

Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e-Ravanchi Says That Ending the “Oppressive Sanctions” and Upholding Iran’s Rights Under the NPT, Including the Right to Uranium Enrichment, Were Central to Iran’s Agenda in the Meeting With the European Troika

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and His Pakistani Counterpart, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, in a Phone Call on Friday Discussed the Israeli Regime’s Crimes and Called for the Use of All International and Regional Potentials to Deliver Humanitarian Aid to the People of Gaza and Stop Zionists’ Crimes

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Iran’s Military, Scientific Progress Will Accelerate



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In a message marking the 40th day since the martyrdom of top Iranian commanders and scientists in a US-Israeli aggression, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said both military and scientific advances will move forward with greater speed and determination.

In the Friday message to the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei condemned the “wicked and criminal Zionist ruling group” for aggression on Iran, calling it “a blow delivered by the vile and spiteful enemy of the Iranian nation.”

“Undoubtedly, the loss of commanders like Martyrs Bagheri, Salami, Rashid, Hajizadeh, Shadmani and other military personnel, as well as scientists such as Martyrs Tehrani and Abbasi, is heavy for any nation,” the Leader said. “But the foolish and shortsighted enemy did not achieve its goal.”

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the Israeli regime’s attempt to slow down Iran’s progress has backfired.

“The future will show that both our military and scientific movements will accelerate even more rapidly toward high horizons, God willing,” he said.

The Leader’s remarks come in the wake of Israel’s June 13 aggression targeting senior Iranian officials and nuclear scientists in an act of terrorism that killed scores of civilians as well. Days later, the United States escalated the war by bombing three civilian nuclear facilities in Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei praised the Iranian people and institutions for their strength in the face of US-Israeli aggression. “This painful incident also revealed some shining points — the patience and fortitude of the survivors, not seen anywhere else except in the history of the Islamic Republic; the steadfastness of institutions under the martyred leaders, who ensured that this heavy blow did not hinder their progress; and the miraculous resilience of the Iranian nation, seen in its unity, spiritual strength, and firm determination to remain in the field.”

“These enemies are hammering cold iron,” he added. “The Islamic Republic will, by God’s grace, become stronger by the day.”

The Leader also laid out seven strategic duties for all sectors of Iranian society, including maintaining national unity, accelerating scientific and technological progress, preserving national dignity, enhancing defense capabilities, ensuring government efficiency, providing spiritual guidance, and fostering revolutionary enthusiasm — particularly among the youth.

“May the Merciful and Almighty God grant everyone success in fulfilling these duties,” he concluded.

Iranian Investment in Iraq Nears \$10b



TEHRAN - Iranian investments in Iraq are approaching the \$10 billion mark, according to a senior trade official.

Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi, Secretary General of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, told ILNA that the estimated volume of Iranian investments in Iraq is close to \$10 billion, despite the lack of precise official data due to issues such as data transparency, international sanctions, and geopolitical complexities.

Sanjabi Shirazi revealed that Iraqi investments in Iran remain significantly lower, officially totaling \$416 million by the end of the Persian calendar year 1403 (March 2025). However, he estimated that the actual figure, including unofficial channels, could exceed \$700 million.

He noted that many Iraqi investments in Iran do not pass through the formal foreign investment registration process and are often carried out via Iranian intermediaries. Similarly, some Iranian investments in Iraq may be made under non-Iranian names to circumvent international sanctions.

Iraqi investors have focused primarily on Iran’s border markets and free trade zones adjacent to Iraq, especially in cities with large numbers of Iraqi tourists and pilgrims, such as Qom and Mashhad. Much of the Iraqi capital has gone into the tourism, hospitality, and medical tourism sectors, particularly in northern Iran and religious cities.

According to Sanjabi Shirazi, Iran is among the most active foreign investors in Iraq, ranking behind China and Turkey in sectors outside oil and gas. Major areas of Iranian investment include Iraq’s Kurdish provinces (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Halabja) and Shiite-majority regions such as Karbala, Najaf, Hilla, Samawah, Maysan, and Basra.

President Says We Are Responsible to Society



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Speaking to the deputies and senior managers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday, President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the heavy responsibility public officials bear toward society and the importance of shared accountability at all levels of government.

Pezeshkian stated, “The truth is, I am not a special individual just because I have become president. Every governor, manager, and minister can achieve great work in their own domain by taking responsibility seriously.”

Recalling his previous role as a parliamentarian about a year ago, he added, “I often said that even during my time as a representative, I was not fully accepted by others. Today, I am president, yet I am still the same person. My responsibility has grown much heavier, and the duty I feel toward the people is such that without God’s help, I would be powerless.”

He underscored the collective responsibility of officials, saying, “Each of you can follow this path. We have delegated authority to governors and ministers. However, in some areas, certain issues have arisen that must be corrected. We will sit together, rectify mistakes, and move forward.”

The president challenged the notion that only he can act effectively, stating, “Who says governors cannot do what I do? They are closer to the issues, while we make decisions from above. If everyone works within the framework of policies issued by the Supreme Leader and the Seventh Development Plan, problems will be solved. Mistakes will be corrected with oversight and support.”

Pezeshkian emphasized the need to grant both responsibility and authority to officials, noting, “We assign responsibility without granting sufficient authority, then expect accountability. That doesn’t work. We are practicing and striving to fix this. I hope you will also help create this narrative.”

Calling for a change in mindset, he said, “We must change our perspective. If change was to come from the old viewpoint, it would have happened by now. This transformation begins with ourselves and depends on you.”

Highlighting foreign relations, the president stressed, “We will prioritize improving relations with neighboring countries such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Gulf states. There’s no need to focus elsewhere. Stronger ties with neighbors can unlock many opportunities. Academics, traders, artists, educators, and tourists all play important roles.”

On the Iranian diaspora, Pezeshkian said, “We must create frameworks to facilitate the return of Iranians living abroad. Many are hesitant to return. We need to coordinate with the judiciary and intelligence to ensure those who long for their homeland can come back easily and contribute. They are valuable assets for Iran.”

Referencing Supreme Leader’s guidance on diplomacy, Pezeshkian noted, “We must be ready to defend our territory with strength, but diplomacy is even more important. Living peacefully is far better than war and bloodshed. Those claiming to support human rights are often hypocrites. I cannot bear to see what has happened in Gaza. Where are the European countries and human rights organizations that preach humanity but remain silent about these brutal acts?”

He strongly condemned some foreign-based Iranian media for their shameful commentary on Iran’s security, saying, “They ignore the violence against our people and instead accuse Iran of human rights abuses. This is disgraceful. We seek unity and will continue steadfastly with God’s help.”

Pezeshkian concluded by reiterating, “I have said many times before and say now: If we serve the people sincerely and with faith in God, the people can stand strong against all challenges. No power can defeat a united nation. If unity fails, it is our fault. We are here to serve the people, remove obstacles, and strengthen connections. I thank you for your efforts—keep building bridges internally and externally. Let us open pathways for engagement so that we can raise our voice against aggression and be heard worldwide.”

Diplomacy’s Frontline Soldiers Stood Heroically Alongside Armed Forces During the War

TEHRAN - In a significant gathering held on Saturday, President Masoud Pezeshkian, alongside senior officials and deputies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, convened to assess the diplomatic efforts carried out during and after the recent intense 12-day conflict involving Iran. During the meeting, Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araqchi provided a detailed account of the Ministry’s vital role and highlighted the seamless collaboration between Iran’s diplomatic corps and its armed forces throughout the crisis.

Araqchi underscored that the war, despite its harshness, became a proud example of national unity where diplomacy and military resilience worked in tandem. “Throughout the challenging twelve days of conflict, all ministry officials remained steadfast at their posts, fully engaged in defending our country’s rights on the international stage,” he stated. “As the Supreme Leader noted, the diplomatic front marched alongside the military front, a rare instance where the battlefield and diplomacy advanced hand-in-hand.”

He praised the armed forces for their heroic defense against two well-equipped adversaries armed with the latest weaponry. Simultaneously, Iranian diplomats worked tirelessly, often around the clock, to uphold the nation’s legitimacy and defend the Iranian people’s right to self-defense against blatant aggression. Araqchi asserted, “Just as our soldiers protected Iran’s soil with courage and determination, our diplomats countered misinformation and rallied international support to defend our nation’s sovereignty.”

The Foreign Minister emphasized that it was this dual front — the military resistance combined with effective government management — that compelled the enemy to retreat and ultimately request an unconditional ceasefire. “The strength displayed was not only on the battlefield but also in governance, which operated without disruption or weakness. This solid, unified stance was crucial during those twelve days.”

Araqchi then elaborated on the Ministry’s diplomatic achievements during the conflict, noting the widespread international condemnation of the attacks on Iran. “Thanks to the tireless efforts of our embassies worldwide and continuous telephone diplomacy, over 120 countries publicly condemned the aggression against Iran, expressing their solidarity,” he explained. These countries ranged across continents and included many influential global players. Apart from the United Nations Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors,



whose positions were anticipated, almost no major international organization remained silent or failed to support Iran’s stance.

He listed the entities that voiced their support: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, and the African Union, among others. “Their acknowledgment of the Iranian people’s legitimate rights sent a powerful message in favor of peace and against the use of force,” Araqchi said.

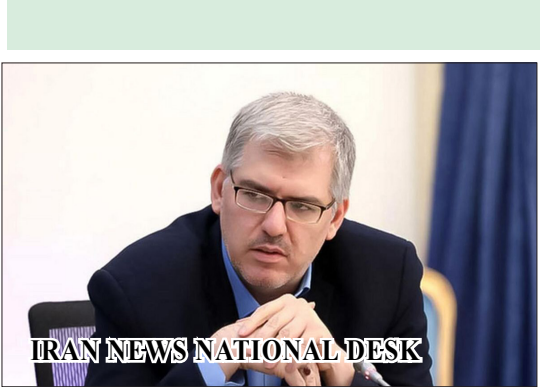
The Foreign Minister also reflected on the broader implications of the attack, highlighting a critical diplomatic lesson. “The Islamic Republic of Iran was targeted while actively engaged in diplomatic negotiations. This conflict revealed the true nature of those who champion dialogue and peaceful resolution, versus those who prefer coercion, bullying, and hegemonic tactics,” he remarked. This clarity, he noted, strengthens Iran’s position on the global stage.

However, Araqchi stressed that the work was far from over. “While we have established the legitimacy of our position internationally, our diplomatic efforts continue unabated,” he said. The Ministry, in cooperation with the Vice-Presidency for Legal Affairs, is meticulously documenting crimes committed against Iranian citizens during the conflict. Legal action is being pursued at the United Nations and other international bodies, with a firm commitment to see justice served.

Turning to ongoing regional issues, Araqchi addressed recent developments in Gaza and Palestine, another focus of Iranian diplomacy. “Our Ministry has been deeply engaged in urgent diplomatic communications regarding the humanitarian crisis unfolding there,” he reported. In the past days alone, Araqchi personally held discussions with foreign ministers from several major Islamic nations—including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Tunisia, Qatar, and Iraq—to coordinate joint responses to the situation.

He described the situation in Gaza as a “deliberate siege using hunger and deprivation as weapons.” Economic blockade and shortages of food and medical supplies were being used to force political concessions in ceasefire talks. Nevertheless, he affirmed that “the resilience of the people of Gaza has so far prevented these strategies from succeeding.”

Iran Begins Construction of Next-Generation Nahid-3



TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), Hassan Salarieh, announced the successful placement of the Nahid-2 telecommunications satellite into its intended orbit. He also confirmed that the third generation of the satellite, Nahid-3, is currently in the design and construction phase and is expected to be launched using a domestically developed launch vehicle.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, Salarieh highlighted that Nahid-2 is Iran’s first satellite from this family to reach orbit. He explained that the satellite was fully designed and built domestically and represents a key step in the development of Iran’s space-based communication technologies.

“In the initial phase, the satellite will undergo various tests to assess the performance of its subsystems,” said Salarieh. “This is a foundational step in advancing Iran’s space program toward high-orbit (GEO) communications satellites.”

Salarieh also revealed that another unit of Nahid-2 has already been built and is scheduled to be launched soon. Meanwhile, Nahid-3, the next-generation model with more advanced capabilities, is under development.

The ISA chief stated that Nahid-2 marks Iran’s first venture into the KU frequency band, which enables broadband communications — a significant milestone for the country’s technological capabilities. “This is the first time that KU band technology has been developed domestically and tested in orbit,” he said.

Salarieh emphasized that mastering the KU and KA frequency bands is critical for Iran to achieve its goals in operational telecommunications satellites, whether through satellite constellations or GEO orbit satellites.

He clarified that although KU technology had previously existed in Iran, it had never before been tested in an orbital and operational context — a milestone now achieved with Nahid-2.

Yemen Strikes Israeli Regime’s Technology Hub With Hypersonic Ballistic Missile



SANAA (Dispatches) - Yemen’s Armed Forces have slammed a hypersonic ballistic missile into the occupied city of Be’er Sheva, billed as the Israeli regime’s modern development and technology epicenter, in support of war-hit Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The forces announced the “precise military operation” through spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree on Friday.

Saree identified the projectile fired towards the city as a Palestine-2 missile.

Besides, the servicemen announced hitting three different locations, each resting on a different end of the occupied Palestinian territories, using armed drones, the spokesman said.

He identified the targets as “three vital Israeli enemy sites” located in the occupied port of Eilat in the far south, the city of Ashkelon in the west, and the city of Hadera in the north of the territories.

Overall, “The military operations successfully achieved their objectives,” Saree added.

The official, meanwhile, warned the regime about the forces’ intention towards “further escalation.”

Upon potential implementation, he added, the escalation would be aimed at further pressuring Tel Aviv into stopping its October 2023-present war of genocide on Gaza.

The Yemeni forces have been conducting hundreds of such operations since the onset of the war that has so far claimed the lives of more than 59,500 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The course of the support operations has witnessed the servicemen mounting a naval and an aerial blockade on the regime.



Low Reservoir Volumes in Tehran Dams Leave No Choice But Conservation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The spokesperson for the Water Industry of Iran announced that the water levels in Tehran's dams are critically low, leaving no option but to conserve water.

Isa Bozorgzadeh responded to recent videos circulating on social media showing full dams in Tehran. He explained that the reality is concerning: the fill percentage of Tehran's dams is approximately 21%, with half of this volume consisting of sediments and dead storage. Bozorgzadeh warned that such images could promote misuse of water. Currently, the shortage of water resources—especially surface water—in Tehran and Alborz provinces is definitive, and there is no choice but to implement conservation measures.

Afghan Workers Made Up Half of Tehran's Construction Workforce



TEHRAN - The head of the Tehran Mass Builders Association has raised concerns over a significant labor shortage in the construction sector following the departure of Afghan migrant workers from Iran.

Speaking to ILNA, Iraj Rahbar stated that over 50 percent of Tehran's construction workers had been Afghan nationals. Their widespread employment across various construction roles—including general laborers, steel fixers, cement workers, stonemasons, and bricklayers—has left a gap that's proving difficult to fill with local labor.

"Following the decision after the imposed war [Iran-Iraq war] to expel Afghan nationals from the country, we have encountered serious shortages in skilled and unskilled labor in the construction industry," Rahbar said.

He noted that the reliance on Afghan workers had become routine over the years, particularly in construction, even though they were employed in other sectors as well. Their sudden removal, he explained, has disrupted ongoing projects and significantly reduced work efficiency.

"Some projects have been halted, and replacing these workers with Iranian laborers will take time," he said, adding that delays will especially impact government-led initiatives such as the National Housing Movement. "These projects were contracted two years ago at two-year-old prices. With labor costs now rising due to the switch to Iranian workers, the final project costs will inevitably increase."

Rahbar emphasized that Afghan workers were often preferred due to their lower wages—roughly half that of their Iranian counterparts—and their exemption from social insurance contributions due to lack of legal documentation. This made them more attractive to employers.

He pointed out that many Iranian workers had no interest in construction jobs, particularly lower-paying ones, which helped solidify Afghan dominance in the sector. "Over time, Iranian workers were pushed out of the industry altogether."

Iran Exports Agricultural Drones to Iraq



TEHRAN - Iran has taken a significant step toward deepening its economic ties with Iraq through the export of domestically-produced agricultural drones from the southwestern province of Khuzestan. The move, officials say, marks the beginning of a new era in regional economic diplomacy driven by technology and innovation.

Shahla Amouri, President of the Ahvaz Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, announced the development following a high-level meeting with Iraq's Minister of Agriculture, Abbas Maleki. "Exporting Khuzestan-made agricultural drones to Iraq represents a strategic shift that could strengthen Iran's position in regional markets," Amouri stated.

The meeting, aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation, focused on the introduction of modern agricultural technologies and the transfer of technical knowledge to Iraq. The initiative includes the export of advanced, fully Iranian-made agricultural drones—developed by domestic experts in Khuzestan—a symbol of Iran's growing technological capabilities and support for local innovation.

According to Amouri, the first shipment of these drones is ready for export. She emphasized that unlike foreign models, these drones are entirely manufactured inside Iran, including their electronic boards and control systems, making them immune to international sanctions. "This gives us and our Iraqi partners a strategic advantage," she added.

The Iraqi side also expressed strong interest in the technology. Minister Maleki reportedly welcomed the collaboration and highlighted Iraq's commitment to modernizing its agricultural sector. "This enthusiasm shows Iraq is ready to absorb Iranian technical expertise and high-tech products," said Amouri, who also serves on the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Despite Iraq's policies restricting imports of agricultural products during its domestic harvest season, Amouri stressed this should not be seen as a challenge. Instead, she called for a strategic approach—producing export-oriented crops in Khuzestan aligned with Iraq's market needs during off-seasons.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Gov't Considering Proposal for Week-Long National Holiday to Boost Post-War Tourism, Jobs

TEHRAN – The government is considering a proposal to declare a one-week nationwide holiday before the end of summer in a bid to revive its tourism sector and stimulate domestic travel. The plan, which is set to be reviewed at the upcoming Cabinet meeting on Sunday, is part of a broader strategy to enhance public morale and safeguard millions of tourism-related jobs in the post-conflict period.

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri announced the initiative during a national television appearance on Friday night. "This is not just a holiday—it's a strategic move," he said. "We've consulted experts and crafted this proposal with two objectives in mind: to boost national spirit and preserve jobs across tourism and handicrafts, which together employ over 2.1 million Iranians."

Salehi-Amiri referenced the recent 12-day war, calling it a multifaceted assault aimed at destabilizing the Islamic Republic. "Despite the psychological and media warfare, the Iranian people emerged united," he said, adding that efforts to sever the emotional bond between the public and national media ultimately failed.

In a separate remark, the minister rejected foreign claims about enriched uranium being found at a historic site in Iran, noting that the government is pursuing the matter through legal and diplomatic channels. "Even the IAEA Director-General did not confirm this allegation," he added.

Looking ahead, Salehi-Amiri shared promising developments in Iran's tourism landscape. "Iran has been ranked among the top 20 global tourist destinations for 2025 based on attractiveness, safety, and infrastructure," he said. He noted growing cooperation with countries such as Egypt, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Iraq—where 3.5 million tourists already travel to Iran annually. The new goal is to increase that number to five million.

Religious tourism continues to be a cornerstone of the sector. "Fifty percent of our tourism is religious or pilgrimage-based," he said. "In the post-war era, we are focusing on two core strategies: reinvigorating domestic travel to rebuild social vitality, and strengthening foreign tourism with an emphasis on religious, pilgrimage, and medical travel." Iran's target is to earn \$10 billion annually from tourism, including \$2 billion from the health sector.

Marking a sign of recovery, the first post-war flights carrying Iraqi tourists have arrived in Iran. "We aim to restore 50% of our pre-war tourism capacity within the next six months," said Salehi-Amiri. "Currently, 23,000 hospitality units—including

hotels and eco-lodges—are operational and in need of support."

To make travel more affordable and accessible, the ministry has developed a cost-sharing plan, where expenses are distributed among the government, the private sector, and travelers. "Travel is more than recreation—it's a pathway to social healing and economic stability," the minister emphasized.

Regarding the preservation of heritage sites during the conflict, Salehi-Amiri confirmed that while some were affected by shockwaves, no major damage was reported. The ministry has filed formal complaints with international organizations over potential threats to Iranian cultural landmarks.

He also announced the extension of financial relief for tourism-related businesses, including deferred social security, tax, and loan payments through September, with a request to prolong the grace period by another six months.

On Saturday, tourism officials from across the country were to gather with three cabinet ministers to finalize practical measures to accelerate the sector's recovery.

Despite recent challenges, Iran has achieved a major heritage milestone: UNESCO has officially registered the Khorramabad valleys in Lorestan as the oldest known habitat of early intelligent humans in Iran, dating back 63,000 years. "This is the first time a global registration confirms Iran's prehistoric role with scientific evidence," the minister stated.

With 29 UNESCO World Heritage sites already listed, Iran is now preparing nominations for others, including Alamut Castle and the historic village of Masuleh.

Salehi-Amiri outlined a five-year strategic plan for the ministry—spanning over 2,000 pages—with detailed goals, budgets, staffing, and annual benchmarks. He emphasized that the government's role is to guide, support, and supervise—not to directly manage operations, which should be left to professional and local stakeholders.

Currently, more than 2,700 tourism and heritage projects are active nationwide. New provincial trustee councils, led by governors and experts, are being formed to involve communities more closely in preserving historical assets.

In a closing message to the Iranian diaspora, the minister expressed gratitude for their concern during the recent war and extended a heartfelt invitation. "President Pezeshkian deeply respects Iranians abroad. On his behalf, I invite all of you to come home. We are laying out the red carpet for your return."

Iran Needs a "Trade Atlas" to Modernize Commerce and Defend Against Sanctions



TEHRAN - In a push to overhaul Iran's foreign trade system, Seyed Taha-Hossein Madani, head of the Smart Governance Think Tank, has called for the immediate creation of a "Trade Atlas"—a strategic, data-driven initiative to strengthen the country's economic defenses against international sanctions and market volatility.

Speaking with Iran Chamber Online, Madani criticized traditional trade models as outdated and inefficient. He stressed that in the aftermath of the recent 12-day conflict, Iran's adversaries are likely to turn to economic pressure rather than military confrontation. "Tools like the snapback mechanism—or even harsher alternatives—could be used to isolate Iran economically. We must act quickly to make the economy more resilient," he said.

Madani identified Iran's heavy dependence on raw material exports as a key structural weakness. Much of this trade, handled by state-owned entities, is exposed to sanctions and political risks that can result in blocked revenues abroad. "We've seen cases like large-scale iron ore exports to India—any political shift in the destination country could halt those exports overnight," he warned.

This inflexibility has already cost Iran access to several markets, partly due to a failure to respond to shifts in global trade patterns. As a result, Iranian trade is now vulnerable not just to foreign sanctions but also to unpredictable domestic policy changes.

To combat these risks, Madani proposed the "Trade Atlas"—a coordinated national effort to streamline essential imports and expand strategic, high-value exports. The system would focus on empowering mid-tier exporters, improving access to real-time trade data, and reducing dependency on politically sensitive trade routes.

According to Madani, this approach could triple foreign exchange income from non-oil exports while maximizing the use of Iran's abundant resources and production capacity. "It's a smarter way to trade," he said. "And it's much cheaper and more effective than outdated methods like trade fairs or brochure-based marketing."

Madani emphasized that the Trade Atlas must be a collaborative project, involving both government institutions and private sector stakeholders. He outlined a proposed breakdown of responsibility:

- Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade: 20%;
- Ministry of Economy and its research institute: 16%;
- Trade Promotion Organization: 11%;
- Central Bank, Customs, and Foreign Ministry (combined): 16%;
- Vice Presidency and Supreme Council for Non-Oil Exports: 10%;
- Iran Chamber of Commerce (private sector): 5%;
- and Fintech startups, data analysis firms, and media: 2% each

He also stressed the importance of innovation, calling for AI-powered platforms and advanced market analytics to replace outdated promotional tools like multilingual websites and printed catalogs.

Madani urged large exporters—particularly those with tens of millions of dollars in annual trade—to lead the way. "The cost of investing in a personalized Trade Atlas strategy is comparable to participating in one international exhibition," he said. "But the return could be transformative, not just for the company but for Iran's economy as a whole."

He pointed to global examples, including Germany, Canada, Chile, Vietnam, and South Africa, where similar strategic trade mapping tools have fueled export growth and market diversification.

While the complete rollout of the Trade Atlas could take up to two years, Madani advised traders to start now, especially those with financial capacity and long-term vision. Early adopters, he said, can demonstrate the model's viability while gaining a first-mover advantage in foreign markets.

"This isn't just a policy proposal—it's a strategic investment," Madani concluded. "If we act wisely today, we can safeguard our economy from future shocks and establish a more dynamic, competitive presence in the global trade arena."

Iran to Approve First Specialized Cyber and Takaful Insurance Company



TEHRAN - Iran's top insurance regulator has announced a major shift in the country's insurance sector, with the imminent licensing of a specialized insurance firm focused exclusively on cyber insurance and takaful (Islamic insurance). The move is part of a broader policy to specialize and modernize Iran's insurance industry amid rising digital threats and evolving market demands.

Parviz Khosrowshahi, head of the Central Insurance of Iran (CII), said the new company will operate solely in the fields of cyber and takaful insurance during its initial phase. Only upon proving success in these areas will the firm be allowed to expand into other insurance segments.

"This policy is in line with our goal to specialize insurance companies," Khosrowshahi told IRNA. "Cyber insurance, in particular, has become an urgent necessity due to the increasing frequency of digital attacks."

The announcement comes in the wake of a recent 12-day hybrid conflict during which major Iranian banks such as Sepah and Pasargad suffered serious cyberattacks, highlighting the lack of cyber insurance coverage in the country and exposing a critical vulnerability in the financial sector.

While the concept of cyber insurance has been discussed globally for years, Khosrowshahi pointed out that growth has been slow — in Iran and abroad — largely due to the lack of comprehensive data needed for risk assessment.

"Insurance companies cannot underwrite policies without first evaluating the likelihood and severity of potential incidents," he explained. "We need detailed data on past cyber incidents to properly calculate premiums and liabilities."

Although efforts are underway to collect such data, Khosrowshahi emphasized that conditions are not yet ideal for widespread issuance of cyber policies. Nonetheless, the CII has received formal applications for establishing cyber-focused firms, and a recent proposal has been approved by the High Council of Insurance.

Khosrowshahi also revealed that several proposals have been submitted for launching digital-first or transportation-focused insurance firms, all of which are under review as part of CII's policy to encourage niche operations.

On potential mergers, Khosrowshahi clarified that while no immediate need has been identified to merge or dissolve any existing insurers, discussions among three to four companies are ongoing. However, these firms must submit detailed merger plans before any decisions are made.

He added that a new legal framework is being drafted to simplify both entry and exit from the insurance market. The aim is to allow underperforming firms to leave without disrupting the market or harming policyholders.

Iran's Oil Revenues Surpass \$46b in 2024



TEHRAN (ILNA) - Iran's oil export revenues exceeded \$46 billion in 2024, marking a 14% increase compared to the previous year, according to the latest data released by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The figures, published in the 60th edition of OPEC's Annual Statistical Bulletin, show that Iran experienced the largest growth in oil export revenues among all member states, with a year-on-year rise of over \$5.6 billion.

Iran earned approximately \$46.77 billion from oil exports in 2024, up from \$41.13 billion in 2023. Venezuela followed with the second-highest growth, increasing its oil revenues from \$13.08 billion in 2023 to \$18.37 billion in 2024.

Interestingly, only four OPEC members reported growth in oil revenues in 2024: Iran, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Equatorial Guinea. Nigeria saw a modest \$1 billion increase, while Equatorial Guinea posted a slight rise of \$39 million.

In contrast, total oil revenues across OPEC fell by 4%, dropping from \$678 billion in 2023 to approximately \$652 billion in 2024.

Among the major producers, Saudi Arabia's oil income dropped sharply by over \$24 billion, down to \$223 billion, while Kuwait saw a \$9 billion decline, bringing its total oil revenue to nearly \$69 billion in 2024.

Pakistan Close to U.S. Trade Deal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said the United States and Pakistan were “very close” to a trade deal that could come within days, but comments from the U.S. after Dar met with Secretary of State Marco Rubio mentioned no timeline.

“I think we are very close to finalizing a deal with U.S. Our teams have been here in Washington, discussing, having virtual meetings and a committee has been tasked by the prime minister to fine-tune now,” Dar said in a discussion at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington.

“It’s not going to be months, not even weeks, I would say (just) days,” he said.



Taiwan Holds High-Stakes Recall Vote



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwanese voters turned out at schools, churches and community centers on Saturday to cast their ballot in a high-stakes recall election that could give President Lai Ching-te’s party control of the parliament.

Supporters of Lai’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) are seeking to unseat 31 lawmakers belonging to the main opposition Kuomintang party, who they accuse of being pro-China and a security threat.

The KMT, which wants closer ties with Beijing, controls parliament with the help of the Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) and has slammed the unprecedented recall effort as a power grab.

Polling stations opened around Taiwan at 8 am with 24 KMT lawmakers facing potential recall. Elections for another seven KMT lawmakers will be held on August 23.

Both major parties held rain-soaked rallies in the days leading up to the critical vote, which has dominated Taiwanese politics, newspaper headlines and social media feeds for months.

While Lai won the presidential election in 2024, his DPP party lost its majority in parliament.

Since then, the KMT and TPP have joined forces to stymie Lai’s agenda, and slashed or frozen parts of the government’s budget.

Contentious opposition bills, including an attempt to expand parliament’s powers, sparked brawls in the legislature and massive street protests—and spurred civic groups to launch the recall campaign.

The DPP needs a minimum of 12 KMT lawmakers recalled to gain temporary control of the parliament, with risk analysis firm Eurasia Group giving that outcome “a 60 percent probability”.

Ukraine Facing Fierce Fighting Around Eastern City of Pokrovsk



KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday that Ukrainian forces were facing fierce fighting around the city of Pokrovsk in the east, a logistics hub near which Russia has been announcing the capture of villages on an almost daily basis.

Zelenskyy, speaking in his nightly video address, said Ukraine’s top commander, Oleksandr Syrskiy, told a meeting of senior officials that the situation around Pokrovsk was the current focal point of its attention in the war, which began when Russia invaded in February 2022.

“All operational directions were covered, with particular focus on Pokrovsk. It receives the most attention,” Zelenskyy said.

Ukrainian forces, he said, were also “continuing to act” in border areas in the northern Sumy region, where Russian troops have gained a foothold in recent weeks.

Syrskiy, in a separate report on the Telegram messaging app, described Pokrovsk and five other sectors as among the most difficult theatres along the 1,000-km (620-mile) front.

“The Russian Federation is paying the maximum price for attempting a ‘summer offensive,’” Syrskiy wrote.

Russian forces have for months been trying to close in on Pokrovsk, a road and rail hub whose pre-war population of about 60,000 has been all but evacuated.

Syrskiy in May reported that Kyiv’s troops had stabilised the situation around the town, also the site of the only colliery in Ukraine producing coking coal for the country’s steel industry.



PARIS (Dispatches) - Britain, France and Germany on Friday urged an end to Gaza’s “humanitarian catastrophe” as the UN food agency warned almost a third of people in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory were not eating for days.

Alarm has been mounting about the deepening crisis in Gaza, with aid groups saying that “mass starvation” is spreading after more than 21 months of conflict.

Gaza’s civil defence agency added that Israeli military operations killed at least 28 people on Friday across the Palestinian territory.

In a joint statement, the leaders of the three European powers urged Israel “to immediately lift restrictions on the flow of aid and urgently allow the UN” and NGOs to “take action against starvation”.

“The most basic needs of the civilian population, including access to water and food, must be met without any further delay,” they said.

“Withholding essential humanitarian assistance to the civilian population is unacceptable. Israel must uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law.”

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday also slammed the international community for turning a blind eye to widespread starvation in the Gaza Strip, calling it a “moral crisis that challenges the global conscience.”

“I cannot explain the level of indifference and inaction we see by too many in the international community -- the lack of compassion, the lack of truth, the lack of humanity,” Guterres told Amnesty International’s global assembly via video link.

“This is not just a humanitarian crisis. It is a moral crisis that challenges the global conscience. We will continue to speak out at every opportunity.”

Guterres said while he had repeatedly condemned the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on southern Israel, which triggered the war in the Palestinian territory, “nothing can justify the explosion of death and destruction since”.

“The scale and scope is beyond anything we have seen in recent times,” he said.

“Children speak of wanting to go to heaven, because at least, they say, there is food there. We hold video calls with our own humanitarians who are starving before our eyes... But words don’t feed hungry children.”

He added that the United Nations was ready to “dramatically scale up humanitarian operations” in Gaza should Israel and Hamas reach a ceasefire deal.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani added his voice to the criticism, saying his country cannot accept “carnage and famine” in Gaza.

Concern is growing in particular about surging numbers of malnourished children. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) says that a quarter of the young children and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers it had screened at its clinics last week were malnourished.

Warning that the crisis had reached “new and astonishing levels of desperation”, the United Nations food agency said: “Nearly one person in three is not eating for days.”

“Malnutrition is surging with 90,000 women and children in urgent need of treatment,” said the Rome-based World Food Programme.

“Food aid is the only way for people to access any food as food prices are through the roof... People are dying from lack of humanitarian assistance.”

Israel has rejected accusations it is responsible for the deepening crisis in Gaza, which the World Health Organization has called “man-made”.

Israel placed the Gaza Strip under an aid blockade in March, which it only partially eased two months later while sidelining the longstanding UN-led distribution system.

In their joint statement, Germany, France and Britain also stressed that “the time has come to end the war in Gaza.”

“We urge all parties to bring an end to the conflict by reaching an immediate ceasefire.”

In a separate statement Friday, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer signalled that London will not imminently recognise a Palestinian state, after French President Emmanuel Macron said a day earlier that his country intended to do so in September.

Starmer said that he was “unequivocal” Britain should eventually recognise a Palestinian state, but that this step “must be part of a wider plan which ultimately results in a two-state solution”.

He is facing mounting pressure however, with more than 220 British MPs, including dozens from the ruling Labour party, demanding that his government formally recognise a Palestinian state.

Britain’s position is similar to that of Germany, which said it regarded the recognition of a Palestinian state as “one of the final steps on the path to achieving a two-state solution”.

Cambodia Calls for Immediate Ceasefire With Thailand



BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Cambodia wants an “immediate ceasefire” with Thailand, the country’s envoy to the United Nations said, after the neighbors traded deadly strikes for a second day, with Bangkok also signaling an openness to talks.

A long-running border dispute erupted into intense fighting with jets, artillery, tanks and ground troops on Thursday, prompting the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting on the crisis Friday.

“Cambodia asked for an immediate ceasefire—unconditionally—and we also call for the peaceful solution of the dispute,” said Phnom Penh’s UN ambassador Chhea Keo following a closed meeting of the Council attended by Cambodia and Thailand.

A steady thump of artillery strikes could be heard from the Cambodian side of the border Friday, where the province of Oddar Meanchey reported one civilian—a 70-year-old man—had been killed and five more wounded.

More than 138,000 people have been evacuated from Thailand’s border regions, its health ministry said, reporting 15 fatalities -- 14 civilians and a soldier—with a further 46 wounded, including 15 troops.

Fighting resumed in three areas around 4 am on Friday (2100 GMT Thursday), the Thai army said, with Cambodian forces firing heavy weapons, field artillery, and BM-21 rocket systems, and Thai troops responding “with appropriate supporting fire.”

Thai Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nikorndej Balankura told AFP that fighting had begun to ease off by Friday afternoon, however, adding that Bangkok was open to talks, possibly aided by Malaysia.

“We are ready, if Cambodia would like to settle this matter via diplomatic

channels, bilaterally, or even through Malaysia, we are ready to do that. But so far we have not had any response,” Nikorndej told AFP, speaking before the UN meeting had been held.

Malaysia currently holds the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc, of which Thailand and Cambodia are both members.

Earlier, acting Thai Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai had warned that if the situation escalated, “it could develop into war.”

“For now, it remains limited to clashes,” he told reporters in Bangkok.

Both sides blamed each other for firing first, while Thailand accused Cambodia of targeting civilian infrastructure, including a hospital hit by shells and a petrol station hit by at least one rocket.

At the UN, Cambodia’s envoy questioned Thailand’s assertion that his

country, which is smaller and less militarily developed than its neighbor, had initiated the conflict.

“(The Security Council) called for both parties to (show) maximum restraint and resort to a diplomatic solution. That is what we are calling for as well,” said Chhea Keo.

None of the other attendees of the UNSC meeting spoke to reporters.

The fighting marks a dramatic escalation in a long-running dispute between the neighbors—both popular destinations for millions of foreign tourists—over their shared 800-kilometer (500-mile) border.

Dozens of kilometers in several areas are contested and fighting broke out between 2008 and 2011, leaving at least 28 people dead and tens of thousands displaced.

A UN court ruling in 2013 settled the matter for over a decade, but the current crisis erupted in May when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a new clash.

Fighting on Thursday was focused on six locations, according to the Thai army, including around two ancient temples.

Ground troops backed up by tanks battled for control of territory, while Cambodia fired rockets and shells into Thailand and the Thais scrambled F-16 jets to hit military targets across the border.

In the Cambodian town of Samraong, 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the border, AFP journalists saw families speeding away in vehicles with their children and belongings as gunfire erupted.

“I live very close to the border. We are scared,” Pro Bak, 41, told AFP. He was taking his wife and children to a Buddhist temple to seek refuge.

Netanyahu, Trump Appear to Abandon Gaza Ceasefire Negotiations With Hamas

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump appeared on Friday to abandon Gaza ceasefire negotiations with Hamas, both saying it had become clear that the Palestinian militants did not want a deal.

Netanyahu said Israel was now mulling “alternative” options to achieve its goals of bringing its hostages home from Gaza and ending Hamas rule in the enclave, where starvation is spreading and most of the population is homeless amid widespread ruin.

Trump said he believed Hamas leaders would now be “hunted down”, telling reporters: “Hamas really didn’t want to make a deal. I think they want to die. And it’s very bad. And it got to be to a point where you’re going to have to finish the job.”

The remarks appeared to leave little to no room, at least in the short term, to resume negotiations for a break in the fighting, at a time when international concern is mounting



over worsening hunger in war-shattered Gaza.

French President Emmanuel Macron, responding to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, announced that Paris would become the first major Western power to recognise an independent Palestinian state.

Britain and Germany said they were not yet ready to do so but later joined France in calling for an immediate ceasefire. British Prime Minister Keith Starmer said his government would recognize a Palestinian state only as part of a negotiated peace deal.

Trump dismissed Macron’s move. “What he says doesn’t matter,” he said. “He’s a very good guy. I like him, but that statement doesn’t carry weight.”



LONDON (Dispatches) - France's Arthur Cazaux took down countryman and sixth seed Arthur Rinderknech 7-5, 6-3 to reach his first ATP final at the Generali Open in Kitzbuhel, Austria.

Cazaux, 22, fired off eight aces without a double fault and won 31 of 37 first-service points (83.8 percent). Ranked No. 100 in the world, Cazaux will face No. 1 seed Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan for the title.

Bublik took care of the Netherlands' Botić van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4. Six days ago, Cazaux reached his first ATP Tour semifinal in Gstaad, Switzerland, and lost to Bublik there.

Spaniard Carlos Taberner toppled No. 4 Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia and Herzegovina 6-2, 6-1 to reach his first career ATP final in Umag, Croatia.

Taberner, ranked No. 111 in the world, had a 26-11 advantage in winners and capitalized on Dzumhur's 37 unforced errors.

Taberner's foe in the final will be Italian second seed Luciano Darderi, who defeated third seed Camilo Ugo Carabelli of Argentina 7-6 (6), 6-3.

Meanwhile no. 1 seed Linda Noskova and No. 5 Marie Bouzkova will meet in the all-Czech final at the Livesport Prague Open.

Noskova rolled over No. 4 Xinyu Wang of China 6-4, 6-1 in 70 minutes and Bouzkova ousted countrywoman Tereza Valentova 6-4, 7-5 in one hour and 54 minutes in the semifinals.

Bouzkova, 27, won her only title in Prague in 2022. Noskova, 20, picked up her maiden WTA Tour title at the 2024 Monterrey Open. Bouzkova has won two of their three previous matches, although Noskova took the most recent meeting at the 2024 Australian Open.

Three unseeded players advanced to the semifinals in stifling, yet stormy conditions in Washington.

In the first match of the day, 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu of Great Britain edged Greece's Maria Sakkari, 6-4, 7-5. Raducanu improved to 4-0 lifetime versus Sakkari.

Canadian Leylah Fernandez ousted the final American in the draw, Taylor Townsend, 6-4, 7-6 (4). Townsend served for the second set at 5-4, but Fernandez broke and overcame cramping to win the match, as she scored the final four points of the tiebreaker.

In the evening session, the lone ranked player to advance, Kazakhstan's No. 3 Elena Rybakina, knocked off Poland's No. 5 Magdalena Frech, 6-3, 6-3. Russia's Anna Kalinskaya broke No. 4 Clara Tauson of Denmark in the final game of the match to prevail 6-3, 7-5.

Fernandez will face Rybakina and Raducanu takes on Kalinskaya in the semifinals.

Meanwhile Wimbledon champion Jannik Sinner has re-appointed his former fitness coach Umberto Ferrara with immediate effect, the Italian world number one confirmed.

Sinner parted ways with Ferrara and physiotherapist Giacomo Naldi last year following the investigation into his positive tests for banned substance clostebol.

"The decision has been made in alignment with Jannik's management team as part of ongoing preparations for upcoming tournaments, including the Cincinnati Open and U.S. Open," a statement from Sinner's team said.

"Umberto has played an important role in Jannik's development to date, and his return reflects a renewed focus on continuity and performance at the highest level."

Piastrri Takes Dominant Sprint Pole in Belgium



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS (Dispatches) - Formula One leader Oscar Piastri secured pole position for the sprint by nearly half a second at the Belgian Grand Prix while McLaren teammate and title rival Lando Norris qualified third.

Red Bull's reigning champion Max Verstappen will join the Australian on the front row for the first race since Christian Horner was dismissed as team boss and replaced with Laurent Mekies.

Piastri lapped the Spa-Francorchamps circuit with a track record time of one minute 40.510 seconds, a mighty 0.477 seconds quicker than Verstappen and 0.618 clear of Norris.

The Australian, eight points clear of Norris at the top after 12 of 24 rounds, apologised over the radio for the scare of almost going out in the second phase when he had a lap deleted for exceeding track limits at Raidillon and was 10th.

"Sorry for the heart attack. That wasn't in the plan," he said. "But that was mega. Nicely done, very nicely done."

Piastri later described it as "a little scare" and attributed his speed to a simple love of the Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

"It's my favourite one of the year. Maybe that gave me a couple of extra tenths," he added. "When the car is handling as well as it is today, it's a pleasure."

"I've had good confidence. I feel like the last few weekends have been good from a pace perspective but not so much from a results perspective."

Record-Breaking Root Puts England in Control Against India



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Joe Root moved to second in the all-time test run scorer charts with a superb 150 to put England in control on day three of the fourth test against India, with the hosts 544-7 at the close of play, giving them a first innings lead of 186 runs.

Yorkshire batter Root strolled to a staggering 38th test hundred, before passing another milestone in climbing above former Australia captain Ricky Ponting into second place in the all-time list as he reached 121 not out just before tea.

England skipper Ben Stokes, plagued by injuries in recent years, retired hurt with cramp in the evening session when on 66, safe in the knowledge his side would remain in the driving seat in his absence.

Root eventually was stuffed off the bowling of Ravindra Jadeja, but the damage to India's resolve had been done.

Jamie Smith and Chris Woakes followed Root back to the pavilion, with Stokes re-emerging to add more runs to his total, finishing the day unbeaten 77, alongside Liam Dawson on 21.

With two days still to play, England are firm favourites to secure the win in Manchester, one that would seal victory in the five-match series with one test still to come.

"Joe is something we have become accustomed to in the past few years," England number three Ollie Pope told reporters.

"The way he goes about his cricket, the way he trains is amazing, he is a joy to watch who keeps getting better and better. From a team perspective it is amazing to have him. We try not to rely on him, but the way he constantly steps up is amazing. The number of hundreds are ridiculous."

"He would have been aware of the records. He is not a massive one for landmarks, but that is a pretty cool one today."

Root overtook South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis to go third in the rankings in Friday's morning session, with his 104th score of fifty or more -- only India great Sachin Tendulkar has more in test cricket -- steering untroubled England to 332-2 at lunch.

Top Footballers Afraid to Speak Out Against Playing Too Many Games

LONDON (Dispatches) - Alex Phillips was speaking after FIFPro held a meeting in Amsterdam with 58 national player unions from around the world to discuss concerns over the way the sport's world governing body FIFA is managing global football.

The meeting came less than two weeks after the end of the first 32-team Club World Cup in the United States, a tournament hailed as a huge success by FIFA president Gianni Infantino but criticised by FIFPro for the demands it has placed on players already faced with a crowded schedule.

"Before the Club World Cup, I was speaking to some of the top stars and they were saying they hadn't had a rest for 'X' amount of time," Phillips said.

"One of them even said, 'I'll only get a rest when I get injured'. Others were resigned actually, and cynical about speaking up."

"Then you see some of the same players two weeks later having to record social media videos saying 'We think the Club World Cup is great,' because their employers are telling them to do it."

"You have this contradictory situation where players can't speak up. They are in an invidious position. They can speak up but it might have consequences."



FIFPro said that FIFA's recent focus on the Club World Cup in the United States was an example of the body ignoring many fundamentally more important issues facing players around the world.

"It is unacceptable for an organisation that claims global leadership to turn a blind eye to the basic needs of the players," FIFPro said in a statement, notably citing the "overloaded"

match calendar, heat concerns at the Club World Cup and an "ongoing disregard for players' social rights".

FIFPro Europe filed a complaint to the European Commission last year accusing FIFA of abusing its position with regards to its handling of the international match calendar.

The summit hosted by the union on Friday came after it was left out of a meeting held by FIFA on the eve of the recent Club World Cup final.

Sergio Marchi, the Argentinian president of FIFPro, this week slammed Infantino's leadership of FIFA and accused him of running an "autocracy" in an interview with The Athletic.

FIFA hit back at FIFPro in a statement on Friday as it called for dialogue "with legitimate bodies that put player welfare first" and said it had tried unsuccessfully to get the union to attend its meeting in New York on July 12.

"FIFA is extremely disappointed by the increasingly divisive and contradictory tone adopted by FIFPRO leadership," the Zurich-based organisation said.

"This approach clearly shows that rather than engaging in constructive dialogue, FIFPRO has chosen to pursue a path of public confrontation," which aims to preserve "their own personal positions and interests."

Arensman Wins Stage 19, Pogacar Retains Overall Lead

PARIS (Dispatches) - Thymen Arensman claimed his second victory in this year's Tour de France when he benefited from the top guns' waiting game to prevail in the 19th stage, the last mountain trek of the race.

The Ineos Grenadiers rider, whose team have been facing doping questions related to their glorious days as Team Sky, went solo in the final climb to La Plagne before crossing the line two seconds ahead of Jonas Vingegaard and Tadej Pogacar, who were second and third respectively.

Slovenian Pogacar retained the overall leader's yellow jersey and leads Vingegaard by 4:24 going into the final two stages and is widely expected to win a fourth title if he avoids a major incident.



German Florian Lipowitz took fourth place on the shortened stage to cement his third place overall, stretching his advantage over fourth-placed Oscar Onley of Britain by 41 seconds to 1:03.

It would have taken a colossal coup from Vingegaard to topple Pogacar on the final mountain test in the Alps, but the Visma-Lease a Bike rider only tried within the last 100 metres to take two seconds off of the Slovenian's lead, with Pogacar emerging as the puppet master of the peloton.

A leading trio featuring France's Lenny Martinez and Valentin Paret Peintre as well as former Tour runner-up Primoz Roglic, reached the Col du Pre with a small gap of a chasing group after a brutal 12.2-km ascent at 7.7%.