pointed out that the two nations have a long-term strategic agreement and should act in alignment with it. “Countries naturally move toward forming relationships with those that share common interests, friends, and even adversaries, because such alignment fosters strategic and rational cooperation.”

He acknowledged the logistical challenges in deepening bilateral trade, especially due to the long distance between the two countries, which significantly impacts transportation—a key factor in trade. “However, there are significant mutual benefits, particularly in OPEC, oil, and energy, and the geographic opportunities in both Iran and Venezuela offer unique capacities that should be harnessed.”

The Iranian Speaker stressed that long-term strategic trade relations between Iran and Venezuela must be facilitated, particularly when led by the private sector. “We believe that wherever the government interferes in the economy, it often results in failure. If governments are to be involved, it should be only to support and meet the needs of the private sector,” he said.

Highlighting the natural trade compatibility between the two nations based on supply and demand, Qalibaf called for follow-up in Tehran on the implementation of a free trade law and the resolution of banking issues. “This will create more stable, logical, and economically viable trade.”

He also referenced agreements made in discussions with Venezuelan officials, particularly in the



agriculture sector, and noted that significant progress has been made in industrial cooperation, with final signatures pending. He added that Iran’s ambassador in Venezuela has been tasked with ensuring these agreements are implemented swiftly.

Addressing concerns over banking systems and the establishment of a joint Iran-Venezuela bank, Qalibaf committed to personally following up on this matter in Iran to create necessary opportunities. He suggested that national currencies and the BRICS payment system could replace other foreign currencies in bilateral trade.

Qalibaf also stressed the importance of moving away from the dollar in bilateral trade. “We must actively use BRICS capacities, including the BRICS Pay system,” he said, noting that Brazil, a BRICS member, is geographically and politically close to Venezuela. “This provides an opportunity for traders to operate outside the dollar-based financial network.”

He also noted that some trade between Iran and Venezuela could be conducted through barter and countertrade systems. “We must ensure that necessary banking guarantees are in place. I assure Iranian and Venezuelan traders that we will pursue the issues of free trade and financial systems in Tehran.”

At the beginning of the meeting, Iranian and Venezuelan private-sector representatives outlined several challenges in doing business, particularly transportation and banking issues caused by international sanctions. They emphasized the mutual benefits of Iran-Venezuela trade and called for government support to remove these obstacles.

Qalibaf was accompanied on this Latin American tour by several Iranian lawmakers, including Jalil Mokhtar, head of the Iran-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship Group; Salar Velayatnadar, deputy head of the Iran-Venezuela Friendship Group; Gholamreza Tajgardo, head of the Parliamentary Budget and Planning Commission; and Mohammad Rashidi, MP for Kermanshah.

After his meetings in Venezuela and Cuba, Qalibaf is scheduled to attend the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum, hosted by Brazil’s Federal Senate, from June 2-4, 2025. The forum will be held in Brasilia under the theme: “The Role of BRICS Parliaments in Building a More Inclusive and Sustainable Global Governance.”

ECO Member States’ Cooperation to Boost Regional Welfare



TEHRAN - In a significant regional gathering, Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development emphasized the importance of cooperation among Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states in enhancing the welfare of their people. Speaking at the 13th Meeting of ECO Transport Ministers in Tehran on Tuesday, Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd highlighted the deep cultural ties among ECO members and stressed the need to strengthen these bonds through regional collaboration.

Sadegh Malvajerd underlined the strategic role of transportation in driving regional and economic development. She stated that expanding regional cooperation, leveraging the vast potential of the ECO region, and enhancing transportation links are top priorities for the Iranian government.

“Iran holds a unique geographical position in West Asia,” the minister said. “Our access to open waters through the Persian Gulf and oceans, along with over 250,000 kilometers of roads and 15,000 kilometers of railways at major North-South and East-West intersections, presents strategic advantages. These capabilities, combined with international partnerships, create immense opportunities for advancing regional transit and transportation.”

She also emphasized the vital role of member countries in achieving ECO’s strategic transport objectives and referred to the Vision 2035 plan for developing regional capacity. Over recent years, transit cooperation within the region has increased substantially, with Iran recording a new high of 20 million tons of transit cargo last year—an achievement attributed to close cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly in developing border infrastructure with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Among key initiatives mentioned were plans for transferring 20 million tons of goods through Iran and Turkmenistan, developing southern port partnerships with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and enhancing border collaboration with Afghanistan and Pakistan. These efforts, the minister said, are expected to trigger a leap in regional transit activity and interdependence.

Yemen Warns Foreign Companies to Leave Israeli-Occupied Territories



SANAA (Dispatches) - The chairman of Yemen’s Supreme Political Council has warned of a growing risk of investing in the Israeli-occupied territories due to drone and missile attacks that Yemen’s Armed Forces are conducting in retaliation for the Tel Aviv regime’s ongoing brutal campaign in Gaza.

Mahdi al-Mashat, in a statement sent to Yemen’s official Saba news agency on Sunday, cautioned all companies operating in the occupied lands to seriously take the warning into consideration, and leave without delay as the atmosphere is becoming highly precarious.

Mashat highlighted that any firm opting to continue operation within the Israeli-occupied territories despite the warning must assume full responsibility for the decision, and admit subsequent losses.

“We may take further measures within the next few days, if necessary, which would place companies investing within the occupied territories at grave and tremendous risks,” he stated.

Mashat emphasized that, “Overlooking the Yemeni warning translates into betting on a tenuous situation that could entail unpleasant consequences.”

The high-ranking Yemeni official also took a swipe at the occupying Israeli regime, saying, “Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s criminal administration does not care about investors’ interests, and is gambling on their safety to serve its own agenda. A regime that has no concern about the destiny of its own captives [being held in Gaza] will neither protect foreign companies nor investments.”

He underscored that Yemeni Armed Forces would soon set a deadline for foreign companies to depart Israeli-occupied lands in order to minimize harm and avoid collateral damage.

Mashat stated that the repercussions may not be confined to strikes within the occupied lands; but could extend to investments abroad if the Yemeni Armed Forces decide to escalate their operations.

IRAN NEWS



CBI Governor Iran Departs for China to Attend SCO Summit

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Mohammadreza Farzin, has departed for Beijing to participate in the summit of Central Bank Governors of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states. According to the Iranian Government's official news portal, Farzin will attend the high-level summit aimed at enhancing financial cooperation among SCO members and will also hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from other member states. The SCO currently comprises ten full members: China, Russia, India, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. Additionally, six nations – Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka – are recognized as dialogue partners within the regional bloc.

Math Prodigy Nominated to Lead Iran's Key Economic Ministry



TEHRAN - Twenty-five years ago, when Seyed Ali Madani Zadeh won a bronze medal at the International Mathematics Olympiad, few could have predicted that he would one day be nominated to head Iran's most important economic ministry – the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

On Sunday, exactly three months after the impeachment of the previous economy minister under Iran's 14th administration, President Masoud Pezeshkian submitted a formal letter to Parliament nominating Madani Zadeh as the proposed minister for the powerful economic portfolio. If approved by the Majlis (Parliament), Madani Zadeh would take the helm of the ministry located in Tehran's historic "Bab Homayoun" district.

Madani Zadeh is a prominent young economist and academic. He currently serves as an associate professor at the School of Management and Economics at Sharif University of Technology. His academic journey began with undergraduate and master's degrees in electrical engineering from the same university. He later earned a master's degree in computational mathematics from Stanford University in the United States, and in 2013, he completed a PhD in economics at the University of Chicago before returning to Iran.

Born in Tehran in 1982, Madani Zadeh is recognized as one of Iran's top academic talents. He earned a bronze medal at the 2000 International Mathematics Olympiad and placed third in the 2002 International Mathematics Competition for University Students. In 2018, he was honored with the Young Researcher Award in Economics in Iran.

His professional background includes numerous academic and executive roles: Associate Professor of Economics at Sharif University of Technology, Former Dean of the School of Management and Economics at Sharif University; Vice Dean for Education and Graduate Studies; Vice Dean for Research and International Affairs; Head of the Modeling Department at the Central Bank's Monetary and Banking Research Institute; Board Member at the Institute for Supporting the Humanities; and economic Advisor to the Planning and Budget Organization.

Iran, Oman Set \$20 Billion Trade Target



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce announced on Sunday that the two countries have agreed to raise their annual trade volume to \$20 billion, following the recent visit of Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, to Muscat.

Speaking to IRNA, Jamal Razaghi Jahromi said a delegation of 90 Iranian private sector representatives accompanied President Pezeshkian during the visit, consisting of those who already have commercial ties with Oman or are seeking to establish them.

On the first day of the trip, a joint investment conference was held with the participation of Oman's Minister of Industry and Trade, where Iranian and Omani businesspeople engaged in bilateral meetings to discuss challenges and opportunities.

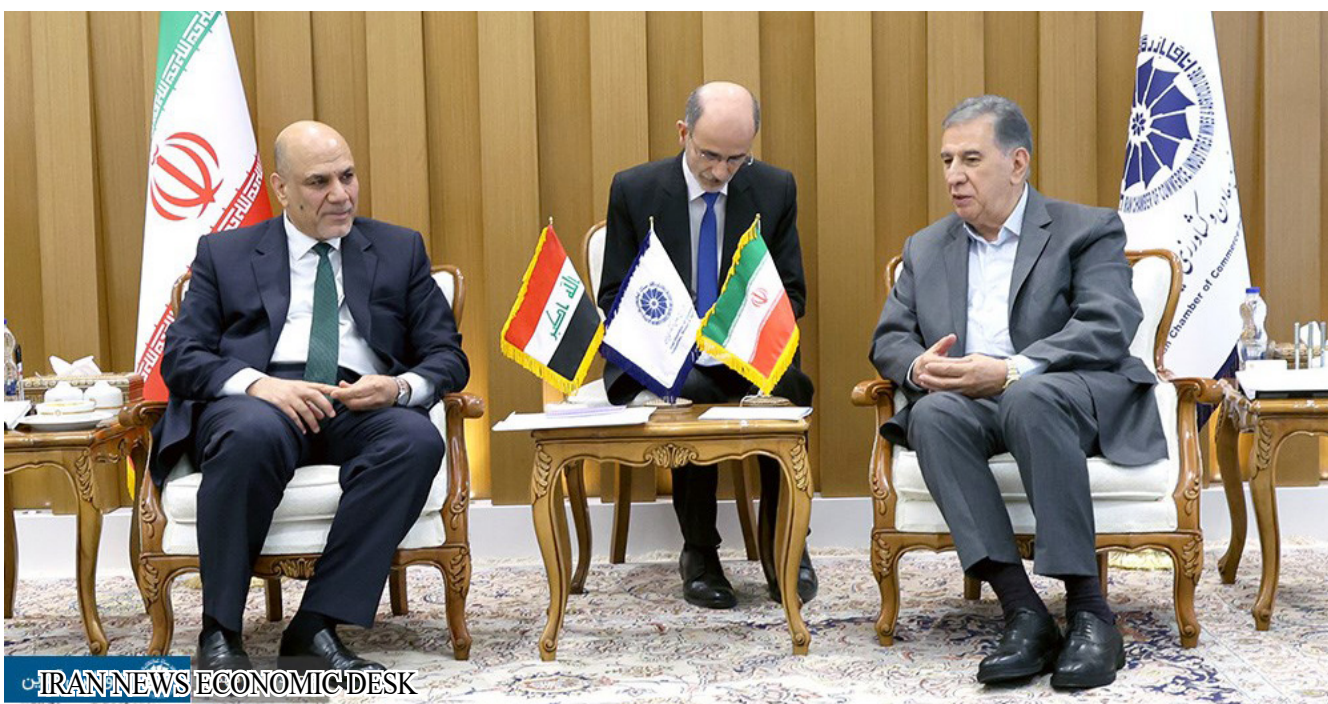
The second day included a high-level meeting with the Iranian President, Iranian ministers, and the Governor of the Central Bank.

Despite long-standing political ties between Iran and Oman, Razaghi Jahromi criticized the underdeveloped commercial relationship. "Although trade between the two countries has grown by 40 to 60 percent over the past three years, the volume is still under \$3 billion — only one-eighth of Iran's trade with some other Gulf states," he noted.

Razaghi Jahromi highlighted several practical steps aimed at improving trade relations, including: Establishing a joint financial institution in Oman within the next month to resolve payment transfer issues and facilitate banking transactions; Launching a direct shipping line between Chabahar Port and Oman with the cooperation of the Chabahar Free Zone and Oman's Chamber of Commerce; Allocating 1,000 square meters of workspace in Oman for Iranian knowledge-based companies; and reducing trade tariffs between the two nations.

The visit led to the signing of 18 commercial memoranda of understanding and agreements. The high-level trip, held on May 27-28 (6-7 Khordad), included three major meetings between Iranian and Omani business delegations, one of which was attended by President Pezeshkian. A business-to-business (B2B) session and an investment forum in collaboration with Oman's Chamber of Commerce were also held.

Iran's Private Sector Ready to Invest in Iraq



TEHRAN - The Iranian private sector is poised to increase investment in Iraq as bilateral efforts intensify to enhance economic cooperation. This momentum was marked by the launch of the Iran-Iraq Trade Policy Council under the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), signaling a strategic commitment to expanding joint ventures and trade relations between the two neighbors.

Speaking at a high-level meeting with Iraq's ambassador to Iran, ICCIMA President Samad Hassanzadeh emphasized that enhanced exchange of commercial information, access to investment incentives, and easier issuance of banking guarantees for Iranian investors will foster stronger private-sector cooperation between the two countries.

"One of our main priorities is the development of joint production and investment opportunities between the Iranian and Iraqi private sectors," Hassanzadeh stated. He highlighted that this goal aligns with both governmental strategies and ICCIMA's central agenda.

Hassanzadeh pointed to a recent investment opportunities conference in Iraq, which showcased over 140 viable investment prospects. He expressed hope that detailed information on these opportunities would be shared with the Iranian Chamber to better prepare Iranian economic actors for engagement.

He also proposed organizing training workshops to guide Iranian investors on how to enter the Iraqi market and leverage available incentives. A critical component of this process, he said, is facilitating the issuance of banking guarantees and ensuring legal clarity on ownership and long-term rights for Iranian investors in Iraq.

In addition, Hassanzadeh urged both governments to prioritize the improvement of logistics and transportation infrastructure, an essential aspect for enhancing trade and economic exchange.

Hossein Pirmoazen, Vice President of ICCIMA, reinforced the importance of Iraq as one of Iran's key economic partners, noting a current trade balance of \$12.7 billion. However, he stressed that the true potential of bilateral trade exceeds this figure.

To capitalize on these opportunities, Pirmoazen announced the formal launch of the Iran-Iraq Trade Policy Council. Composed of economic actors from Iranian provinces bordering Iraq and other major trade regions, the council is tasked with executing a roadmap to bolster trade volumes.

One of the council's top goals is to improve Iran's export ranking to Iraq—from fourth to second place—which hinges on enhancing transport infrastructure. "We

need Iraq to approve transit operations under the TIR Convention to ease cross-border logistics," Pirmoazen noted.

He further highlighted delays in customs clearance between the two countries, which he said have halved transportation activity. Installing X-ray scanners at border checkpoints in both Iran and Iraq could significantly address these delays.

Another strategic objective of the council is to dedicate 10% of Iran's imports to goods coming from Basra and adjacent Iraqi provinces, in an effort to narrow the trade imbalance. Pirmoazen stated, "This is part of a broader effort to correct the 50% trade deficit Iran faces in its trade relationship with Iraq."

Yahya Al-e Eshaq, head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, reiterated the urgency of addressing the financial and banking issues that have hampered economic relations. "The biggest barrier to sustainable long-term investment is the lack of stable monetary channels and banking coordination," he said.

He stressed that removing obstacles to money transfers, banking guarantees, and insurance coverage is essential to unlock the full potential of bilateral cooperation. Al-e Eshaq also pointed to the untapped potential of Iraqi goods transiting to Iran, suggesting that this could be a game-changer in addressing the trade imbalance.

"Iraq can supply nearly \$5 billion worth of goods to meet Iranian market demand, and Iranian businesses are fully prepared to engage," he added.

Nasir Abdulmohsen Abdullah, Iraq's ambassador to Iran, underscored his country's readiness to welcome Iranian investors. "We value Iran's role in our development projects, and there is strong potential for cooperation," he said.

He presented a comprehensive list of investment opportunities in Iraq, including: 27 renewable energy projects across 14 provinces, 2 major oil and gas investment opportunities, 22 projects in heavy and medium industries, 9 opportunities in industrial towns and free zones, 10 agricultural projects—many in provinces bordering Iran, 10 healthcare-related projects, and 25 housing developments.

According to the ambassador, the total value of investment opportunities in Iraqi industrial zones and free trade areas alone amounts to \$70 billion. He expressed confidence that expanding Iranian participation in these projects would help establish a more balanced trade relationship between the two nations.

As both sides push forward with ambitious plans to deepen economic ties, the creation of the Iran-Iraq Trade Policy Council and the open invitation from Iraq for Iranian investments signal a new chapter in bilateral economic cooperation. If logistical, financial, and regulatory challenges are addressed promptly, the two countries could move significantly closer to realizing their shared economic potential.

Investment Boom in Kish Island Breaks Three-Year Record

TEHRAN - The Kish Free Zone Organization has achieved a historic milestone in investment attraction, securing a record-breaking amount over the past six months equivalent to the total of the previous three years combined.

In a press briefing held on Kish Island, Mohammad Kabiri, the newly appointed CEO of the Kish Free Zone Organization, unveiled an ambitious development plan titled "Kish 1414," positioning the island as a model for seventh-generation free zones by 2035.

Kabiri announced that 13 investment projects worth 330 trillion rials (approximately \$660 million) were finalized in the past half-year, marking the highest investment influx in the last three years. He attributed this success to comprehensive reforms and new strategic priorities.

A notable breakthrough came with the resolution of a 20-year dispute over 110 hectares of land, formerly under contention with the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order. This settlement allows for the formal documentation of over 10,000 privately-owned plots that previously lacked official titles.

In another legal victory, a French court ruled in favor of returning the land involved in the "Gol-e Shargh" project—valued at over \$1 billion—to the Kish Free Zone, although the organization is liable for certain penalties, which are under negotiation.

The development of Kish's airport is central to these plans. A new runway and advanced navigation systems, including an ILS, will be inaugurated during Eid al-Ghadir, backed by an investment of 15 trillion rials.



Health services are being expanded with the number of specialists increasing to over 100. Free insurance coverage continues for sanitation workers, locals, and teachers, while cancer screening programs are being launched in partnership with the Ministry of Health.

In education, construction of 10 new schools is underway, and specialized university programs in artificial intelligence will be supported via grants in partnership with the University of Tehran.

Transport upgrades include the addition of 120 new taxis, port expansion, and planning for Iran's first aircraft maintenance center (MRO) on the island. In communication, six new towers will be installed to enhance connectivity.

Kabiri highlighted upcoming mega-projects, such as: The transformation of Kish's second-largest underground oil field, worth \$7 billion, into an investment hub; Creation of a 27-hectare exhibition city; and expansion of the Aftab Port and development of Hendurabi as a green island.

He emphasized transitioning from land-based revenue to sustainable income sources and announced active negotiations with 17 investors to establish a southern health district.

In closing, Kabiri invited domestic and foreign investors to participate in these large-scale initiatives. He expressed confidence that with the implementation of "Kish 1414," investment attraction will triple, turning Kish into a national model of a seventh-generation free zone.

Productivity Growth in Iran Has Been Just 0.2% Over the Past Half-Century



TEHRAN - Iran's long-term productivity growth has been alarmingly low, averaging just 0.2% over the past 50 years, according to the head of the National Productivity Organization.

Speaking at the National Productivity Conference on Sunday—an event attended by the President—Mohammad Saleh Olia acknowledged the country's poor productivity trajectory and said new capacities have been identified in development programs to shift this trend.

"Stability, capabilities, and market dynamics are key to improving productivity," Olia stated. "Governments play a critical role through policy-making."

He stressed the importance of motivation within government institutions: "If there is no motivation, goals cannot be achieved."

Olia also raised a critical question: "Is the growth of private companies rooted in productivity or driven by rent-seeking?" He warned that if economic actors believe profits come through rent rather than innovation or efficiency, productivity in the private sector will remain stagnant.

Calling for a fresh perspective in all policy decisions and regulations, Olia urged officials to consider whether each decision motivates higher productivity.

He rejected the notion that productivity growth is a purely top-down process. "We need collaboration across the entire ecosystem—public and private sectors alike," he said. Olia emphasized inter-agency cooperation and encouraged continued expert meetings to promote shared accountability and progress.

"We Have Neglected Productivity," Says Head of Iran Productivity Association

Seyed Hamid Kalantari, President of the Iran Productivity Association, also spoke at the event, pointing out that 35% of the country's economic growth from the fourth to seventh development plans was supposed to come from productivity—but that target was not met.

Iran Unveils Initiatives to Boost Transit and Connectivity in ECO Region



TEHRAN (IRNA) The Islamic Republic of Iran has presented a set of initiatives aimed at facilitating and expanding transit across the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region, according to a senior official at the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

Amin Tarfa', Advisor to the Minister and Head of the Ministry's International Affairs Center, announced the proposals on Sunday during the expert-level meeting of the 13th ECO Transport Ministers' Summit in Tehran. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the transport ministries of ECO member states.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the session, Tarfa' explained that the agenda for the upcoming ministerial summit and key decisions to be addressed were thoroughly reviewed during the expert meeting.

He outlined Iran's main proposals, which include: Reducing cargo dwell time at borders to enhance transit integration, Cutting freight transportation costs through tariff policy reforms, and providing landlocked ECO member countries with facilitated access to logistics zones in Iran's southern ports.

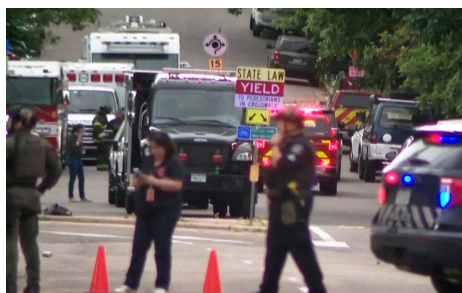
According to Tarfa', these measures are expected to strengthen Iran's transit performance, deepen interdependence in the ECO value chain, and reinforce both the North-South and East-West transport corridors across the region.

He further highlighted that cultural and civilizational exchanges among ECO nations can play a pivotal role in boosting trade, easing transport barriers, and fostering smoother regional logistics. He expressed optimism about an increase in intra-regional trade among ECO members in the medium term.

The 13th ECO Transport Ministers' Meeting is scheduled to take place in Tehran tomorrow (Monday, June 2), hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Transport ministers from the ECO member states will convene to discuss and advance cooperation within the framework of the ECO corridor network.

FBI Probing Molotov Cocktail Attack at Colorado Pro-Israel Protest

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Several people were injured Sunday in what the FBI called a “targeted terror attack” in the U.S. state of Colorado, where a group was protesting for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza. “We are aware of and fully investigating a targeted terror attack in Boulder, Colorado,” FBI chief Kash Patel said on X. Local media cited eyewitnesses describing a man throwing something resembling a homemade Molotov cocktail at a group calling for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza.



China Firmly Rejects U.S. Accusation of Violating Tariff Deal



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China said Monday it “firmly rejects” claims by the United States that it had violated a deal to lower crippling tariffs between the world’s two largest economies.

Beijing and Washington last month agreed to temporarily slash staggeringly high levies on each other for 90 days after talks between top officials in Geneva. But US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Beijing was “slow-rolling the deal”, in comments to Fox News Sunday.

Beijing hit back Monday, saying Washington “has made bogus charges and unreasonably accused China of violating the consensus, which is seriously contrary to the facts”.

“China firmly rejects these unreasonable accusations,” its commerce ministry said in a statement.

US President Donald Trump said last week that China had “totally violated” the deal, without providing details.

But Beijing’s commerce ministry said it “has been firm in safeguarding its rights and interests, and sincere in implementing the consensus”.

Washington “has successively introduced a number of discriminatory restrictive measures against China”, it said, citing export controls on artificial intelligence chips and revoking Chinese student visas in the United States.

“We urge the US to meet China halfway, immediately correct its wrongful actions, and jointly uphold the consensus from the Geneva trade talks,” the ministry said.

At Least 31 Palestinians Killed at Gaza Aid Hub



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - At least 31 people were killed and scores were wounded on Sunday as they were on their way to receive food in the Gaza Strip, according to health officials and multiple witnesses. The witnesses said Israeli forces fired on crowds around a kilometer away from an aid site run by an Israeli-backed foundation.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation’s distribution of aid has been marred by chaos, and multiple witnesses have said Israeli troops fired on crowds near the delivery sites. Before Sunday, at least six people had been killed and more than 50 wounded according to local health officials.

The Gaza Health Ministry on Sunday said 31 people were killed and 170 others were wounded, updating an earlier toll.

Hours earlier, officials at a nearby field hospital run by the Red Cross said that at least 21 people were killed and another 175 were wounded, without saying who opened fire on them. An Associated Press reporter saw dozens of wounded people being treated at the hospital.

Israel’s military said on Sunday that it “did not fire at civilians” within or around the aid centre in southern Gaza.

“In recent hours, false reports have been spread, including serious allegations against the IDF (military) regarding fire toward Gazan residents in the area of the humanitarian aid distribution site in the Gaza Strip,” the army said in a statement.

WARSAW (Dispatches) - Nationalist historian Karol Nawrocki is predicted to win Poland’s presidential election, projections showed on Monday in what would be a major blow for the country’s pro-EU government.

The 42-year-old, an admirer of U.S. President Donald Trump, was given 51 per cent of votes in a projection by Ipsos based on partial results from Sunday’s vote.

His 53-year-old rival Rafal Trzaskowski, Warsaw’s pro-EU mayor and an ally of the country’s centrist government, was on 49 per cent.

“We will win and we will save Poland,” Nawrocki told a crowd of supporters at his election night rally in Warsaw soon after polling stations closed.

The final result is expected later on Monday.

If confirmed, Nawrocki’s win would block the government’s progressive agenda for abortion and LGBTQ rights and could revive tensions with Brussels over rule of law issues.

It could also undermine strong ties with neighbouring Ukraine as he is critical of Kyiv’s EU and Nato accession plans and wants to cut benefits for Ukrainian refugees.

Nawrocki visited the White House during his campaign and said he had been told by Trump: “You will win.”

US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem also endorsed Nawrocki when she attended a conservative conference in Poland last week, saying: “He needs to be the next president.”

Polish presidents have some influence over foreign and defence policy and wield veto power over legislation, which can only be overturned by a three-fifths majority in parliament that the government does not have.

Reforms planned by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a former European Council president who came to power in 2023, have been held up by a deadlock with the current nationalist incumbent President Andrzej Duda.

Trzaskowski had claimed victory after a first exit poll put him very narrowly in the lead but his supporters at an election night rally were less optimistic.

“There’s a sleepless night ahead of us,” said Dorota Loboda, a lawmaker for Trzaskowski’s Civic Coalition.

Many Nawrocki supporters said they want stricter curbs on immigration and advocate conservative social values and more sovereignty for the country within the European Union.



“Catholic values are important to me. I know he shares them,” Warsaw pensioner Lila Chojecka, 60, told AFP as she came to cast her ballot for Nawrocki. Trzaskowski voters tend to back greater integration within the EU and an acceleration of social reforms.

Trzaskowski supports introducing civil partnerships for same-sex couples and easing Poland’s near-total ban on abortion.

Malgorzata Wojciechowska, a tour guide and teacher in her fifties, said Polish women “unfortunately do not have the same rights as our European friends”.

“I hope that Rafal Trzaskowski will relaunch the debate on abortion so that we can finally live in a free country,” she told AFP.

Anna Materska-Sosnowska, a political scientist at the University of Warsaw, called the election “a real clash of civilisations”.

A Nawrocki victory would embolden the populist Law and Justice (PiS) party, which ruled Poland between 2015 and 2023.

Some analysts have predicted it could lead to fresh parliamentary elections if a political deadlock with the government persists.

Nawrocki’s campaign was overshadowed at times by controversies over the circumstances in which he bought an apartment from an elderly man and his football hooligan past.

A former amateur boxer, Nawrocki also strongly denied media reports in the last days of the campaign that he had procured sex workers while working as a security guard at a hotel.

His opposition to Ukraine’s Nato membership also brought heavy criticism from Ukrainian officials.

Nawrocki used his last campaign hours on Friday to leave flowers at a monument to Poles killed by Ukrainian nationalists during World War II.

“It was a genocide against the Polish people,” he said.

Poland is an EU and NATO member and a fast-growing economy of 38 million people with a leading role in international diplomacy surrounding Ukraine.

Ukraine Claims \$7b Blow to Russian Bombers in Bold Drone Strike

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine said Sunday it destroyed Russian bombers worth billions of dollars in a “large-scale” drone assault on enemy soil as it geared up for talks with Moscow counterparts to explore prospects for a ceasefire.

In a spectacular claim, Ukraine said it damaged \$7 billion worth of Russian aircraft parked at four airbases thousands of kilometres (miles) away, with unverified video footage showing aircraft engulfed in flames and black smoke.

A source in the Ukrainian security services said the drones were concealed in the ceilings of shipping containers which were opened up to release them for the assault.

The long-planned operation came at a delicate moment three years into Russia’s invasion.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday that he was sending a delegation to Istanbul led by his Defence Minister Rustem Umerov for talks on Monday with Russian officials.

Turkey is hosting the meeting, which was spurred by US President Donald Trump’s push for a quick deal to end the three-year war.

Zelensky, who previously voiced scepticism about whether Russia was serious in proposing Monday’s meeting, said he had defined the Ukrainian delegation’s position going into it.

Priorities included “a complete and unconditional ceasefire” and the return of prisoners and abducted children, he said on social media.

Russia has rejected previous ceasefire demands.

It said it has formulated its own peace terms but refused to divulge them in advance. Russian President Vladimir Putin ruled out a Turkish proposal for the countries’ leaders to attend the meeting.

Russian news agencies said the Russian delegation was headed to Istanbul on Sunday for the talks.

A source in Ukraine’s SBU security service said the coordinated attacks inside Russia were “aimed at destroying enemy bombers far from the front”.

Rybar, an account on the Telegram message platform that is close to the Russian military, called it a “very heavy blow” for Moscow and pointed to what it called “serious errors” by Russian intelligence.

The SBU source said strikes targeted Russian airbases in the eastern Siberian



city of Belaya, in Olenya, in the Arctic near Finland, and in Ivanovo and Dyagilevo, both east of Moscow.

More than 40 aircraft had been hit at the Belaya base and a fire had broken out there, the source said, showing a video in which several aircraft could be seen in flames and black smoke rising.

AFP was not able to independently verify the claims or the video images.

The SBU claimed in a social media post to have hit Russian military planes worth a combined US\$7 billion in a “special operation”.

Russia’s defense ministry confirmed on Telegram that several of its military aircraft “caught fire”, adding that there were no casualties and that several “participants” had been arrested.

Igor Kobzev, Governor of Russia’s Irkutsk region, which hosts the targeted

Belaya airbase, said it was “the first attack of this sort in Siberia”.

He called on the population not to panic and posted an amateur video apparently showing a drone flying in the sky and a large cloud of grey smoke.

The governor of the Murmansk region where the Olenya base was located, Andrey Chibis, also said “enemy drones” were flying overhead, and anti-aircraft defences were operating.

Russia has been announcing Ukrainian drone attacks on a near-daily basis, usually saying they had all been shot down. But it was rare for such drone strikes to be reported so deep within its territory.

At the same time, Russia has been carrying out constant attacks on Ukraine.

On Sunday, Ukraine’s air force said it was hit by 472 Russian drones and seven missiles overnight — a record since the beginning of the invasion.

In a rare admission of its military losses, the Ukraine army said Russia’s “missile strike on the location of one of the training units” had killed a dozen soldiers, most of whom had been in shelters during the attack, and wounded more than 60.

The attack led Ukrainian ground forces commander Mykhailo Drapaty to announce his resignation, saying he felt “responsibility” for the soldiers’ deaths.

Separately on Sunday, the Russian army said it had captured another village in Ukraine’s northern Sumy region, where Kyiv fears Moscow could mount a fresh ground assault.

Russia claims to have captured several settlements in the region in recent weeks, and has massed more than 50,000 soldiers on the other side of the border, according to Zelensky.

Authorities in the region have evacuated more than 200 villages amid intensified shelling.

In Russia, officials said a blast brought down a road bridge in the Bryansk region bordering Ukraine on Saturday, derailling a passenger train heading to Moscow and killing seven people.

Hamas Signals Willingness for New Indirect Gaza Ceasefire Talks With Israel

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Hamas said on Sunday evening that it is ready to immediately enter a new round of indirect negotiations with Israel to resolve outstanding points of contention, with the aim of ending the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and reaching a permanent ceasefire, Anadolu Ajansi (AA) reported.

The announcement followed the group’s Saturday delivery of its response to a Gaza ceasefire proposal presented by US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff. Both the envoy and the Israeli government later rejected the response outright.

“We welcome the continued Qatari and Egyptian efforts to reach an end to the war waged by the Zionist occupation against our people in the Gaza Strip,” Hamas said in a statement.

The group affirmed its willingness “to immediately begin indirect negotiations to reach an agreement on disputed points, in a way that ensures relief for our people, ends the humanitarian catastrophe, and leads to a permanent ceasefire and



the complete withdrawal of (Israeli) occupation forces.”

Earlier Sunday, Egypt and Qatar said they hoped for a swift agreement on a 60-day temporary truce between Israel and Hamas that would pave the way towards a lasting ceasefire in Gaza, according to a joint statement.

“Qatar and Egypt, in coordination with the United States, affirm their intention to intensify efforts to overcome the obstacles facing the negotiations,” the statement said.

They also urged all parties “to exercise responsibility and support the efforts of mediators aimed at resolving the crisis in the Gaza Strip through restoring stability and calm to the region.”

On Saturday night, Witkoff criticised Hamas’ latest response to his ceasefire proposal as “totally unacceptable.”



Piastri Wins in Spain, Verstappen on Brink of a Ban

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Formula One leader Oscar Piastri won the Spanish Grand Prix in a McLaren one-two with Lando Norris on Sunday while Max Verstappen was left on the brink of a ban after a clash with Mercedes' George Russell.

Polesitter Piastri won by 2.471 seconds to go 10 points clear of Norris with his fifth victory in nine races, and McLaren's seventh of the season.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc completed the podium in a race that left the drama to the end with a late safety car deployment.

"It's a nice way to bounce back from Monaco. A superb weekend," said Piastri, who finished third last weekend in a race won from pole by Norris.

Verstappen, who made four stops in total and ended up fighting on hard tyres against rivals with faster softs, collided with Leclerc and then twice with Russell after the safety car restart with six laps to go.

Stewards handed the four-times world champion a 10-second post-race penalty for the second collision with Russell, which appeared deliberate, dropping Verstappen from fifth on the road to 10th.

The Dutch driver was also given three penalty points to take his total tally to 11 for the 12 month period. One more before the end of June would incur a one-race ban.

Nico Rosberg, Mercedes 2016 world champion and now a pundit for Sky Sports television, said Verstappen should have been black-flagged for what looked to him like intentional retaliation for the earlier contact.

Another investigation into the clash with Leclerc drew no further action.

Russell finished fourth while Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg finished a surprising and morale-boosting fifth for the future Audi team after passing Ferrari's seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton on the penultimate lap.

Hamilton ended up sixth, Isack Hadjar seventh for Racing Bulls and Pierre Gasly eighth for Renault-

owned Alpine to cap a solid weekend for the Frenchman celebrating soccer side Paris St Germain's Champions League win.

Continuing the football theme, the race was attended by FIFA president Gianni Infantino and most of the England squad while the chequered flag was waved by Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski.

Ferrari moved up to second from fourth in the constructors' standings, now 197 points behind McLaren.

Verstappen remained third in the drivers' championship but now 49 points behind Piastri in what is becoming a McLaren battle.

Home hero Fernando Alonso scored his first points of the season in ninth for Aston Martin, who had only one car on the grid due to Lance Stroll's withdrawal through injury after Saturday's qualifying.

Piastri led away at the start with Verstappen seizing second from Norris while Hamilton and Leclerc moved up to fourth and fifth as Russell lost out.

Hamilton let Leclerc through on lap 10 of 66 after the two Ferraris had run nose to tail.

Norris took back second place from Verstappen on lap 13, the Dutch driver making no attempt to defend against the quicker McLaren and pitting in the next lap for fresh tyres.

Verstappen took the lead again on lap 23 after Piastri pitted, with Norris making his first stop on lap 21 and coming out behind the Red Bull, but that lasted only until Verstappen pitted for a second time on lap 30.

He came in for a third stop on lap 47 but Norris pitted the lap after to defend second place.

A safety car deployment on lap 55, after Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli beached his Mercedes in the gravel, bunched up the field and triggered a rash of stops.

The McLarens came in together for fresh tyres, double-stacking, and resumed ahead of Verstappen who had only hards available to him.

"That safety car just came at the wrong time," he said.



Yates Wins Giro d'Italia for Second Grand Tour Title



ROME (Dispatches) - Simon Yates of Visma-Lease a Bike won the 2025 Giro d'Italia on Sunday to claim his second Grand Tour victory, having effectively sealed the title a day earlier when he snatched the pink jersey from Isaac Del Toro.

Yates and other riders received blessings from Pope Leo at the Vatican before the Briton cruised to the finish in Rome on the final stage, which was won by teammate Olav Kooij in a sprint finish.

Yates, riding in all pink on a pink bike, also became the first rider since Alberto Contador in 2015 to win the Giro without claiming victory on any of the stages. His victory added to his 2018 Vuelta a Espana title.

"Honestly, it's still sinking in. What a huge moment in my career... I couldn't be prouder of the whole team over three weeks," said Yates, the Giro's 12th different winner in as many editions.

"It's been good that we had the possibility to win the last stage with Olav. So we kept focused till the end. It's a defining moment of my career, there's no doubt about that. It's a sweet success."

Having raced for more than 82 hours, Yates eventually finished three minutes and 56 seconds ahead of Del Toro while Richard Carapaz was third, a further 47 seconds behind.

Yates, 32, famously lost the title in 2018 on the Colle delle Finestre climb but this year he closed that painful chapter on the same slopes by taking the pink jersey with Saturday's stunning attack in the mountains.

After a 3,300-km journey through Italy, Albania and Slovenia, the final stage was a 143-km ride starting and finishing in Rome, including eight laps of a 9.5 km long circuit.

Paris Cheers Its Sublime Champions PSG



PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris St Germain held victory celebrations on the Champs Elysees and at their Parc des Princes stadium for thousands of cheering supporters on Sunday after crushing Inter Milan 5-0 to win their first Champions League title.

Dressed in the club's blue-and-red colours, fans gathered in the French capital's most famous avenue to welcome their Parisian heroes, just landed from Munich.

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The players showed off the coveted trophy from their open top bus and joined in the crowd's singing.

"We are the champions!", "Ici c'est Paris!" (Paris is here) and other chants reverberated throughout the avenue.

The squad then headed for the nearby Elysee palace where they were greeted by President Emmanuel Macron.

"You won this Champions League, and you did it in a sublime, phenomenal way. You are the champions, and you put Paris at the top of Europe. And it was magnificent," Macron said.

"We all felt the excitement. There were 11 of you on the pitch, but there was clearly a 12th man - the French public ... regardless of traditional allegiances."

PSG's young team achieved what the likes of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe could not do in their colours, becoming only the second French side to win the trophy after Olympique de Marseille in 1993.

"It's unbelievable," said one fan Leo Rogue, 22, standing in the middle of the packed crowd in a vintage PSG top. "I don't have the words ... We've been waiting for this for a long time."

Police capped numbers at 100,000 for security reasons.

Some youngsters climbed on scaffolding or news stands to better take in the moment.

Jamel, 55, was disappointed to be stopped near an entrance to the parade as numbers had reached a maximum, but was not letting that spoil his celebration.

Swiatek, Alcaraz Power on at French Open

PARIS (Dispatches) - Four-time champion Iga Swiatek clawed her way back from the brink to reach the French Open quarter-finals by defeating her claycourt nemesis Elena Rybakina while men's title holder Carlos Alcaraz also went through after a tough workout.

Fifth seed Swiatek looked out of sorts as she trailed 6-1 2-0 on Court Philippe Chatrier, leaving the crowd stunned. But Swiatek found her groove and some grit to prevail 1-6 6-3 7-5.

Her final opponent from last year, Jasmine Paolini, was on the wrong end of another last-16 clash against 13th seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine, the Italian wasting three match points in a 4-6 7-6(6) 6-1 defeat.

Svitolina will provide the next test for Swiatek, who continues her quest to become the first female player since tennis turned professional to claim the singles' title four times in a row at Roland Garros.

The only women to win the singles at Roland Garros in four straight years were Jeanne Matthey from 1909-12 and Suzanne Lenglen from 1920-23 when only French players competed.

Since tennis turned professional in 1968, Swiatek is one of three women with Monica Seles and Justine Henin to enjoy three consecutive triumphs in Paris and on Sunday it looked like her quest for a fourth straight was going to crash to a halt.

The 12th-seeded Rybakina made a bullet start, putting Swiatek



on the back foot with some powerful baseline play and racing to a 5-0 lead, threatening to inflict on the former world number one her first bagel at a Grand Slam.

"It was as if I was playing (men's world number one and heavy hitter) Jannik Sinner," Swiatek joked.

If there was any sign that Swiatek was rattled, it was her three double faults at 2-2 in the second set.

The fifth seed still held though and it proved to be a turning point as she went on to break to love and move 4-2 up, bagging 10 consecutive points in the process to send the clash into a decider.

At 4-4, with Rybakina serving at 15-40, the Kazakh appeared to have double-faulted on break point.

Both players were walking towards their benches when chair umpire Kader Nouni's deep voice overruled the line judge's call.

The reversal offered Rybakina an unexpected lifeline as the air filled with electricity.

Swiatek later saved a game point with a blistering forehand winner, but it was Rybakina who ultimately secured the crucial hold, shifting the weight of expectation squarely onto her opponent's shoulders.

Swiatek cooled down and held, then broke and finished it off on the second match point before unleashing a huge scream and bumping her chest in a mix of released anger and relief.

"In the first set, with her playing like that I felt I did not have a single chance," said Swiatek, who had lost to Rybakina in their two previous encounters on clay.

"Using the top spin was the plan from the beginning but I did not feel she gave me the space to do that. But I'm happy that I was patient enough to stay in the game and use any opportunity that came to me."

Siakam, Pacers Knock Out Knicks in Eastern Conference Finals

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Pascal Siakam already owns one NBA championship ring and he now has a chance to win another.

Siakam was the biggest hero as the Indiana Pacers earned their first NBA Finals appearance since 2000 with a solid 125-108 victory over the visiting New York Knicks in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals on Saturday night at Indianapolis.

Siakam recorded 31 points and three blocked shots to finish off a stellar series in which he was named MVP of the series. He was 10-of-18 shooting while notching his third 30-point outing of the series.

"So deserving," Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said of Siakam. "The guy has been a rock of consistency all year."



Indiana will face the Western Conference champion Oklahoma City Thunder in the NBA Finals. Game 1 is Thursday night at Oklahoma City.

Siakam, a nine-year veteran, won a title in 2019 with the Toronto Raptors. Now he'll be the guy fielding questions from his teammates about what to expect.

"That year was my third year, I was this young kid. I thought it was going to be easy (to get back)," Siakam said. "I appreciate it even more now because I know how hard it is to get here."

Tyrese Haliburton added 21 points, 13 assists and three steals for fourth-seeded Indiana. Obi Toppin added 18 points off the bench and Andrew Nembhard had 14 points and six steals for the Pacers.