

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf Says the 21st-Century Nazis, Who Targeted Tehran's Main Water Supply in Tajrish Square With Missiles to Deprive the City of Water, Are Now Trying to Deceive the Iranian People With a Glass of Treated Sewage Water

# IRAN NEWS

President Masoud Pezeshkian Has Once Again Slammed Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu for His Deceptive and Interventionist Remarks About the Islamic Republic of Iran and Its People

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2 DOMESTIC

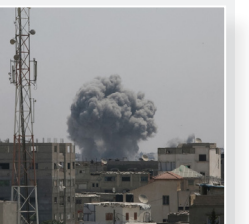


## Iran and Kenya Set \$1b Trade Target

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## Gaza Officials Say Israeli Strikes Kill 17



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## Iran Calls Greater Israel a Diabolical Idea Reflecting Netanyahu's Fascist Intent



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Foreign Ministry has issued a strong condemnation of recent remarks made by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu concerning his aspirations for realization of the so-called "Greater Israel" scheme.

In a statement, spokesman Esmail Baghaei described the scheme as an unmistakable declaration of the regime's intention to extend its occupation over independent nations, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

Such ambitions, he added, represented a blatant breach of the United Nations Charter and fundamental principles of the international law.

Highlighting the regime's persistent violations and atrocities, particularly its ongoing occupation and systemic killings in historic Palestine, Baghaei said, "The admission by Israeli premier that he sees himself as carrying a 'historical and spiritual mission' to realize the diabolical idea is a clear indication of a fascist intent."

Realization of such plot would translate into violation of the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of regional countries and imposition of occupation over Muslim nations, the official warned.

According to the spokesperson, such ambitions had to be firmly condemned by the UN secretary-general, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and all governments as a blatant breach of the principles and objectives of the UN Charter and the peremptory norms of the international law.

Baghaei also drew attention to the dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, where the regime has been waging a war of genocide since October 2023 and using starvation as a weapon of war.

He pointed to the mass killings of innocent Palestinians and the deliberate imposition of hunger and thirst upon the coastal sliver's population.

## Tehran-Yerevan Ties 'Strategic, Non-Negotiable



TEHRAN - Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan has reaffirmed that relations between Tehran and Yerevan are of strategic importance and "will never be the subject of any geopolitical bargain."

Speaking in an exclusive interview during his visit to Tehran, Kostanyan stressed the deep respect of the Armenian government and people for Iran's leadership and citizens, calling the ties "unique" and rooted in thousands of years of shared history.

Since Armenia's independence in 1991, Kostanyan noted, bilateral relations have steadily grown, now spanning politics, trade, and energy. Both governments aim to boost trade turnover first to \$1 billion and eventually to \$3 billion. He expressed confidence that the upcoming visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Yerevan will elevate relations further.

On the recent Armenia-Azerbaijan agreement signed in Washington, Kostanyan said it marks a "new era" of peace that could benefit regional stability and economics. Key provisions include reopening communication routes with respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, potentially enhancing rail links between Iran, Armenia, and the Black Sea via the Nakhchivan-Jolfa line.

Regarding regional cooperation, Kostanyan praised Iran's proposed "3+3" dialogue platform, in which Armenia has participated at both ministerial and deputy ministerial levels. He said the reopening of transport corridors creates fresh opportunities for dialogue, with the next meeting expected in either Yerevan or Baku.

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## Europeans Lack Authority to Invoke Any Part of the JCPOA, "Snapback" Mechanism

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi has said that European states have until October 19 to trigger the "snapback" mechanism under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but in Iran's view they lack the legal authority to do so due to their positions, including a call for "zero enrichment" — a stance that contradicts the JCPOA, which recognizes Iran's right to enrichment.

Speaking on the state television program Jaryan while visiting Karbala for the Arbaceen commemorations, Araqchi discussed a range of domestic and international issues. He described the Arbaceen pilgrimage as a display of unity and resilience, noting that Iranian participation was as strong as ever, with pilgrims expressing steadfast support for the government and leadership. Iraqi citizens, he said, also voiced admiration for Iran's role during the recent 12-day conflict, reinforcing a sense of Shiite solidarity.

On the possibility of war, Araqchi said that although the question is often asked in Tehran, no one had raised it during his Arbaceen visit. He argued that while the risk of war always exists, the current regional and international conditions do not point to an imminent conflict. Maintaining readiness, he stressed, is essential as a deterrent, cautioning against preparing only for the type of warfare seen in the last conflict.

Addressing European threats to invoke snapback sanctions, Araqchi explained that while the JCPOA contains a mechanism for restoring pre-agreement conditions, Europe has forfeited its right to use it by failing to uphold commitments and by adopting U.S.-aligned positions against Iran's enrichment program.

He recalled that after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran initially remained in the deal at Europe's request, but gradually reduced its commitments under Paragraph 36 when promised sanctions relief failed to materialize. Within ten months, Iran had halted all JCPOA obligations and restored enrichment levels beyond pre-agreement levels, having preserved its nuclear infrastructure.

For the Europeans, snapback would mean reinstating EU, U.S., and UN Security Council sanctions. While Washington already reimposed its sanctions in 2018, restoring UN sanctions requires a more complex process. Araqchi stressed that after October 19, when UN Security Council Resolution 2231 expires, Europe will lose the option to trigger snapback altogether. Iran has formally notified the UN Security Council that France, Britain, and Germany are no longer JCPOA participants and therefore lack legal standing to act. China and Russia, he added, share Iran's position, creating a legal standoff with the European trio.

Araqchi argued that fears about snapback are often exaggerated, as U.S. unilateral

sanctions already surpass the scope of potential renewed UN measures, which mostly involve listings of individuals and companies rather than oil or banking restrictions. However, snapback could reinstate an arms embargo and return Iran to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, posing political and legal challenges.

Commenting on the situation in the South Caucasus, Araqchi said Armenia has insisted it respects all of Iran's red lines regarding a planned road project in the Syunik Province. Originally feared as a "Zangezur Corridor" under Azerbaijani control, the plan has reportedly been scaled back to a road built by a U.S.-registered engineering firm under Armenian sovereignty, with no foreign military presence.

He cautioned against exaggerated claims that Iran is being encircled by NATO, suggesting some actors are trying to damage Tehran-Baku relations. Iran supports peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, he said, but opposes any foreign military presence in the region.

In response to recent remarks by Israel's prime minister, Araqchi said that resistance has frustrated Israeli ambitions, both in war and under sanctions. He reiterated that Iran's stance is that peace in the region will be less stable without the arms of the "resistance," arguing that Israel seeks to keep all regional states weak.

Drawing parallels to Ashura and Arbaceen, he said the resistance movement is strengthened, not weakened, by the loss of its leaders, citing the assassination of Hezbollah's Abbas Mousavi as an example.

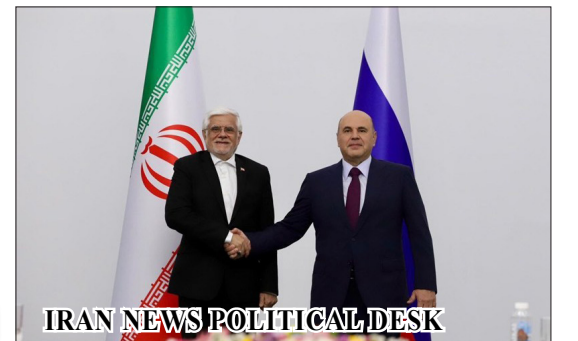
On relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) following the bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities, Araqchi said there is no inspection protocol for bombed nuclear sites, and new cooperation frameworks must be negotiated under Iranian law and with approval from the Supreme National Security Council. Some cooperation, such as supervision of fuel replacement at the Bushehr nuclear plant, may proceed if approved.

Addressing debate over the roles of military power ("the field") and diplomacy, Araqchi stressed they are complementary: diplomacy relies on the strength generated in the field, while military gains must be translated into national interests through diplomacy. He noted that media is the "third side" of this triangle, shaping perceptions of both.

He also confirmed the formation of a new National Defense Council, chaired by the president, to focus specifically on defense strategy in light of post-conflict conditions.

Araqchi concluded by asserting that resistance is an enduring doctrine: "Blood prevails over the sword," he said, quoting Shiite tradition. As long as Israel maintains expansionist aims, he argued, armed resistance will remain the most effective deterrent in the region.

## Iran's Strategy Is to Prevent Foreign Interference, Especially in Regional Geopolitics



TEHRAN - First Vice President, Mohammad Reza Aref, stressed that Iran's strategic policy is to prevent the involvement of foreign powers—especially in the geopolitics of the region—during a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on the sidelines of the Eurasian Economic Union prime ministers' summit.

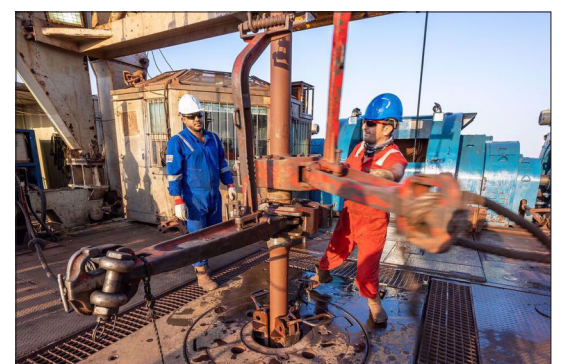
Aref said the current regional situation requires more dialogue between Iran and Russia, noting that diplomatic consultations between the two nations had been of great significance during the 12-day imposed war against Iran.

Highlighting Iran's readiness to expand bilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation with Russia, Aref referred to Iran's nuclear negotiations, stating that the Islamic Republic has always pursued dialogue and confidence-building regarding its peaceful nuclear activities. However, he added, Western countries have from the outset turned Iran's nuclear file into a political project.

Commenting on the European stance on the "snapback" mechanism, Aref maintained that, from a legal standpoint, the three European countries have no right to intervene in this matter. He said European proposals effectively legitimize the United States' unprincipled positions in the nuclear talks.

He emphasized that Iran has never sought non-peaceful uses of technology, particularly nuclear technology. Aref accused Israel, with U.S. support, of attacking Iran in the midst of indirect negotiations, killing prominent academics, military commanders, and civilians without any legitimate justification—an attack he said occurred even as the U.S. claimed talks were moving toward confidence-building.

## OPEC Data Shows Iran's Oil Output Fell by 0.37% in July



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's oil production fell slightly in July as output continued to suffer from the impacts of a war of aggression the country fought with the Israeli regime in June, and despite a general rise in production by members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Iran's Oil Ministry cited data from OPEC Secretariat in a report showing that Iran had produced 3.245 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in July, down just 0.37% compared to figures reported in June.

Despite the fall in output, Iran remained the third-largest oil producer in the 12-member OPEC in July, trailing Saudi Arabia at 9.526 million bpd and Iraq at 3.902 million bpd, OPEC data showed.

Iran had produced 3.291 million bpd of oil in the June quarter, down from 3.307 million bpd in the March quarter but up from 3.29 million bpd reported in the last quarter of 2024, according to the same data.

The country had produced an average of 3.257 million bpd last year and 2.884 million bpd in 2023, the figures showed.

Total OPEC output rose by 0.263 million bpd to 27.543 million bpd in July, OPEC tables showed, as the bloc stuck to its policy of gradually removing supply cuts agreed in recent years to stabilize international oil prices.

However, the average price of Iran's heavy-grade oil rose by \$1.68 or 2.43% compared to June prices to reach \$70.81 per barrel. That came as average OPEC basket prices rose by \$1.24 or 1.77% to \$70.97 per barrel in June, according to the tables.

Iran has consistently raised its oil output in recent months despite the growing pressure of the US sanctions on its exports.

## Resistance a "Great Asset" for the Region

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TEHRAN - Iran's top security official, Ali Larjani, has called regional resistance movements a "great asset" for both the Middle East and the wider Islamic world, emphasizing that these groups have reached a level of political and strategic maturity that enables them to make independent decisions.

Speaking to Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television following recent visits to Iraq and Lebanon, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council said Tehran views resistance as a unifying force beyond sectarian divides.

"Resistance is for all," Larjani said. "We defend Hamas, a Sunni movement, and Hezbollah, a Shia movement. Our position is not sectarian." He stressed that Iran does not dictate policy to such groups, instead cooperating with them as "brothers" and respecting their independence.

During his stay in Lebanon, Larjani met with senior political leaders, including President Joseph Aoun and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. His visit took place amid intensified US-Israeli pressure on Hezbollah to disarm—pressure which Tehran sees as part of a strategy to weaken the group's role as a deterrent to Israeli aggression.

Larjani also addressed the recent 12-day conflict triggered by Israel's attacks on Iran. He accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of starting a war that ultimately failed both strategically and tactically.

The Israeli offensive, launched on June 13, targeted Iranian military and nuclear sites, killing military officers, scientists, and civilians. The United States joined in, striking what Iran describes as peaceful nuclear facilities in its central provinces.

Larjani claimed Israeli intelligence services had threatened him personally at the start of the conflict, but he dismissed the threats. He praised Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei for his decisive wartime leadership—stepping in "like a military commander" to replace fallen officers and maintain operational strength.

"When the Americans told us to surrender, Ayatollah Khamenei replied: 'We will not surrender. We will confront you with strength,'" Larjani said.

According to Larjani, the military campaign was intended to topple Iran's Islamic Republic and create internal unrest. Instead, he said, the attacks united the Iranian public—including political opponents—behind the government.

He criticized Washington's regional approach, rejecting the concept of "peace through strength" as a flawed and dangerous policy. "Security should be based on the sovereignty of nations, not the submission of one to another," he said.

Larjani accused the US of using negotiations as a tool to prepare for future conflicts rather than genuinely seeking peaceful solutions. The latest hostilities erupted while Tehran and Washington were engaged in indirect nuclear talks via Oman.

"When they speak of war and negotiations at the same time, it means they haven't understood that war is pointless," he said. "Iran has never surrendered and never will."

Larjani also pointed to what he described as a global shift toward a multipolar world, where US dominance is waning. He questioned Washington's ability to impose its will on major powers such as China and Russia.

"The world will not remain unipolar," he said. "We should not make ourselves easy prey for them."

For Iran, Larjani argued, supporting resistance movements remains a strategic priority—not just as a matter of ideology, but as a defense against foreign domination. "Wherever resistance exists," he concluded, "it must be supported."



# IRAN NEWS



## Minister Stresses Expanding Cooperation With China Through SCO

TEHRAN - Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Seyed Ali Madani-Zadeh, in a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Tehran today, emphasized the expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation by leveraging the capacity of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

According to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, Zhong Peiwu, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Islamic Republic of Iran, met with Madani-Zadeh at the ministry's headquarters for talks.

Highlighting the positive record of economic and trade cooperation between Iran and China, Madani-Zadeh called for further development of bilateral and multilateral engagements, particularly through the SCO framework.

## An Invisible War Tougher Than Wartime



TEHRAN - Iranian economist and advisor to the President Hossein Abdeh-Tabrizi has likened the country's current state of "economic suspension" to an "invisible war" — a prolonged and damaging phase that he says can be even harsher than wartime. Speaking at a seminar on "Resilience in Economic Suspension," he warned that this "neither war nor peace" scenario freezes investment, undermines trust, and can persist for decades unless met with sustained reforms.

Abdeh-Tabrizi described suspension as a rational response to uncertainty and the absence of transparent information, noting that policymakers are mistaken if they consider it a normal state. The return to stability, he stressed, will be slow and step-by-step, requiring consistent policy actions.

Suspension, he said, sits between a return to the past and a transition to the future. Its defining feature is the postponement of economic decisions: development projects stall, investors hold back, and the capital market sinks into deep stagnation.

Drawing on four financial theories, he explained why caution prevails: "Real Options" theory views decision delays as valuable under uncertainty; "Asymmetry of Information" leaves actors unable to plan; "Herd Behavior" causes investors to mimic large players' moves; and "Loss Aversion" pushes individuals to avoid risks even when opportunities exist.

Abdeh-Tabrizi said suspension mirrors war in its impact on investment, demand, supply chains, and market psychology — but without the clarity that war provides. This lack of certainty steadily erodes capital and confidence. Consumer priorities shift under such pressure, as seen in Ukraine's war, where spending moved toward ICT, food, and personal care.

## Iran Poised to Become a Gasoline Exporter Soon



TEHRAN - The Secretary-General of the National Association of Employers in the Oil Refining Industry announced that Iran could soon export gasoline if 18 refinery projects are completed, even under the current trend of rising demand and high consumption rates.

In an interview with ILNA, Nasser Ashouri Qaleh-Roudkhani said that existing refineries are already operating at full capacity, and any further increase in output depends on the completion of new projects or expansion plans—both of which require substantial financial backing.

According to Ashouri, a total of 18 projects have been defined for Iran's refineries, requiring over \$3 billion in investment. Given the current financial climate, some of these projects may be completed by next year.

Ashouri stated that the first phases of the Adish and Mehr Persian Gulf refinery projects could begin production by early March 2026. Together, the two facilities will have a combined capacity of 180,000 barrels per day—120,000 barrels from one refinery and 60,000 from the other.

When asked about the impact of completing all 18 projects, Ashouri said that if the current pace of demand growth and gasoline consumption continues for the next five years, Iran will not only fully meet its domestic needs but also reach a saturation point, enabling gasoline exports.

Ashouri warned that a rapid increase in production could compromise quality, preventing the production of Euro-4 and Euro-5 standard gasoline. However, he emphasized that with careful planning, Iranian fuel quality could match European standards.

He noted that over 70% of Iran's total refinery output currently meets standards, with an octane rating of 94. Even during the so-called "12-day war," when demand rose and gasoline production increased, fuel quality remained largely unchanged. At worst, octane levels fell to 87, which is considered standard-grade gasoline.

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TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleleh, announced that expanding economic cooperation with Kenya is on the agenda of the two countries' joint commission, with a goal of increasing bilateral trade to \$1 billion.

Speaking at the 7th Iran-Kenya Joint Economic Cooperation Commission held in Nairobi, Nouri Ghezleleh said the commission is co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Agriculture and Kenya's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Highlighting Kenya's strategic location in East Africa, he said the country's economic potential provides a strong foundation for expanding trade ties. He noted that agriculture is a key sector for Iran, which is among the world's top producers and exporters of pistachios, saffron, and dates. Iran has also achieved notable success in greenhouse cultivation and water-efficient farming, and is ready to share its expertise with Kenya.

According to the minister, Iran's strengths could help position Kenya as a gateway to East African markets. He also called for deeper cooperation, including the creation of a joint economic committee to follow up on agreements, organizing joint exhibitions, enhancing banking cooperation, and boosting private-sector partnerships.

Currently, official trade between Iran and Kenya stands at about \$150 million. Nouri Ghezleleh said he expects this figure to rise to \$1 billion in the near future. During the commission meeting, multiple cooperation agreements are expected to be signed, enabling Iran's private sector to work with Kenya in fields such as culture, healthcare, construction, agriculture, and overseas farming projects.

Kenya's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister emphasized the importance of trade growth, noting that Kenya's tea exports to Iran have risen from over 3,000 tons in 2003 to more than 13,000 tons in 2024. He expressed readiness to remove some export restrictions to Iran and announced the formation of a joint committee to resolve existing trade issues within 60 days, with a focus on the tea sector.

Both sides encouraged businesses to explore each other's markets, with the joint commission seen as a key driver for strengthening bilateral economic and cultural relations.

Meanwhile Iran's Minister of Agriculture, emphasizing that Iran serves as a bridge between Eastern and Western markets, described Kenya as Iran's gateway to East Africa.

Nouri Ghezleleh met with Kenya's Minister of Trade and Investment. He stated: Given the historical background and long-standing ties between the two countries, the current level of trade is not satisfactory and needs to be expanded.

Referring to Kenya's strategic position in Africa, the Minister said: As the gateway

to East Africa, Kenya provides Iran with access to a population of more than 350 million people. Therefore, our view of Kenya is not limited solely to this country, but rather as an entry point to the broader East African market.

Highlighting Iran's exceptional geopolitical position, he added: Iran can serve as an effective bridge for Kenya to access Eastern and Western markets. Considering the logistical and industrial capacities of both countries, bilateral trade could rise to several billion dollars.

Nouri Ghezleleh noted that a delegation of 100 Iranian economic actors is present on this trip, saying: Representatives from major Iranian companies in pharmaceuticals, industry, agriculture, and technology are here, and this large presence demonstrates Kenya's importance in Iran's strategy for developing economic relations in Africa.

The Minister also expressed Iran's readiness to swiftly remove trade barriers between the two countries, adding: We are working to encourage Iranian technology companies in the agricultural sector to invest in Kenya and jointly produce goods that can also be exported to Iran.

He said: The Kenyan side can facilitate the path for Iranian economic actors by resolving banking issues and enabling trade through barter arrangements.

Nouri Ghezleleh expressed hope that, with the removal of obstacles, the level of trade between the two countries could rise from the current unofficial figure of over \$300 million to more than \$1 billion in the near future.

Kenya's Minister of Trade and Investment, in the meeting, thanked the Iranian economic delegation for visiting Kenya, saying: The presence of a 100-member Iranian delegation shows how important Kenya is to Iran, and this is highly valuable to us.

He invited Iranian traders and investors to enter Kenya's market and proposed: Iranian companies should invest in Kenya's tea industry, as this would not only serve our domestic market but also allow Kenyan tea to be exported to West Asia and other countries.

Pointing to Kenya's agricultural potential, the Minister stated: Kenya has vast fertile lands suitable for overseas farming, and investors can expect high profitability in less than five years. We are ready to offer these lands to Iranian investors under 30-year long-term partnerships.

He also expressed Kenya's readiness to cooperate with Iran in the construction sector, adding: Iranians have strong expertise and capabilities in construction and can participate in our development projects.

## Activating the Potentials of the Iran–Eurasia Free Trade Agreement

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) described the Iran–Eurasia trade agreement as unprecedented, emphasizing that trade expansion is the main outcome of such agreements.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, speaking at a meeting on the potentials of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the petrochemical and steel sectors, said the agreement is "unprecedented" in its scope. He noted that under this trade document, tariffs on 87% of goods have been reduced to zero—something that has happened for the first time in Iran.

He recalled that Iran had previously signed preferential trade agreements with other countries, including the EAEU, which had led to notable results and expanded trade with the region.

Referring to the agreement's implementation since May 14, 2025, Dehghan Dehnavi said that trade agreements can carry both opportunities and risks, but ultimately their outcome is trade growth. "In trade agreements, the gains are not a zero-sum game; both sides benefit. However, only those who make the most of opportunities and address vulnerabilities can fully capitalize on such agreements," he explained.

The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade pointed out that steel and petrochemicals are two major, leading industries for Iran's production and exports. "We started this series of meetings with these two industries because they represent 50% of our goals. If there are opportunities in the agreement, a significant portion of them will apply to these sectors," he said.

Calling for stronger cooperation between the private sector and the government in advancing trade, Dehghan Dehnavi urged stakeholders to jointly identify opportunities and remove barriers. "The TPO will work to resolve obstacles, but the private sector should also use this agreement to expand trade with the region," he said.

He stressed the expectation for private companies to be active in Eurasia, noting that there are significant opportunities there. A TPO

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report identifies which Iranian products could see higher exports in the EAEU market. "The private sector should focus on maximizing business profits, while policies should be shaped to ensure that private interests align with collective benefits such as job creation, economic growth, and foreign currency inflow," he added.

Highlighting the varying characteristics of different markets, Dehghan Dehnavi described exports to Russia as one of the most profitable areas for business and said studies in this field will be

expanded.

In the same meeting, Elham Haji Karimi, acting head of the TPO's Trade Agreements Office, noted that the Iran–EAEU FTA was signed in January 2024 after more than two years of negotiations. The agreement's implementation, she said, reflects the mutual determination of both sides' authorities, along with the EAEU Commission as the responsible body, to expand bilateral trade in the near future.

According to Haji Karimi, the agreement came into effect on May 14, 2025—two months after its ratification by the legal authorities of the member states and Iran. She said the agreement consists of 11 chapters, covering: preamble, trade in goods, trade remedies, technical measures, sanitary measures, rules of origin, customs cooperation, dispute settlement, government procurement, sectoral cooperation (in transport, MSMEs, energy, automotive industries, free trade zones), and final provisions.

The meeting on "Exploring the Potentials of the Iran–Eurasia Free Trade Agreement in the Petrochemical and Steel Sectors" was attended by Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, TPO head; Farzad Piltan, advisor to the TPO head; Elham Haji Karimi, acting secretary of the Iran–EAEU FTA Secretariat; and a group of steel and petrochemical industry stakeholders at the Persian Gulf Pearl Hall in Tehran's International Permanent Fairground.

## Iran–Sweden Trade Volume Reaches \$1.7b in 2024



TEHRAN - The trade volume between Iran and Sweden reached \$1.7 billion in 2024, according to a new report by the International Affairs Department of Iran's Chamber of Commerce. Prior to the imposition of sanctions, Sweden's annual imports from Iran amounted to \$1.8 billion, but this figure dropped sharply to \$150 million in 2024.

The report notes that bilateral trade had previously grown significantly, from \$2.8 billion in the 1970s to \$3.5 billion in 2010, before sanctions reduced it to current levels.

Sweden, with expertise in telecommunications, automotive manufacturing, and machinery, is considered a valuable trade partner for Iran. However, international sanctions, competition from China, and political tensions have been identified as the main barriers to expanding economic relations.

In the telecommunications and automotive sectors, Sweden was Iran's leading supplier before 2018 — providing \$500 million in telecom equipment in 2016 and \$600 million in trucks. Post-sanctions, these numbers declined to \$250 million and \$400 million, respectively.

The Chamber's report suggests that lifting sanctions, improving infrastructure, and expanding cooperation could increase bilateral trade to \$4.5 billion, particularly in telecommunications, automotive, and energy. In the short term, however — until the end of 2025 — only modest growth and a continuation of current conditions are expected.

## Iran's PMI Remains Below 50 Despite Slight Slowdown in Decline



TEHRAN - Iran's overall Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for July 2025, after seasonal adjustment, was calculated at 47.3, signaling continued contraction in business activity despite a slower pace of decline compared to June's 43.3 reading. The index has remained below the neutral 50 threshold for sixteen consecutive months, indicating persistent economic weakness.

According to the Research Center of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, July marked the sixteenth straight month in which production levels fell below 50, reflecting a tangible drop in output across manufacturing and service sectors. New customer orders declined for the seventeenth consecutive month, underlining prolonged weakness in domestic demand.

Inventories of raw materials and purchased goods also fell for the eleventh month in a row, reaching their lowest level since December 2024. Analysts attribute this to weak demand, soaring input prices, and ongoing supply chain disruptions, including currency allocation delays, customs issues, and financing constraints.

The five main components of the PMI — production, new orders, inventories, employment, and supplier delivery speed — all registered declines in July, dimming both the current business climate and future outlook.

The production index stood at 48.4, slightly better than June, but still below neutral. Frequent unplanned power outages disrupted operations, while higher raw material costs, currency volatility, and financing difficulties further restricted capacity.

New orders continued to fall as chronic inflation, slow wage growth, and heightened political and economic uncertainty — exacerbated by ongoing regional tensions and currency fluctuations — discouraged consumer spending. Export orders also slipped, with exporters citing rising risks, volatile exchange rates, and regulatory hurdles such as foreign currency repatriation requirements.

Employment weakened again, marking its lowest level in 57 months, as firms avoided new hires or resorted to layoffs to control costs. The downturn in hiring reflects a combination of falling sales, rising production expenses, and uncertainty over the economic outlook. Some firms also reported labor shortages, as offered wages failed to attract workers given inflationary pressures.



## Russia, Ukraine Exchange 84 Prisoners Each

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia and Ukraine exchanged 84 prisoners each on Thursday, both sides said, the latest in a series of swaps that has seen hundreds of POWs released so far this year.

This latest one came on the eve of a high-level summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Donald Trump in Alaska.

The Russian defense ministry said on Telegram that the United Arab Emirates had mediated the exchange and that the released Russian personnel were receiving "psychological and medical assistance".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media that among the exchanged prisoners were "both military personnel and civilians", some of whom had been "held by the Russians since 2014, 2016, and 2017".



## India, China in Talks to Restart Border Trade



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India and China are discussing resuming border trade five years after it was halted, foreign ministry officials on both sides have said, as U.S. tariffs disrupt the global trade order.

Past trade across the icy and high-altitude Himalayan border passes between the neighbours was usually small in volume, but any resumption is significant for its symbolism.

The two major economic powers have long competed for strategic influence across South Asia.

But caught in global trade and geopolitical turbulence triggered by US President Donald Trump's tariff regime, the countries have moved to mend ties.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is expected for talks in New Delhi on Monday, according to Indian media, after his counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Beijing in July.

That, as well as agreements to resume direct flights and issue tourist visas, has been seen as an effort to rebuild a relationship damaged after a deadly border clash in 2020 between their nations' troops.

"For a long time, China-India border trade cooperation has played an important role in improving the lives of people living along the border," China's foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP on Thursday.

It added that the two sides have "reached a consensus on cross-border exchanges and cooperation, including resumption of border trade".

New Delhi's junior foreign minister, Kirti Vardhan Singh, told parliament last week that "India has engaged with the Chinese side to facilitate the resumption of border trade".

No restart date was given by either side.

Successive US administrations have seen India as a longstanding ally with like-minded interests when it comes to China.

## Mali Junta Accuses Foreign States of Attempted Destabilization Plot



PARIS (Dispatches) - The authorities in Mali said a French national had been arrested on suspicion of working for French intelligence services, and accused "foreign states" of trying to destabilize the country.

The ruling junta, which came to power after back-to-back coups in 2020 and 2021, also said that dozens of soldiers had been detained in recent days for allegedly seeking to overthrow the government.

Impoverished Mali has been gripped by a security crisis since 2012, fuelled notably by violence from groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State jihadist group, as well as local criminal gangs.

In a statement read on national television, the military said "fringe elements of the Malian armed security forces" were held for seeking to "destabilize the institutions of the republic".

"These soldiers and civilians" are said to have obtained "the help of foreign states", the government said.

The French national was held on suspicion of working "on behalf of the French intelligence service".

Security sources told AFP that at least 55 soldiers had been arrested, and the government said it was working to identify "possible accomplices".

The junta confirmed the arrest of two generals, including Abbas Dembele, a highly respected figure in the army and a former governor who was recently dismissed from his position.

# Gaza Officials Say Israeli Strikes Kill 17



GAZA CITY (Dispatches) - Gaza's civil defense agency said at least 17 people were killed Thursday in Israeli strikes as the military intensified its bombardment of Gaza City.

The dead included six civilians who had been waiting for humanitarian aid, said civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal.

"The Israeli occupation forces are intensifying their raids in the Zeitun area" of Gaza City, he said.

The Israeli military has yet to comment.

"For the fourth consecutive day, the area has been subject to a military operation, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries," said Bassal.

"Since dawn today, we have received 28 calls from families and residents of this neighbourhood, some of whose children have been killed.

"Many people cannot leave these areas due to artillery fire," the spokesperson added.

Maram Kashko, a resident of Zeitun, said the strikes had increased over the past four days.

"My nephew, his wife and their children were killed in a bombardment," he told AFP.

An AFP videographer said their bodies were taken to Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City and buried shortly afterwards at the Sayyid Hashim cemetery.

On Wednesday, the head of the Israeli military said he had approved a new plan for operations in the Gaza Strip aimed at freeing all hostages and defeating Hamas.

The military intends to take control of Gaza City and neighbouring refugee camps, some of the most densely populated areas in the Palestinian territory, which has been devastated by more than 22 months of war.

Over the past three days, Zeitun has been the target of repeated air strikes, according to multiple sources, including the military.

Adding to the dire humanitarian situation, Gaza has been experiencing a spell of extreme heat, which is particularly difficult for displaced residents living in tents and makeshift shelters.

"The heat is unbearable. We live in a nylon tent — it's like an oven. We cannot stay inside during the day, there is no

ventilation," said Umm Khaled Abu Jazar, 40, displaced in the Al-Mawasi camp.

"My children have developed skin rashes. Even the water we drink is hot from the sun. There is nothing to cool us down. The heat only adds to our daily suffering," the mother of five told AFP.

Meanwhile Israeli forces reportedly demolished houses in eastern areas of Gaza City overnight, killing at least 11 people in aerial and tank fire, local health authorities said, as the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas told mediators it was ready to resume ceasefire talks.

Residents and medics said eight people were killed when Israeli tank shelling hit a house in Zeitoun neighbourhood, while a man was killed in an airstrike on a building in the nearby Shejaia suburb. Two other people were killed in tank shelling in Tuffah, a third Gaza City suburb.

Local health authorities said they had received desperate calls from families trapped in the Zeitoun area, including from people saying they were wounded, and that ambulance vehicles could not reach them.

"The explosions are almost non-stop in eastern Gaza areas, mainly Zeitoun and Shejaia. The occupation (Israel) is erasing homes there, as we hear from some friends who live nearby," said Ismail, 40, from Gaza City.

"At night, we pray for our safety as the sounds of explosions get louder and closer. We hope Egypt can secure a ceasefire deal before we are all dead," he told Reuters via a chat app.

More than 22 months into Israel's military offensive in Gaza, residents have also been grappling with a worsening hunger crisis.

Four more people died of starvation and malnutrition in the territory in the past 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said on Thursday. That took the total to 239, including 106 children, since the war began, it said.

Israel disputes malnutrition and hunger figures reported by the health ministry in Gaza, which Hamas took control of in 2007.

Israel's planned seizure of Gaza City — which it took in the early days of the war before withdrawing — is probably weeks away, officials say.

# Rival Protester Groups Clash Anew in Serbia Amid Escalating Political Crisis

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Escalating anti-government protests in Serbia continued into late Thursday, as clashes between President Aleksandar Vucic's critics and detractors over corruption accusations led to a second night of violence and arrests.

Clashes between rival groups of protesters in Serbia flared again late Thursday, police said, as months of anti-government demonstrations boiled over into street violence this week.

A wave of anti-corruption protests has gripped Serbia since November, when the collapse of the Novi Sad railway station roof killed 16 people, a disaster widely blamed on entrenched corruption.

Anti-graft protesters again gathered in several cities across Serbia late Thursday.

That was mainly in response to a previous attack by governing party supporters on demonstrators Tuesday in the town of Vrbas, about 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of the capital Belgrade.

Large groups of pro-government supporters, most wearing masks, confronted protesters on Wednesday, and the two groups hurled bottles, stones and fireworks at each other.

Police had arrested nearly 50 people across the country on Wednesday, and around 30 riot police were injured.

On Thursday, protesters vandalised the Novi Sad headquarters of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and two other SNS offices in the city, RTS television reported, during protests spread across Serbia.

In the capital Belgrade, protestors massed in front of government buildings and the army headquarters, before heading toward nearby SNS offices.

But a heavy riot police deployment kept them from reaching the offices using teargas.



"These are no longer peaceful student protests but people who want to provoke violence... This is an attack on the state," Interior Minister Ivica Dacic told a news conference.

At least five police officers were injured on Thursday evening and 14 protesters were arrested, the ministry said.

Frustrated with government inaction, protesters have demanded an investigation into the Novi Sad tragedy and piled pressure on right-wing President Aleksandar Vucic to call early elections.

the violence.

"No one attacked them anywhere," he said of the anti-government protesters, speaking at a late-night press conference.

"They went everywhere to attack those who think differently," he added.

While the protests have so far led to the resignation of the prime minister and the collapse of his cabinet, Vucic remains at the helm of a reshuffled government.

Over the past nine months, thousands of mostly peaceful, student-led demonstrations have been held, some attracting hundreds of thousands.

But this week's violence marks a significant escalation and indicates the increasing strain on Vucic's populist government, in power for 13 years.

Since June 28, when around 140,000 demonstrators gathered in Belgrade, the government has responded with an "intensifying crackdown" on activists, according to a statement by UN human rights experts released earlier this month.

Protesters and those linked to the movement have faced a "troubling pattern of repression" including excessive police force, intimidation and arbitrary arrest, the experts said.

Vucic has remained defiant, repeatedly rejecting calls for early elections and denouncing the demonstrations as part of a foreign plot to overthrow him.

Student protesters have accused the police of protecting pro-government supporters while doing little to stop the attacks on their own gatherings.

"The authorities tried to provoke a civil war last night," the students wrote on their official Instagram page.

Vucic, who had visited pro-government encampments overnight Wednesday, denied his supporters had started

# China's Factory Output, Retail Sales Growth Slump in Blow to Economy

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's factory output growth slumped to an eight-month low in July, while retail sales slowed sharply, raising pressure on policymakers to roll out more stimulus to revive domestic demand and ward off external shocks to the \$19 trillion economy.

The underwhelming indicators come as officials navigate pressure on multiple fronts ranging from U.S. President Donald Trump's trade policies to extreme weather, excessive competition in the domestic market, and chronic weakness in the property sector.

Industrial output grew 5.7% year-on-year in July, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed on Friday, the lowest reading since November 2024, and compared with a 6.8% rise in June. It missed forecasts for a 5.9% increase in a Reuters poll.

Retail sales, a gauge of consumption, expanded 3.7% in July, the slowest pace since December 2024, and cooling from a 4.8% rise in the previous month. They missed a forecast gain of 4.6%.



The chart shows China's industrial production and retail sales for select months.

A temporary trade truce reached between China and the United States in mid-May, which was extended by another 90 days this week, has prevented U.S. tariff rates on Chinese goods from returning to prohibitively high levels. However, Chinese manufacturers' profits continue to take a hit from subdued demand and factory-gate deflation at home.

"The economy is quite reliant on government support, and the issue is those efforts were 'front-loaded' to the early months of 2025, and by now their impact has somewhat faded out," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

That policy support has helped the world's second-largest economy avoid a widely anticipated sharp slowdown, along with factories taking advantage of the U.S.-China trade truce to front-load shipments, but analysts say weak demand at home and global risks will drag on growth in coming quarters.





## Sinner Crushes Auger-Aliassime to Reach Cincinnati Semis

CINCINNATI (Dispatches) - Jannik Sinner “felt great on the court” as he annihilated Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-0, 6-2 to reach the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open semi-finals with his 25th straight hardcourt match victory.

The world number one powered through a rapid-fire opening set and overcame a wobble as he started the second set by dropping serve.

The defending champion prevailed in a brief 71 minutes as he claimed an eighth victory in a row at this event and his 30th this season.

“I felt great on the court today, you could see that,” said the Italian, who turns 24 on Saturday. “But every day can be different. Let’s see what I can do in the semis.”

Sinner, playing his first tournament since his Wimbledon triumph, will face either French qualifier Terence Atmane or Danish seventh seed Holger Rune for a place in the final.

Auger-Aliassime meekly lost the opening set after less than 30 minutes, delivering three double-faults in the final game.

After dropping his serve early in the second Sinner broke back to level at 2-all, eventually advancing as Auger-Aliassime coughed up his eighth double fault on match point.

“I served well today, that was the key for me,” Sinner said. “I had a small drop in the second set and I’m happy that I broke back. He moves and serves well, he’s difficult to play.”

Ben Shelton the fifth seed coming off a title in Toronto, finished up the last of the men’s fourth-round matches with a 6-4, 6-4 defeat of Jiri Lehecka, punctuated by back-to-back aces to yield three match points.

Shelton came good on his second as Lehecka drilled a return wide.

“I’m hungry, I’m in a good rhythm and the body feels good,” said Shelton, who will face third-seeded Alexander Zverev for the third time this season when they meet in the quarter-finals.

Zverev has won all three of their matches, including a quarter-final here a year ago.

In women’s action, French Open champion Coco Gauff beat Lucia Bronzetti 6-2, 6-4 to reach the quarter-finals.

The second-seeded American’s game showed minor rust after a bye in the previous round.

“I could have maybe made some more first serves in that second set, but overall, I had a lot of aces and unreturnables,” said Gauff, the 2023 Cincinnati champion who went on to win the US Open title that year.

“I’m happy considering where (my serve) was last week. I’m always trying to get better, but also just trying to take the little wins along the way.”

“I’m just trying to be happy with where I’m at now, but still doing the things I need to do to improve.”

Gauff, who was broken once in each set herself, finally secured a spot in the last eight with a concluding break of the 61st-ranked Italian’s serve as Bronzetti hit long after 79 minutes on court.

Gauf next takes on seventh seed Jasmine Paolini, who crushed 2024 Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova 6-1, 6-2.

Krejickova had treatment on her left foot in the second set and her movement was clearly hampered.

Paolini, the 2024 Roland Garros and Wimbledon finalist, won seven straight games on the way to a 4-0 second-set lead and rallied from 0-30 down in the final game to advance.

“She’s a great player and can do anything she wants with the ball,” Paolini said. “But I don’t think she was at 100 per cent today.”

Gauff will play Paolini — whom she beat here two years ago on the way to the title — in her third 1000-level quarter-final of the season after Madrid and Rome.

## PSG Fight Back to Beat Spurs on Penalties in Super Cup

UDINE (Dispatches) - European champions Paris St Germain fought back from 2-0 down with five minutes left to beat Europa League winners Tottenham Hotspur 4-3 on penalties in a dramatic UEFA Super Cup.

Tottenham looked set to give new manager Thomas Frank a winning start before PSG substitute Lee Kang-in pulled a goal back after 85 minutes and Goncalo Ramos headed the equaliser four minutes into stoppage time to level the scores at 2-2.

PSG completed the turnaround in the shootout as Mathys Tel and Micky van de Ven missed for Tottenham and Nuno Mendes stepped up to bury the decisive spot-kick.

The PSG players poured on to the pitch in celebration, knowing they had etched their names into history as the first French side to lift the trophy.

“It’s incredible to win like this. This team once again showed character, even if we’re not at our physical best,” PSG defender Marquinhos said.



“We managed to get the goals we needed through the substitutions, and in the shootout we have players who take their penalties well and a goalkeeper who helped us.”

Tottenham, who finished 17th in the Premier League last season, took the lead after Van de Ven scored from a rebound and doubled the advantage when Cristian Romero headed home against the French champions, who won their first European Cup in May with a crushing 5-0 final win over Inter Milan.

Lee scored with a crisp finish after his side had dominated the closing stages, before Ramos met Ousmane Dembele’s pinpoint cross with a diving header to send the game into a shootout.

“It’s difficult to talk about this match... We trained for only five-six days, it’s incredible,” PSG coach Luis Enrique said.

“For us, it’s really special to have won this trophy and to be able to offer it to them.”

## NBA Releases 2025-26 Regular-Season Schedule



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The NBA released its 2025-26 regular-season schedule Thursday, revealing the dates of marquee matchups and highlighting its new three-pronged media rights deal.

This will be the first season of an 11-year agreement that sees NBCUniversal and Amazon get in on the NBA action alongside ESPN, with Turner Sports’ TNT out of the picture.

The NBA’s national broadcast schedule with these new partners was revealed. It features games on ABC, NBC and Peacock on Sundays; Peacock alone on Mondays; and NBC and Peacock on Tuesdays. ESPN will carry national broadcasts Wednesdays and Fridays, ABC will add games on Saturday and Prime Video will feature on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Thanksgiving week will feature a pair of star forwards visiting their old digs for the first time. Kevin Durant and the Houston Rockets will play at the Phoenix Suns on Nov. 24, Durant’s first time facing Phoenix following an offseason trade.

Then, on Nov. 28, the Dallas Mavericks will visit Los Angeles to mark Anthony Davis’ first game at the Lakers since the blockbuster deal featuring him and Luka Doncic trading uniforms.

Some marquee games already were known, including the opening night doubleheader on Oct. 21 (Rockets at Oklahoma City Thunder, Golden State Warriors at Lakers) and the five-game slate on Christmas Day.

## ATP Players Handed Record \$18.3m Profit-Sharing Bonus



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Men’s tennis players will pocket a record \$18.3 million in profit-sharing bonuses from the 2024 season, the ATP said on Thursday, as the tour stepped up its efforts to forge a more sustainable and financially aligned future for the sport.

The bonus amount, a 177% increase on the previous season’s payout, will be distributed to players based on performance at the nine ATP 1000 tournaments, which rank just below the four Grand Slams in prestige.

“This is exactly what profit sharing was designed to do: ensure that players and tournaments share equally in the sport’s financial upside,” ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said.

“The \$18.3 million is a huge milestone. For us, it’s proof that strengthening the premium product and aligning interests creates value.

“We’re proud to be strengthening our partnership and building a stronger, more sustainable ATP Tour.”

The profit-sharing plan, introduced in 2022, splits profits generated at ATP Masters 1000 events – above onsite base prize money – equally between players and tournaments and is a cornerstone of the tour’s OneVision strategic plan.

Profit-sharing helped push ATP player compensation to a record \$261 million for the 2024 season for a total of \$378 million when combined with Grand Slam prize money.

The men’s elite body added that it was on track to deliver more compensation records, including \$28.5 million in Challenger Tour prize money and a \$3 million ATP 500 bonus pool.

The expansion of most of the Masters events to 96-player draws had increased earning opportunities for players, widening the number of those able to make a sustainable living from the sport, the ATP added.

## Marquez Eyes First Austrian GP Win

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marc Marquez has never won the Austrian Grand Prix, having been beaten by a red Ducati to the chequered flag on three occasions, but the Spaniard believes this year could be different.

Although Marquez won multiple world titles with Honda, he finished second at the Red Bull Ring three years in a row from 2017-2019, twice behind Andrea Dovizioso and once behind Jorge Lorenzo — both of whom rode for Ducati at the time.

Marquez has not finished on the podium in Austria since 2019 but as he arrives from the summer break with a 120-point lead over his brother Alex in the championship, the Ducati rider is seeking his ninth win of the season.

“It was super close for many years here in Austria. I always



lose against red bikes, with the amazing Dovizioso and amazing Lorenzo. But now I’m riding that red bike! So let’s see if we can fight for the victory,” Marquez told reporters on Thursday.

“Of course, starting the second part of the season with a 120-point advantage, the only one that can lose the championship is you.

“I will need to control myself in some races because you cannot be the fastest out there in every session, every practice and every race.”

Although Marquez has the strongest bike on the grid, so does his teammate Francesco Bagnaia who is unbeaten in Austria since 2022.