Iran's Intelligence Minister Says the Islamic Republic Is Utterly Distrustful of Being Able to Secure the Country's National Interests Through Talks With the United States

IRAN NEWS

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Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Warned the Head of the UN Nuclear Agency, Rafael Grossi, Against Making "Failed Threats" Toward Tehran, Saying Such Remarks Would Bring "Nothing But Another Defeat"

2 DOMESTIC

4.5% Increase in Home Appliance Exports in H1

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

EU Tasks Commission With Ukraine Funding Plan, Eyes Loan From Frozen Russian Assets

> SEE PAGE 3

Iran Rejects U.S. Allegations of Interference in Regional Affairs

TEHRAN - Iran has strongly rejected the latest claims by the United States accusing Tehran of interfering in the affairs of regional countries, labeling them as baseless.

The remarks were made by Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative, on Thursday in response to accusations by US envoy Michael Waltz at the UN Security Council. Iravani emphasized that Iran's foreign policy is guided by the UN Charter and principles including respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and good neighborliness.

He pointed to the "unlawful military presence" and destabilizing actions of the United States as the real source of conflict and instability in West Asia. According to Iravani, the notion of "Iranian proxies" has been fabricated to divert attention from the true cause of regional turmoil, namely Washington and its unwavering support for Israel.

The ambassador criticized the US for repeatedly obstructing the Security Council's mandate, arguing that such actions make it complicit in Israel's crimes, bearing both legal and moral responsibility. He described the Israeli regime as a major threat to regional and international peace, citing its "unprecedented war of extermination" in Gaza, which has killed over 68,000 Palestinians and left thousands unaccounted for.

Iravani condemned the widespread destruction caused by Israeli bombardments, which have decimated hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure, describing these acts as clear violations of international humanitarian law. He also referred to a recent International Court of Justice advisory opinion condemning Israel for obstructing humanitarian aid and attacking UN agencies, which led to the deaths of numerous UN personnel.

President Emphasizes Production and Exports as Key to Overcoming Sanctions

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the importance of regular dialogue between the government, industrialists, entrepreneurs, and traders, stressing that the path to overcoming the challenges posed by sanctions lies in boosting domestic production and exports.

Speaking on Thursday, during the second program of the eleventh provincial trip to West Azerbaijan, Pezeshkian met with investors and economic actors from the province, emphasizing the need for structured and goal-oriented discussions. "Our aim is to hear the views and suggestions of economic activists," he said. "However, these discussions must be organized and categorized to allow for accurate conclusions and effective action."

He outlined the government's ongoing engagement with the private sector, noting that monthly sessions are held in Tehran with chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs to address industry-specific challenges. Each ministry is assigned to directly follow up on sectoral issues, ensuring actionable solutions are proposed, and at the end of each month, results are consolidated to remove barriers to production and trade.

"We believe that the way to overcome economic difficulties and counter the pressures of sanctions is through production and export," Pezeshkian emphasized. "Any obstacles arising from government processes will be addressed collaboratively to smooth the path for economic actors."

The president also noted the necessity of establishing incentive mechanisms for investors and said the government is ready to implement proposals using its legal authorities. "It is essential that existing barriers are identified and communicated to us so that we can resolve them at the central level in Tehran," he said.

While acknowledging that persistent challenges accumulated over past years cannot be resolved quickly, Pezeshkian reassured that corrective measures have begun and will continue in close cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and entrepreneurs. He cited recent discussions with the petrochemical industry to address operational challenges and stressed that the government seeks to remove barriers so that businesses can operate without hindrance.

Pezeshkian underscored the role of the private sector in managing its own processes and supervising performance, noting that external oversight alone has historically been insufficient. He stressed that business actors should directly participate in improving quality and operational standards.

Highlighting environmental and economic initiatives, the president drew attention to the issue of gas flaring in oil fields. "A significant volume of flare gas is currently wasted in the country," he said. "If controlled, it could generate $5–6 billion annually. For comparison, achieving a $1 billion gain elsewhere often consumes enormous resources, yet billions are lost through flare gas."

Pezeshkian reported that over 11 million cubic meters of flare gas have been captured so far, compared to a total of 9 million cubic meters in all previous periods combined. "This demonstrates that the reform path has begun in practice, and the government is pursuing it rigorously," he said. Weekly sessions are held to ensure complete flare gas management, and investors are assured that any legal or operational obstacles will be resolved promptly.

The president also reiterated the government's commitment to broad plans for exploiting associated gas, expanding gas distribution in oil-rich regions, and investing in oil and gas fields to prevent resource wastage and maximize national development benefits.

Regarding West Azerbaijan's economic potential, Pezeshkian called the province "an ideal location for trade and investment," stressing that residents should not face economic hardship given the region's resources. He urged collaboration among officials and economic actors to identify and remove obstacles to growth.

Pezeshkian concluded with a reflection on governance and ethics, stressing the importance of evidence-based decision-making, honesty, and integrity. "Policies and programs must rely on data and collective experience," he said. "Those who offer more effective, accurate, and impactful solutions should be recognized and supported."

He also emphasized social equality and merit-based recognition, invoking Islamic teachings that true excellence lies in righteousness and integrity, not ethnicity, language, or gender. "Disagreements arise from ignorance," he noted. "Dialogue should focus on truth, and anyone who can offer solutions to national challenges deserves respect and support."

Prior to his address, the government held a ceremony to sign agreements and inaugurate development projects in West Azerbaijan Province, covering both economic and environmental initiatives, with participation from the governor, provincial officials, and representatives from universities and organizations.

Non-Oil Exports Grow by 6% in First Half of the Year

TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil exports grew by 6% in the first half of the year, after experiencing a decline in the early months, according to the Director General of Planning and Monitoring at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran.

Mohsen Montazeri noted that while exports decreased in the early months—particularly in the petrochemical and gas sectors—the situation improved over the first six months. In terms of weight, exports grew by around 6%, while the value of exports remained comparable to last year.

Montazeri highlighted growth in industry, mining, and agriculture, signaling dynamism in Iran's non-oil sectors.

The official pointed out that the main concern of exporters is the repatriation of export revenues. "Exporters believe the return rate should reflect the actual production costs, not fall below the free-market exchange rate. Fortunately, the Central Bank has allowed steel and petrochemical exporters to sell their foreign currency on the secondary market, where prices are more realistic," he said.

"This decision will improve currency flow, shorten allocation queues, and facilitate operations for small and medium exporters," Montazeri added.

Montazeri emphasized the importance of diversifying export destinations through free trade agreements or preferential trade deals. He cited the Eurasian Economic Union as a successful example, and noted that free trade agreements with Pakistan and Indonesia are in final stages, negotiations with Uzbekistan and Oman are nearly complete, and exchanges with Malaysia are ongoing.

Iran to Pursue Sanctions Relief While Boosting Domestic Strength

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has stated that Iran will continue its mission to lift sanctions "with seriousness," but emphasized that a more important goal is to "neutralize" their effects through domestic strength.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the second regional meeting on provincial diplomacy in Mashhad, Araqchi outlined a strategy for tackling the country's economic challenges.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue the mission of lifting sanctions with seriousness," Araqchi said, adding "But alongside that, there is a more important mission, which is to 'neutralize sanctions' and 'neutralize external pressures' by activating domestic capacities."

He highlighted that the country's "challenges are rooted in the failure to utilize domestic capacities, rather than being caused by foreign sanctions."

"Sanctions have their costs and pressures," he noted, "but the reality is that we have not yet fully utilized our domestic capabilities and talents."

The top diplomat explained that until the nation can fully leverage its national capacities in sectors like economy, trade, and tourism, it cannot attribute all its problems solely to sanctions.

Global Energy Supply Costs Rising Amid Intensified Sanctions

TEHRAN – Oil Minister warned that international sanctions are driving up global energy supply costs by undermining market stability and discouraging timely investment. Despite the mounting restrictions, he reaffirmed Iran's determination to continue expanding natural gas production and improving energy efficiency.

Speaking at the 27th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in Doha, Qatar, Mohsen Paknejad, Iran's Oil Minister, expressed appreciation for Qatar's hospitality and emphasized the importance of dialogue among member states on the forum's strategic policies and activities.

"It is an honor to be in Doha, the capital of our friendly and brotherly nation, Qatar, to discuss the shared policies and future of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum," Paknejad stated.

Referring to recent regional conflicts, Paknejad recalled that four months have passed since a 12-day conflict triggered by Israeli aggression against Iran's territorial integrity, which, according to him, "ended in failure for the aggressors due to the resistance of the Iranian people and armed forces."

He condemned the repetition of such aggressions against Qatar, describing them as violations of international norms and a threat to global peace and market stability.

"Iran expects all GECF members, as a family, to condemn such acts as destabilizing to international order, security, and the energy market," he said.

Paknejad emphasized that global energy demand is rising faster than ever due to population growth, urbanization, and the need for economic development and welfare.

"Today, the world needs a more secure and reliable energy supply than at any time in history," he stated.

He highlighted natural gas as a central component of the modern energy mix. Citing forecasts from the GECF Secretariat, Paknejad noted that by 2050, global gas demand is expected to increase by 32%, with the fuel's share in the world energy mix rising from 23% to 26%.

"As members controlling about 70% of the world's natural gas reserves, we must aim to increase gas supply and target a 30% share of natural gas in the global energy mix by 2050," he said.

The minister cautioned that promoting increased gas supply has become more difficult amid global movements to phase out fossil fuels in response to climate concerns.

"The spread of extreme anti-fossil-fuel policies poses serious risks for the future of gas demand," Paknejad warned.

He stressed that the GECF must defend natural gas as part of the solution to both energy security and climate challenges, reiterating commitments made in the 7th GECF Summit Declaration (Algiers, March 2024), which emphasized natural gas's role in sustainable development, poverty reduction, and the global energy transition.

Paknejad pointed to mounting uncertainty surrounding investment in the gas sector, compounded by expanding sanctions against major oil- and gas-producing countries.

"These politically motivated sanctions destabilize markets and delay investments, ultimately raising the cost of energy supply worldwide," he stated.

Despite these pressures, Paknejad reaffirmed Iran's resolve to move forward:

"We remain determined to continue implementing our programs for natural gas production growth and energy efficiency improvement, using domestic capabilities and expanding regional and international cooperation. Iran is ready for joint projects and investment with all GECF member countries."

Given the ongoing global energy transition and investment uncertainty, Paknejad proposed that the GECF create a structured platform for constructive dialogue between gas-producing and gas-consuming nations to strengthen market stability and ensure balanced supply and demand.

He further suggested that the forum's institutional structure be upgraded to better meet its members' growing technical and policy needs, adding that "it may be time to consider transforming the GECF into an Organization of Gas Exporting Countries."

The minister expressed gratitude to the GECF Secretariat staff and extended special thanks to Mohammad Hamel, the outgoing Secretary-General, for his "dedicated leadership and valuable service."

"I strongly believe that through solidarity, dialogue, and cooperation, the forum can play a key role in shaping the future of the global energy market," Paknejad said.

He concluded by reaffirming that the Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to play an active and constructive role in achieving the GECF's common goals.

Economic Pressure Will Not Weaken Iran's Resilience

TEHRAN - Supreme National Security Council Secretary, Ali Larijani, has asserted that external economic pressures will not undermine the country's resilience.

"The West imagines that with economic pressure it can reduce Iran's resilience," Larijani said on Thursday at a local event in Tehran, adding that "the nation of Iran, with resistance and faith, will pass through this stage as well."

Larijani highlighted Tehran's efforts to prevent the so-called snapback mechanism, which Western powers attempted to use to reimpose UN sanctions. "In the matter of snapback, all efforts were made to reach a negotiated conclusion. However, the West demanded that Iran reduce the range of its missiles to under 500 km, effectively trying to strip the nation of its most important defensive weapon," he said, stressing that such demands directly concern Iran's national security.

Iran has rejected the legality of the snapback triggered by the E3 countries—France, Germany, and the UK—calling it "null and void" and a "fabricated" term. On Saturday, Tehran declared the expiration of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and its associated provisions, emphasizing that its nuclear program should now be treated like any other non-nuclear-weapon state under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Despite sustained economic pressure, particularly after the United States' 2018 withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the imposition of sweeping sanctions, Iran has adapted through increased domestic production, non-dollar trade mechanisms, and expanded economic ties with Asian and neighboring countries.

IRAN NEWS

Indonesia Seeks Iran's Cooperation in Developing Hydropower Plants

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Indonesian Minister of Manpower and Housing expressed his country's interest in cooperating with Iran to develop hydropower plants and strengthen power grid stability, during a meeting with Iran's Minister of Energy.

Abbas Aliabadi, Iran's Minister of Energy, met with Dody Hangdoko, Indonesia's Minister of Manpower and Housing, on Thursday on the sidelines of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between Iran and Indonesia.

Iran, China Pursue Win-Win Cooperation in Mining and Mineral Industries

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has emphasized Iran's vast potential in strategic mineral reserves and engineering expertise, calling for a win-win partnership between Iran and China in the mining and mineral industries.

According to IMIDRO, Mohammad Masoud Samieinejad, speaking on Thursday at the China Mining Conference 2025, stated that Iran's participation in this event demonstrates the Islamic Republic's determination to foster sustainable and balanced cooperation with strategic partners, particularly the People's Republic of China, in the mining and minerals sector.

Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade (MIMT) Samieinejad highlighted that Iran is a land where much of human civilization, industry, and technology have taken shape. "In this country, the earth is not only the cradle of civilization but also a rich source of mineral wealth and opportunities on a global scale," he said.

Citing the latest geological studies, he noted that Iran possesses more than 63 billion tons of proven mineral reserves, ranking among the world's leading mining nations in terms of mineral diversity.

Samieinejad explained that Iran's mineral richness is evident in the discovery of 48 metallogenic zones worldwide—of which Iran alone holds 35. Out of 114 known types of mineral deposits, 89 are found in Iran, and from 112 types of mineral materials identified globally, 75 are present and actively mined in the country.

"This level of diversity makes Iran one of the few nations with actual and potential capacities across nearly all categories—metallic, non-metallic, energy-bearing, and construction materials," he added.

He estimated Iran's total proven mineral reserves at around 70 billion tons, with an annual extraction rate of nearly 600 million tons. Among metallic ores, iron ore reserves exceeding 3 billion tons rank Iran ninth globally, while copper reserves—around 7 billion tons of ore or over 66 million tons of contained copper—place the country sixth worldwide.

Additionally, lead and zinc reserves totaling 28 million tons secure another sixth-place global ranking, and chromite deposits exceeding 11 million tons position Iran among the top ten producers internationally.

Regarding gold, Samieinejad said Iran's identified reserves amount to around 300 million tons of ore, and from a geochemical perspective, the country ranks among regions with high potential for further discoveries.

He noted that Iran's mineral-based industries have expanded steadily over the past 15 years, with 2024 production figures showing both stability and diversity across the value chain.

4.5% Increase in Home Appliance Exports in H1

TEHRAN - The Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced a 4.5% increase in home appliance exports during the first half of the year, alongside an improvement in the domestic manufacturing depth of the industry from 50% to 60%.

Ebrahim Sheikh, Deputy Minister of General Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, made the remarks on Thursday, October 23, 2025, on the sidelines of the Home Appliance Exhibition. He noted that the home appliance sector experienced around 10% growth in 2024 compared to 2023.

He added, "Although production growth has slightly slowed over the past six months, exports have increased by 4.5%."

Sheikh emphasized that the ministry's main strategy in this sector is to expand exports, stating, "We aim to achieve $800 million in exports within the framework of our strategic plan." He also noted plans to focus on producing energy-efficient products—such as A+++ and A+ rated appliances—and to improve access to raw materials including petrochemical and steel products.

According to Sheikh, nearly 22 million appliance components have been produced domestically, while around 2 to 3 million units have been imported from various countries.

He added, "Our goal at the Ministry of Industry is to reform border trade laws so that they facilitate the import of essential parts and equipment for domestic manufacturers. This will allow producers to offer higher-quality products at more competitive prices."

Sheikh also cautioned that importing finished goods similar to domestically produced ones with low tariffs could harm local manufacturers. "We are therefore working to ensure that border trade regulations are used to strengthen domestic production," he said.

Regarding pricing, Sheikh noted that locally produced home appliances are cheaper than comparable foreign products, and that customer satisfaction with domestic brands now exceeds 80%.

"Our industrial policies must move in the same direction as those of leading manufacturing countries—improving price, quality, and export development in tandem," he said.

Sheikh added that the domestic market is now highly competitive. "Although some foreign competitors are still present, their market share is shrinking. More than 200 small and large companies are participating in this exhibition, reflecting the strength of domestic competition. This has helped increase the local manufacturing depth from 50% to 60%, improving both price and quality standards."

He concluded by noting that while foreign products still enter the Iranian market through various channels, "the first and preferred choice of Iranian consumers in the home appliance sector remains domestically produced goods."

Meanwhile Sadegh Beikzadeh, CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran International Exhibitions Company, announced on Thursday, October 23, 2025, during the opening ceremony of the 25th International Home Appliance Exhibition, that this year's event features the participation of 235 domestic companies and 30 foreign companies from various countries.

Beikzadeh stated that the 25th Home Appliance and Related Industries Exhibition is in a strong position compared to previous years, adding that industry associations and manufacturing groups have played a more active role this year.

He noted, "This year, nine exhibition halls are being utilized. Given the level of interest and demand, we could have easily added another five or six halls, as many other companies also sought to participate."

According to Beikzadeh, the exhibition covers 35,000 square meters of usable space and over 20,000 square meters of display area.

He explained that the exhibition has evolved into more than just a product showcase:

"It has become a platform for policymaking, knowledge exchange, and the transfer of the latest technologies. Many leading companies with significant market shares are taking part in this event."

The CEO of the International Exhibitions Company expressed hope that the exhibition would serve as a platform for domestic manufacturers to expand their presence in export markets, in addition to meeting domestic demand.

Beikzadeh emphasized that many of these companies are operating on the cutting edge of technology in various small, medium, and large-scale industries.

"By developing exhibition services and supporting the participation of manufacturing units in such platforms, we can help create both domestic and international demand for their products," he concluded.

Iran, Tajikistan Discuss Water Cooperation on Sidelines of OIC Conference

TEHRAN - Minister of Energy met with Tajikistan's Minister of Water and Energy on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation in the water and energy sectors.

Abbas Aliabadi met with Daler Juma, Tajikistan's Minister of Water and Energy, during the meeting, the two officials exchanged views on key topics including joint use of reservoir overflow water for electricity generation, strengthening the structure of the spillway dam, and supporting Iranian companies' participation in the Rogun Dam and hydropower plant project in Tajikistan.

It was agreed that experts from both countries would conduct a technical review within the next ten days to identify practical areas of cooperation and accelerate the implementation of joint projects.

Minister Aliabadi is in Saudi Arabia to attend the Fifth OIC Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water, held October 20–22, 2025 (28–30 Mehr), where he heads the Iranian delegation.

Meanwhile Aliabadi met on Thursday with Dudi Hangudo, Indonesia's Minister of Manpower and Housing, on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to strengthen joint cooperation between Iran and Indonesia.

Minister Aliabadi invited his Indonesian counterpart to visit Iran's key water and power projects, particularly hydropower dams, emphasizing Iran's strong interest in expanding bilateral cooperation in the water and electricity sectors.

For his part, Minister Hangudo expressed Indonesia's interest in benefiting from Iran's experience in the fields of water management and electricity, especially in developing hydropower plants and ensuring grid stability and voltage regulation. He also reaffirmed Indonesia's readiness to deepen cooperation with Iran, particularly in the water and energy industries.

Call for Establishing Iran–Japan Joint Innovation Center for Smart Marketing and Digital Trade

TEHRAN - The Vice President of the Iran–Japan Chamber of Commerce has proposed the creation of a joint innovation center between Iran and Japan focused on smart marketing and digital trade, citing projections that artificial intelligence (AI) will influence 60% of global marketing decisions by 2030.

Speaking at the National Conference on Marketing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, held by the Iran–Japan Chamber of Commerce with participation from Kana Sato, Head of the Economic Section at the Embassy of Japan, and Sabbah Zangeneh, advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bahram Shakouri, the chamber's vice president, emphasized that digital transformation is "no longer a choice—it's an imperative that has penetrated every aspect of the global economy."

According to Shakouri, an international report published in 2024 shows that 38% of global marketing decisions are now powered by AI tools, a figure expected to rise to over 60% by 2030.

"AI has revolutionized how companies interact with customers, design products, advertise, and even price their offerings. Marketing is no longer just the art of selling—it's the science of understanding the human mind and behavior through data," Shakouri said.

Highlighting Japan's leadership in AI adoption, Shakouri noted that companies like Toyota, Rakuten, Uniqlo, and Sony leverage AI to analyze millions of consumer behavior data points, enabling them to create personalized experiences.

For example, Uniqlo's AI-driven 'Style Advisor' system analyzes consumer conversations on social media to identify fashion preferences—boosting customer satisfaction by approximately 27%.

He added that the Japanese government's "Digital Transformation Strategy 2030" encourages small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to integrate data-driven technologies and AI into marketing, product design, and exports. As a result, over 65% of Japanese firms are expected to use AI in at least one marketing process by the end of 2024.

Shakouri emphasized Iran's potential in this field, citing the country's knowledge-based firms, startups, and universities with creative young talent.

"With proper infrastructure and policy support, these forces can play a vital role in transforming marketing practices," he said.

He added that with global markets becoming data-driven, Iran can utilize AI-powered marketing to expand exports to Asia, Africa, and Europe.

AI-based data analytics can help Iranian exporters better understand consumer behavior in target countries, create localized marketing content, and predict product demand trends across different seasons.

Shakouri proposed the establishment of an Iran–Japan Joint Innovation Center for Smart Marketing and Digital Trade to facilitate collaboration on experimental and real-world projects between the two nations.

The proposed center would focus on technology transfer, AI-based data analytics, manager training, and joint projects in knowledge-based exports.

"This joint initiative could become an effective bridge—connecting Japan's advanced technological experience with Iran's human and intellectual capital," Shakouri stated.

Shakouri also underlined the importance of ethics in AI-driven marketing:

"Marketing in the age of AI is not just about algorithms and data—it's about trust, ethics, and human-centric values. AI can predict customer behavior, but only humans can build genuine relationships."

He concluded by emphasizing that the world is evolving at unprecedented speed, and success will belong to countries and companies that use AI to better understand humans, not replace them.

Mohammadreza Karimi, a faculty member at Allameh Tabataba'i University's School of Management, described AI as a "dual-faced crisis—both an opportunity and a threat."

He said that today's "era of permanent crisis" demands that businesses engineer resilience, noting that small firms must act strategically and avoid trial-and-error approaches when facing challenges such as logistics disruptions or trade wars.

Karimi warned that in this age of digital fragility, minor errors can destroy brand trust, and many failing companies do so not due to lack of resources but failure to adapt to new realities.

He presented the AGC model (Adaptation, Growth, Continuity), which shows that successful firms maintain a balance between speed and reliability during crises.

"The consumer of today is fully informed—you can't fool them anymore. Transparency is total," Karimi noted.

He also stressed that AI cannot yet replace humans: "If an AI-generated output contains an error, responsibility still lies with humans. Keeping humans involved in machine-led operations is essential to minimize risks."

In conclusion, Mehdi Amir Jafari, senior marketing consultant, predicted that within the next five years, AI will directly affect 70% of companies' strategic marketing decisions.

A New Mechanism for Regulating Employment of Foreign Nationals

TEHRAN - The Director-General of Foreign Nationals at Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare announced the launch of a new "labor visa" system for foreign workers — a plan designed to legally reintegrate skilled labor into the Iranian job market. The initiative aims to address labor shortages caused by the recent large-scale departure of Afghan nationals, and will be implemented in a limited and controlled manner under the country's labor laws.

Ali Bagheri explained that in the past, Iran only issued work visas to specialized professionals, investors, and foreign company managers. However, following the significant outflow of Afghan workers and the resulting shortage in certain service sectors, the government decided to facilitate the legal return of skilled workers — individuals who have worked in Iran for years, gained experience, and are trusted by employers.

Bagheri noted that this plan introduces, for the first time, a distinct category of visa — the labor visa, which differs from the previous specialized work visa. It specifically targets skilled foreign laborers employed in approved occupations and designated areas of the country.

Under the new system, employers can officially request to hire foreign workers within set quotas and for authorized job categories.

Iran and Afghanistan Move Toward Joint Investment in the Mining Sector

TEHRAN - The Vice President of Iran Chamber of Commerce has called for joint investment between Iran and Afghanistan in the mining sector, describing it as a potential regional model for successful economic cooperation.

At the Iran–Afghanistan Joint Cooperation Development Summit, hosted by the Birjand Chamber of Commerce, Mohammadreza Bahraman, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the broad potential for collaboration between the two neighboring countries.

The meeting was attended by Alireza Khamezar, President of the Birjand Chamber of Commerce; the Assistant to the Minister and Director-General for South Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Farah Province, Afghanistan; the Head of the Birjand Special Economic Zone; and the Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Herat.

"This meeting reflects the strong sense of unity and determination among business leaders and officials to define a sustainable and actionable future for bilateral cooperation," Bahraman stated.

Bahraman highlighted Iran's support for Afghanistan's new development path and called for introducing joint capacities, utilizing mineral and non-traditional resources in South Khorasan Province, and enhancing transportation and trade routes between the two countries.

Thailand General Election Now Most Likely on March 29

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - The likely date for a general election in Thailand is March 29, a senior government official told Reuters on Friday after Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul discussed the issue with the country's Election Commission.

The Prime Minister has earlier said he plans to dissolve parliament by the end of January, with a general election to follow in March or early April.

"The government and the Election Commission have discussed the timeframe for holding the election," said Paradorn Prissananantakul, a minister attached to the prime minister's office.

"The most likely date is March 29," he said.

IRAN NEWS

EU Tasks Commission With Ukraine Funding Plan, Eyes Loan From Frozen Russian Assets

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - EU leaders on Thursday asked the European Commission to prepare options to fund Ukraine for two more years, keeping open the possibility of a vast loan backed by frozen Russian assets. After marathon Brussels talks, they deferred a final decision on the proposed 140-billion-euro ($162 billion) "reparations loan" to December.

In broadly-worded conclusions adopted after marathon talks in Brussels, EU leaders stopped short of greenlighting plans for the 140-billion-euro ($162-billion) "reparations loan" -- pushing that crunch decision to December.

But diplomats said the text was a step towards a potential agreement -- though it was watered down in the face of strong objections from Belgium, where the bulk of the Russian central bank funds frozen after the 2022 invasion are held.

European Council President Antonio Costa said the bloc had "committed to ensure that Ukraine's financial needs will be covered for the next two years".

"Russia should take good note of this: Ukraine will have the financial resources it needs to defend itself," he told a news conference.

The EU froze some 200 billion euros of Russian central bank assets after Moscow's tanks rolled into Ukraine, and the European Commission has proposed using the funds to provide a huge loan to Kyiv -- without seizing them outright.

Speaking beside Costa, Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said there was still tough work ahead on the complex proposal.

"We agreed on the 'What' -- that is, the reparations loan -- and we have to work on the 'How,' how we make it possible," she said.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, who was in Brussels to shore up European support, welcomed the summit outcome as a signal of "political support" for the notion of using Russian assets to keep Kyiv in the fight.

The vast majority of the Russian funds is held in international deposit organisation Euroclear, based in Belgium -- the most vocal sceptic of a plan it fears could open it up to costly legal challenges from Russia.

The Brussels talks were focused largely on addressing those concerns.

Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever repeated demands for guarantees from all EU countries that they share the risk if Russia sues, and said other countries must also tap Moscow's assets on their territory -- threatening otherwise to block the plan.

"I'm only poor little Belgium, the only thing I can do is point out where the problems are and to gently ask solutions for the essential problem," De Wever told reporters after the talks.

Belgium has not been alone however in raising concerns.

French President Emmanuel Macron acknowledged the plan "raises judicial questions, and questions over risk sharing" -- while also saying it remained the best option for shoring up Ukraine these next two years.

The summit conclusions -- adopted by all member states with the exception of Hungary, seen as Russia's closest ally in the 27-nation bloc -- did not mention the loan directly, instead inviting the commission "to present, as soon as possible, options for financial support".

Still, a European diplomat described it as "a great success".

Another diplomat said the compromise wording "does not close but does not rush" the sensitive matter of using Russian assets for Ukraine.

The EU talks were taking place a day after the bloc agreed a 19th package of sanctions on Russia and US President Donald Trump hit Moscow with sanctions on two oil majors, Rosneft and Lukoil.

Zelensky hailed the US sanctions as sending a "strong and much-needed message" to Russia -- whose leader Vladimir Putin hit back insisting they would not significantly damage the country's economy.

"Good, I'm glad he feels that way," Trump told reporters at the White House when asked about Putin's response. "I'll let you know about it in six months from now. Let's see how it all works out."

The US measures represent a major stepping up of its actions against Russia and reflect Trump's frustration at being unable to persuade Putin to end the conflict despite what he calls his personal chemistry with the Kremlin chief.

Zelensky said he hoped Trump's shift on sanctions would also herald a change of mind on giving Ukraine long-range Tomahawk missiles -- after Kyiv came away from a meeting in Washington empty-handed last week.

The EU sanctions package meanwhile saw the bloc bring forward a ban on the import of liquefied natural gas from Russia by a year to the start of 2027, and blacklist more than 100 extra tankers from Moscow's so-called "shadow fleet" of ageing oil vessels.

Putin Says Russia Will Never Bow to U.S. Pressure, Warns on Missiles

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that Moscow would never bow to pressure from the United States or any other foreign power, and cautioned that it would deliver an "overwhelming" response to any military strikes deep inside Russia.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday hit Russia's two biggest oil companies with sanctions in a sharp policy shift on Moscow's war in Ukraine, prompting global oil prices to rise by nearly 5% on Thursday and India to consider cutting Russian imports.

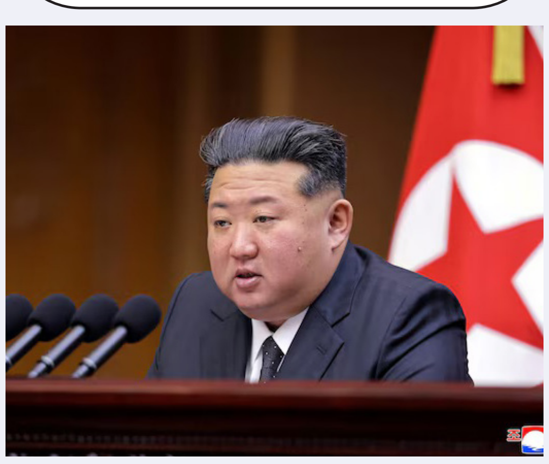
Putin told reporters that U.S. and Western sanctions were an "unfriendly" act and "will have certain consequences, but they will not significantly affect our economic well-being". Russia's energy sector feels confident, he said.

"This is, of course, an attempt to put pressure on Russia," Putin added. "But no self-respecting country and no self-respecting people ever decides anything under pressure."

Putin, after joking with reporters about how sanctions might prevent the West importing Russian toilets, recalled that Trump during his first term imposed tough sanctions on Russia.

He warned that disrupting exports from Russia - the world's second largest oil exporter - would lead to a sharp rise in the price of oil, including at U.S. gas stations. This could be politically uncomfortable for Washington, he said.

North Korea's Kim Says Military Ties With Russia Will Advance Non-Stop



SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said military brotherhood between his country and Russia would "advance non-stop", state media KCNA reported on Friday.

Kim made the comments during a speech at the groundbreaking ceremony for a memorial for North Korean soldiers who fought alongside Russian troops in Russia's Kursk region during Moscow's ongoing war with Ukraine, KCNA said.

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"The years of militant fraternity, in which a guarantee has been provided for the long-term development of the bilateral friendship at the cost of precious blood, will advance non-stop," Kim said, according to KCNA. Challenges by the "domination and tyranny" cannot hinder the two countries' ties, he added.

The event was the latest public honouring of North Korean troops who fought in Russia to repel an incursion by Ukrainian forces.

Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin have signed a mutual defence pact. North Korea has sent soldiers, artillery ammunition and missiles to Russia to support Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Maduro Hits Out as U.S. Sends Stealth Warplanes, Warships Near Venezuela

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro pleaded Thursday against a "crazy war" as an escalating U.S. military campaign sent tensions soaring.

Maduro's comment came after US President Donald Trump said he had authorised covert action against the South American nation amid a military campaign targeting what Washington says are drug traffickers in the Caribbean and Pacific.

"Yes peace, yes peace forever, peace forever. No crazy war, please!" Maduro said in English in a meeting with unions aligned with the leftist leader.

The United States has deployed stealth warplanes and navy ships as part of what it calls anti-narcotics efforts, but has yet to release evidence that its targets—eight boats and a semi-submersible—were smuggling drugs.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Trump again denied that he had sent B-1B bombers to Venezuela, but said "we're not happy with them. They've emptied their prisons into our country."

The president said "we're not going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war" from Congress, which has the constitutional power to do so.

"We're just going to kill people who come into our country."

The U.S. strikes, which began on September 2, have killed at least 37 people, according to an AFP tally based on US figures.

Regional tensions have flared as a result of the campaign, with Maduro accusing Washington of seeking regime change.

Late Thursday, the government in Trinidad and Tobago—located just off Venezuela's coast—announced that a US warship would dock in its capital from October 26-30.

The Trinidadian foreign ministry said a unit of US Marines would conduct joint exercises with its defense forces.

Two of those killed in the US strikes were from Trinidad and Tobago.

Last week, Trump said he had authorised covert CIA action against Venezuela and was considering strikes against alleged drug cartels on land.

The Republican billionaire president accuses Maduro of heading a drug cartel, a charge the Venezuelan leader denies.

"We know the CIA is present" in Venezuela, the country's defence minister Vladimir Padrino said Thursday.

"They may deploy—I don't know how many—CIA-affiliated units in covert operations... and any attempt will fail."

Padrino was overseeing military exercises along Venezuela's coast in response to the US military deployment in the Caribbean.

Experts have questioned the legality of using lethal force in foreign or international waters against suspects who have not been intercepted or questioned. — AFP

Trump Terminating Canada Trade Talks Over Anti-Tariff Reagan Ad Campaign

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday that he was immediately ending all trade talks with Canada, accusing it of misquoting former president Ronald Reagan in an advertising campaign against tariffs.

"Based on their egregious behavior, ALL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH CANADA ARE HEREBY TERMINATED," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

"The Ronald Reagan Foundation has just announced that Canada has fraudulently used an advertisement, which is FAKE, featuring Ronald Reagan speaking negatively about Tariffs."

The latest extraordinary twist in relations between the North American neighbours comes just over two weeks after Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney visited Trump in the White House to seek a relaxation of stiff U.S. tariffs.

The Ronald Reagan Foundation said on X that the government of the Canadian

province of Ontario had used "selectively audio and video" from a radio address to the nation to the nation on trade by Reagan in April 1987.

It said the ad "misrepresents" what the Republican former actor had said in his address, adding that it was "reviewing its legal options in this matter."

Trump said the ad was designed to "interfere with the decision of the US Supreme Court," which is due to rule on his sweeping global tariffs.

The sudden decision to end trade talks will come as a blow to Carney, whom Trump described as a "world-class leader" when they met on October 7, adding that the Canadian would be "very happy" with their discussion.

At the time, however, Trump offered no immediate concessions on tariffs.

Roughly 85 percent of cross-border trade in both directions remains tariff-free as the United States and Canada continue to adhere to an existing North American trade deal called the USMCA.

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Liverpool Back on Track While Real, Bayern and Chelsea Win in Champions League

PARIS (Dispatches) - Hugo Ekitike scored against his former club as Liverpool got back on track with a 5–1 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt in the Champions League today, while Chelsea, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich were among the night's other winners.

The Anfield side went into their trip to Germany reeling from four consecutive defeats, including a 1–0 loss to Galatasaray in their previous Champions League outing.

They bounced back in style, coming from behind to hammer Eintracht, who suffered a second straight 5–1 defeat in Europe — having opened their campaign with a 5–1 win.

Rasmus Kristensen gave the hosts the lead, but Ekitike broke away to equalise against the team he left in July in a £79 million deal.

Virgil van Dijk headed the visitors in front from a corner on 39 minutes, and Ibrahima Konaté made it 3–1 before the interval in almost identical fashion.

Cody Gakpo and Dominik Szoboszlai added further goals in the second half as Liverpool moved up to 10th in the 36-team league phase standings.

"I don't know if it's a statement, but it is a win and something to build on," Van Dijk told broadcaster TNT Sports.

Chelsea won by the same scoreline against Ajax at Stamford Bridge in a match that featured an early red card and three first-half penalties.

Kenneth Taylor was sent off for the Dutch visitors before Marc Guiu and Moises Caicedo scored for the Premier League side.

Wout Weghorst pulled one back from the spot for Ajax, but Enzo Fernandez and Estevão both converted penalties before half-time for Chelsea.

Tyrique George rounded off the scoring in the second half — marking the first time in Champions League history that three teenagers scored for the same team.

"We trust a lot of young players," said Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca after the goals for Guiu, Estevão and George. "That is the strategy of the club, but not only the ones that we buy — also the ones from the academy."

Chelsea have now won their last two European outings since beginning their campaign with a 3–1 defeat at Bayern.

Ajax, meanwhile, are bottom of the standings as one of only two teams without a point after three games — the other being José Mourinho's Benfica.

Bayern are one of five teams with the maximum nine points as Harry Kane scored his 20th goal in 12 club appearances this season in a 4–0 cruise against Club Brugge at the Allianz Arena.

Lennart Karl, 17, opened the scoring before Kane, Luis Díaz and Nicolas Jackson also found the net for the Bundesliga champions.

Real Madrid also have nine points following a hard-earned 1–0 victory over Juventus at the Santiago Bernabéu, as England captain Kane's compatriot Jude Bellingham scored for the first time this season.

The goal came just before the hour mark, with Bellingham converting the rebound after Vinícius hit the upright. Juventus have now gone seven games without a win.

"I'm very happy with the win. It was a very tough game with chances at both ends and we had to sweat for it, but it was an important win against a big team," Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois told Movistar.

Tottenham Hotspur were the only one of England's six representatives to fail to win this week, held to a 0–0 draw away to Monaco.

In Lisbon, Portuguese champions Sporting came from behind to defeat Marseille 2–1 in a game that turned on a red card in first-half stoppage time.

Igor Paixão's stunner put Marseille ahead, but Emerson Palmieri was dismissed for a second yellow for diving after a penalty decision in his favour was overturned.

Sporting used the extra man to equalise in the second half through Geny Catamo before Alisson Santos struck the winner.

Nigeria star Victor Osimhen netted twice as Galatasaray beat Bodo/Glimt 3–1 in Istanbul, with Yunus Akgün scoring their other goal before Andreas Helmersen pulled one back.

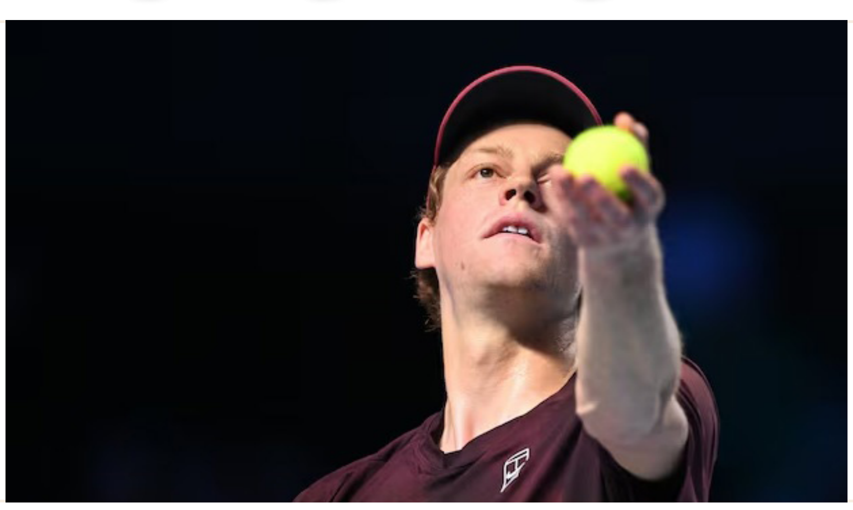
Sinner Takes Speedy Victory at Erste Bank Open

LONDON (Dispatches) - Second-ranked Jannik Sinner overwhelmed his first opponent at the Erste Bank Open at Vienna, Austria, defeating German Daniel Altmaier 6-0, 6-2 in just 58 minutes.

The Italian, seeded first, extended his indoor-hard-court winning streak to 17 matches by scoring five aces and 18 winners, avoiding having to face a single break point.

Sinner will face fellow Italian Flavio Cobolli in the next round, as ATP's No. 22 defeated Czech Republic's Tomas Machac 7-6 (6), 6-2. And the Italians made it 3-for-3 at the event, as Matteo Berrettini downed Australia's Alexei Popyrin 7-6 (5), 6-3.

Other Wednesday winners included France's Corentin Moutet, Aniil Medvedev, Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor and Australia's Alex De Minaur.



Top-seeded Taylor Fritz fended off upstart Valentin Vacherot to win 4-6, 7-6 (4), 7-5 in Basel, Switzerland.

The world's No. 4 proved too resilient for Vacherot, who vaulted up to No. 39 in the ATP rankings following his victory at the ATP Masters 1000 Shanghai last month. The product of Monaco controlled the net, taking 15 of 18 net points (83%), but Fritz used 21 aces to complete his comeback.

Fritz will next square off against France's Ugo Humbert, a 6-3, 6-4 winner over Sebastian Korda. Other winners included Netherlands' Botic Van De Zandschulp, Norway's Casper Ruud, Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime and Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. Jakub Mensik-Joao Fonseca was a walkover.

Forest Rediscover Fight With Porto Win

LONDON (Dispatches) - Sean Dyche got off to a winning start as Nottingham Forest boss thanks to two penalties to beat Porto 2-0 in the Europa League, while Aston Villa were stunned 2-1 by Go Ahead Eagles on Thursday.

Forest, who sacked Ange Postecoglou after just 40 days and eight games in charge on Saturday, had not won in 10 games stretching back to the opening weekend of the Premier League season.

But Dyche, who began his playing career at the two-time European champions, roused an immediate impact, even if Forest needed some fortune from VAR interventions to get the better of the Portuguese giants.

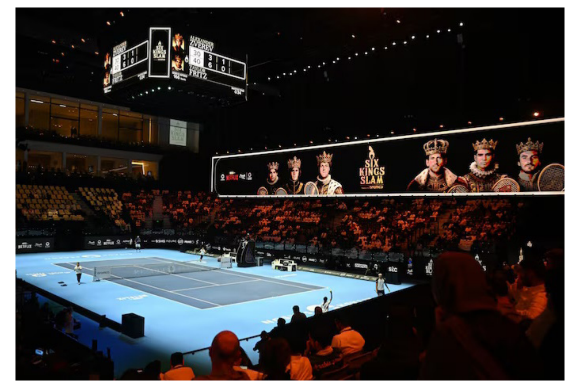
Morgan Gibbs-White fired in from the spot on 19 minutes after Jan Bednarek had been penalised for handball.

Former Southampton defender Bednarek thought he had equalised early in the second half, only for the goal to be ruled out after a VAR review for offside against Samu Aghehowa.

The video assistant referee also came to the home side's aid when Nicola Savona was initially booked for diving, only for that decision to be overturned and a second penalty awarded 13 minutes from time.

Igor Jesus this time slammed home for his first Forest goal at the City Ground.

Saudi Arabia's PIF to Launch New ATP Masters 1000 Tournament



PARIS (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund will launch a new ATP Masters 1000 tournament in the Kingdom from 2028, marking the first expansion of the elite category in its 35-year history, the ATP and PIF-owned SURJ Sports Investment said on Thursday.

The new event will make Saudi Arabia the 10th Masters 1000 host, joining Indian Wells, Miami, Monte-Carlo, Madrid, Rome, Toronto/Montreal, Cincinnati, Shanghai and Paris.

ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi called the announcement "a proud moment that has been years in the making," saying Saudi Arabia had "shown a genuine commitment to tennis — not just at the professional level, but also in growing the game more broadly."

The event will be owned and operated in Saudi Arabia, staged over one week with a 56-player draw on outdoor hard courts, and will not be mandatory for players.

SURJ Sports CEO Danny Townsend said they were working with the ATP to create "a world-class stadium and the infrastructure to deliver the tournament," with an announcement expected in months.

"We've got a couple of years to work that through, and we've got a bunch of different options around both the Giga-Projects (large-scale, multi-billion dollar initiatives) that PIF have around the country, but also other facilities," Townsend said.

"I'd say, we're a couple of months away from a pretty exciting announcement on that. I think it's more like three options. So Riyadh, being the centre of the business community and sports community in Saudi is likely to be the place. But we've still got work to do on that."

Townsend stressed the new Masters would not replace the Six Kings Slam, a PIF-backed exhibition featuring six top male players.

Hamilton Hopes Ferrari Can Recapture Mexico Magic

MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton hopes Ferrari can repeat last year's Mexican Grand Prix triumph this weekend but teammate Charles Leclerc sounded a more pessimistic note on Thursday, saying a victory looks out of reach without "strange things happening".

Carlos Sainz, who is now driving for Williams, delivered Ferrari's last victory 12 months ago in Mexico, with the team now on a 23-race winless streak.

"I think we were very strong here last year. So I'm hoping that we can take the learnings that they had last year and apply them this weekend," Hamilton, who has yet to stand on the podium since joining the Italian team in January, told reporters.

The seven-times world champion faces the additional challenge of missing the first practice session, with endurance racer Antonio Fuoco taking the seat to gain Formula One experience.

"I'm missing P1, so this weekend I need to learn to run straight away pretty much," he added.

Leclerc struck a more downbeat tone about Ferrari's immediate prospects.

"At the moment it doesn't seem very likely that we are going to fight for the win this weekend but never say never," he said.

"Last year obviously was a very positive weekend for the team. Carlos was actually very strong the whole weekend and it was difficult for me to get close.

"I hope we can reproduce that, but I feel like we are further away compared to last year," added Leclerc, who is fifth in the drivers' championship and has been on the podium six times this season.

"So until the end of the season, I think it's going to be very tough to win races in a normal race without any strange things happening."