

The Iranian Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Esmaeel Baqaei Condemned the Israeli Regime's Military Attack on the Peacekeepers of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

IRAN NEWS

The U.S. Has Imposed New Sanctions on Iran's Oil and Petrochemicals Sectors in Reaction to the Islamic Republic's Recent Retaliatory Missile Attacks Against Israeli Targets

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Araghchi Warns U.S.-Backed Israel of More Forceful Response to Any Action



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says Tehran will definitely give a stronger and more forceful response to any act by the Israeli regime against the country.

He made the remark in an interview with Italy's TG3 state-owned TV channel on Friday when asked whether the US has given a green light to Israel to respond to Iran's October 1 missile strike against the regime - dubbed Operation True Promise II - and whether Iran would retaliate against a possible Israeli response.

"This is not something new and the Israelis have always had their [the US] green light. For every action, there is a reaction. This is a law of physics," Araqchi said.

Iran launched hundreds of missiles towards the Israeli entity's military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1 as part of Operation True Promise II.

The operation came in response to the regime's assassinations of Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Secretary General of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Brigadier General Abbas Nilforushan, Deputy Commander of Operations of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC).

Elsewhere in his interview, Araqchi said Operation al-Aqsa Storm, which was launched on October 7, 2023 against Israel in response to its intensified atrocities against Palestinians, did not happen in a vacuum but there was an 80-year story behind it.

"It was said that 1,200 people were killed in Israel during the operation but does this issue give them the right to kill 42,000 people [in Gaza]?" the top Iranian diplomat questioned.

He once again emphasized that Iran did nothing leading to the escalation of tension in the region, adding, "We are not afraid of war, but we do not want it either."

Araqchi slammed European countries' approach to Israeli crimes and urged them to play a "more active role" to end the tensions in the region.

The Iranian foreign minister dismissed Europe's claim that it lacks the tools necessary to rein in Israel.

BRICS Member Countries Welcome Iran's Proposal on Non-Communicable Diseases



TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education announced that BRICS member countries have welcomed Iran's proposal in the field of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Iran suggested during this meeting that the focus of countries' programs on NCDs should shift from adults to children.

Alireza Raisi, who traveled to Russia to attend the 14th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting, explained that most current global protocols on NCDs focus on adult care and treatment. He pointed out that due to lifestyle changes worldwide and the rise of issues such as obesity, inactivity, decreasing age of diabetes onset, video gaming, sleep disorders, urban living, and air pollution, children's health is increasingly at risk. Preventative care programs should start from early ages and be implemented in schools.

The Deputy Minister of Health stated that this proposal was well-received by BRICS members, particularly Russia, India, China, and the WHO representative. It was decided that Iran will present a formal proposal at the next BRICS meeting in Brazil, where it will be discussed as a primary topic.

Raisi also noted that Iran has a memorandum of understanding with Russia regarding scientific exchanges in prevention, treatment, and pharmaceuticals. In a meeting with the Russian Health Minister and Deputy Minister, both sides welcomed the implementation of these agreements. Tuberculosis is a significant concern in Russia, and Iran's experience in this area could be beneficial for scientific and practical exchanges.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Gov't to Embrace Ideas Free from Political Bias

TEHRAN - The President of Iran has called for a non-partisan approach to solving the nation's challenges, emphasizing that the government will embrace correct ideas regardless of their political affiliations. In a significant speech delivered at the opening of the academic year at Tehran University, Masoud Pezeshkian underscored the crucial role of universities in advancing Iran's scientific, artistic, and technological capabilities.

Speaking to a large audience of students and academics, Pezeshkian conveyed his vision for the future, placing universities at the center of national progress. "Our hope for the future of this country lies in its universities and academic community," he said. He noted that while other sectors, such as industry, also contribute to the nation's development, it is the responsibility of universities to ensure that Iran becomes a leader in science and technology.

Pezeshkian encouraged the university community to focus their efforts on solving the pressing issues the country faces, emphasizing that creative minds and dedicated individuals hold the key to realizing Iran's potential. "Those who possess skills, knowledge, and motivation are crucial to bringing dignity to our country," he said, adding that the Supreme Leader's vision of Iran as a leading nation in the region depends heavily on the contributions of academics and scientists.

During his address, Pezeshkian expressed frustration over Iran's current standing in comparison to other countries, noting the rapid advancements made by foreign nations. "As an Iranian, it pains me to see the progress being made elsewhere while we lag behind. We cannot afford to remain in this position," he said. His remarks highlighted the urgency for Iran to catch up with global trends in science and technology.

The President stressed the importance of unity and collaboration across all sectors, urging that good ideas should be embraced regardless of their political source. "If a group or faction presents a correct idea, we are obligated to accept it, no matter its political origin. Hell is for those who reject right ideas because of their source," he said, adding that the nation's progress should not be stifled by political bias.

Pezeshkian reiterated that sound ideas must be rooted in scientific evidence, not political

motivations. "Decisions based on facts should not lead to conflict," he asserted, suggesting that rational, evidence-based policymaking is the way forward for Iran. His comments appeared to be aimed at promoting a more pragmatic and less ideologically-driven approach to governance, particularly in the face of pressing economic and social challenges.

Acknowledging the financial difficulties currently facing universities, Pezeshkian called for stronger cooperation between academic institutions and industries to help tackle the country's problems. He urged universities to adopt more practical approaches to education and research, citing the example of third and fourth-generation universities that prioritize hands-on experience alongside theoretical learning.

"We must integrate theory with practice, and universities should be at the forefront of this effort," Pezeshkian said, signaling a shift toward a more applied approach to higher education in Iran. He stressed that academia must align itself more closely with the needs of society and industry in order to remain relevant and effective in solving the country's challenges.

In closing, the President reaffirmed the government's commitment to achieving the Supreme Leader's vision of dignity and prosperity for Iran. He also called for accountability from those who work against these goals, implying that both individuals and institutions would be held responsible if they fail to contribute positively to national progress.

Pezeshkian took the opportunity to praise Iran's scholars and professors as invaluable assets to the nation, promising that their efforts and contributions would not go unnoticed. "Your work will be recognized and respected," he said, emphasizing that the government values the contributions of the academic community and will continue to support its role in shaping the future of the country.

As Iran looks to bolster its position in the global scientific and technological landscape, Pezeshkian's remarks highlight the essential role universities must play in driving innovation, fostering unity, and overcoming the political and economic hurdles that stand in the way of national progress.

Iran-Tajikistan Trade More Than Doubled in Three Years

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has said that trade exchanges between Iran and Tajikistan have more than doubled over the past three years.

Speaking at a press conference upon returning from his two-day visit to Dushanbe, the Iranian speaker said that he had had cultural and social discussions with top-ranking Tajik officials.

He stressed that talks over economic and industrial cooperation had topped the agenda of his talks in Dushanbe, adding that in a meeting with the Tajik president, he had discussed reducing tariffs on inbound goods from each other's countries. Qalibaf said that the issue of reduced tariffs is to be pursued in a joint commission of the two countries.

He added that he has also had discussions with Tajik officials over main regional security issues, including restoration of stability and security in Afghanistan, as well as fight against drug trafficking and arms smuggling.

Writing on his official X account earlier in the day, Qalibaf had said that in his meeting with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, he had presented him a copy of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as well as a collection of the classifications of Iranian music recently unveiled by Hossein Alizadeh, an Iranian musician and composer.

Earlier, Qalibaf said the Israeli assassinations of senior resistance figures and its crimes across West Asia will not help the regime cover up its failures.

Qalibaf made the remarks at an international conference marking the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the constitution of Tajikistan in the capital city of Dushanbe on Friday. "The Zionist regime must know that it can't compensate for its strategic failures with airstrikes and assassination operations," Qalibaf said, stressing that those crimes are,



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instead, accelerating the pace of the regime's destruction.

Qalibaf noted that the crimes and acts of terrorism committed by Israel over the past year are "a clear sign of the regime's inability to confront the Palestinian and Lebanese nations."

Calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon, Qalibaf stressed that speakers of parliaments around the world "have a duty" to react to Israel's brutal killing of women and children and support their call for freedom and justice.

The remarks come amid Israeli aggression on Lebanon that began a few weeks ago. The Israeli attacks on Beirut and other regions have

claimed the lives of more than 2,000 Lebanese people.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf referred to the common history and culture between Iran and Tajikistan, expressing Tehran's readiness to strengthen ties with Dushanbe.

He stressed that the expanded ties will not only serve the interests of the two nations, but they will also contribute to the region's stability and prosperity.

During his speech, Qalibaf also introduced a proposal for a convergence agreement between the regional countries' parliaments.

Referring to unilateralism and the violation of the political sovereignty of regions, terrorism, extremism and climate change, Qalibaf said bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation, "and in one word, effective collective action" is required to confront those challenges and threats that the region and the world currently face.

He noted that the signing of "the Parliamentary convergence agreement for peace and sustainable development" by the parliaments of the regional countries will pave the way for negotiations aimed at resolving misunderstandings and advancing dialogue.

Iran Condemns Israeli Attack on Iranian Red Crescent Facility as "War Crime"



TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Iravani, has condemned an Israeli airstrike on the Iranian Red Crescent's humanitarian aid facility near the Syrian-Lebanese border. The facility, completely destroyed in the airstrike, housed critical supplies such as hospital beds, medical equipment, food, and water intended to aid displaced Lebanese civilians.

Iravani emphasized that attacking humanitarian and medical centers is a direct violation of international humanitarian law, urging the UN Security Council to condemn the act and hold Israel accountable. Iran also called for immediate action to prevent further aggression against civilians and relief workers in the region.

The Iranian Red Crescent had informed the International Committee of the Red Cross of the facility's humanitarian role prior to the attack, underscoring its non-military function. Despite this, the facility was targeted, sparking outrage from Tehran.

Earlier, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi strongly condemned Israel's attack on a charity hospital on the Syria-Lebanon border, calling it "a war crime."

"The attack by the Zionist regime on the 56-bed field hospital of the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Syria along with its medicine warehouse on October 9, 2024, and setting it on fire, while creating a serious obstacle to the provision of humanitarian services, is considered a war crime," Gharibabadi said.

"It is also considered a violation of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the customary international humanitarian rules, which absolutely prohibit any attack on civilian places and centers, especially medical centers and hospitals," he stated.

Strategic Role of Iran-Russia Gas Network Connection in Regional and Global Energy Supply



TEHRAN - The CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company described the connection between the gas networks of Iran and Russia as strategic in the supply of regional and global energy. He stated that Iran's position at the center of the North-South energy corridor is unique.

Saeed Torkli, who participated via videoconference in the 13th St. Petersburg International Gas Forum, emphasized Iran's significant role in meeting energy demands, with a daily production capacity of over one billion cubic meters of gas and an extensive network for distribution and export.

Elaborating on Iran's role as one of the key energy suppliers globally, Torkli noted that Iran is the sole supplier of imported gas to Iraq and one of the main suppliers to Turkey. He expressed plans to expand gas exports and trade with both countries.

The Deputy Oil Minister for Gas Affairs highlighted that Russia and Iran, as the first and second holders of the world's largest gas reserves, can play an important role in supplying clean energy to the region and the world by working together and shaping appropriate international policies in this field.

Torkli mentioned that one of the successful examples of such cooperation was the establishment of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), which was formed through the joint efforts of Iran and Russia, along with the participation of other gas-exporting nations. He expressed hope that this organization would have a more influential role in the gas market in the future, maximizing the benefits for gas-exporting countries.

He stressed Iran's unique position at the center of the North-South energy corridor, viewing it as an opportunity for cooperation with other countries, including Russia, to supply gas through multilateral agreements, swaps, and transit to other nations.

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Body of Martyr General Nilforushan Found

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The public relations of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced the discovery of the body of martyr General Abbas Nilforushan, who was martyred in the Zionist terrorist attack on the outskirts of Beirut.

"With thanks and gratitude to the One and Only God, it brings to the attention of the noble and heroic nation of Iran that with the day-to-day efforts of the search group for the bodies of the martyrs of the brutal and bloodthirsty Zionist regime in the suburbs of Beirut, the body of Major General Abbas Nilforushan, the superior military adviser of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was martyred along with the leader of the resistance, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah of Lebanon, has been discovered," the IRGC said.

On Friday evening, the Zionist regime's planes bombed the residential areas of "Hare Harik" neighborhood in the suburbs of Beirut.

Outstanding and Influential Managers Recognized at National Event in Tehran



TEHRAN - The inaugural National Recognition Event took place with the attendance of key figures from international and national organizations, including the Secretary of the World Assembly of Islamic Cities, the Secretary of the World Assembly of Silk Road Cities, the President of the Eurasia Chamber of Commerce, and the Senior Advisor of the Parliamentary Research Center. The event gathered entrepreneurs, industrialists, economic leaders, managers, and international officials, and concluded with a ceremony that celebrated 20 outstanding managers and entrepreneurs.

Among those honored was Majid Talimi, recognized for his over two decades of contribution to international public relations, communications, and media. Talimi received the title of exemplary manager for his service and achievements in these fields.

Speaking at the event, Majid Talimi, who also serves as the event's secretary, emphasized that the purpose of the National Recognition Event was to spotlight young and influential managers, entrepreneurs, and consultants who have a tangible impact on the lives of people across the country. Out of 210 participants representing industries such as knowledge-based sectors, culture, commerce, law, and emerging technologies, 20 individuals and organizations were awarded plaques and medals of honor as exemplary and influential managers and entrepreneurs.

A representative from the World Assembly of Islamic Cities highlighted the significance of identifying and celebrating influential figures who can transfer their expertise and knowledge to the wider community, which aligns with the mentor-mentee approach. This, the representative added, is a key step toward achieving the nation's sustainable development goals.



Iranian Goods Reach Bangladesh Via Third Countries

TEHRAN - The longstanding trade relations between Iran and Bangladesh have been impacted by indirect export routes, as most Iranian goods destined for the Bangladeshi market are funneled through intermediary countries. This was highlighted in a recent meeting between representatives of the Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, and Bangladesh's ambassador to Iran, Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury. Despite the historic economic ties between the two nations, the meeting underscored several challenges hampering direct trade and called for initiatives to improve economic cooperation.

During the meeting, Mohammad Reza Tavakkoli Zadeh, head of the Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the positive trade relationship between Iran and Bangladesh and noted that there was significant potential to further develop these ties. He pointed to cultural similarities as a key factor in fostering stronger economic cooperation between the two countries. However, Tavakkoli Zadeh expressed concern that despite this potential, trade relations between Iran's Khorasan Razavi province and Bangladesh have not reached the desired depth.

"There is a real need to raise awareness about each other's economic capacities," Tavakkoli Zadeh said. He called for more direct engagement between Iranian and Bangladeshi traders, particularly highlighting the unique products of Khorasan Razavi such as saffron and dried fruits, which already have a presence in Bangladeshi markets. By improving mutual knowledge of market conditions and opportunities, Tavakkoli Zadeh believes that both countries can unlock greater trade potential.

One of the major issues highlighted by Tavakkoli Zadeh is the indirect route through which Iranian goods enter the Bangladeshi market. Currently, Iranian exports such as bitumen and food products are primarily reaching Bangladesh via third-party countries like Turkey, Dubai, and India. This practice increases costs and complicates the supply chain, thereby limiting the potential for direct trade growth.

Bangladesh Ambassador Chowdhury confirmed these challenges, stating that while there is substantial interest in Iranian goods among Bangladeshi traders, direct trade relations remain stymied by financial and logistical barriers. One of the most significant obstacles, according to Tavakkoli Zadeh, is the difficulty in transferring money between the two countries due to banking sanctions and other financial restrictions. He expressed optimism, however, that if these hurdles were addressed, bilateral trade could grow considerably.

Chowdhury echoed this sentiment, stressing that financial transactions are crucial for expanding trade. "If we can overcome these financial obstacles, trade between Iran and Bangladesh will naturally increase," he said. Both Iranian and Bangladeshi officials emphasized the importance of sending

and receiving trade delegations to strengthen mutual understanding and open new avenues for commercial interactions. Tavakkoli Zadeh proposed the idea of hosting a Bangladeshi trade delegation in Khorasan Razavi, while also organizing a delegation from the province to visit Bangladesh in the near future.

Bangladesh Ambassador supported this initiative, stating that trade delegations could help bridge the gap in commercial awareness between the two countries. He highlighted the importance of introducing Bangladeshi traders to Iranian markets, which could serve as a viable alternative to existing trade routes that rely on intermediaries. According to Chowdhury, Bangladesh, with its population of 170 million and growing middle class, presents an attractive market for Iranian goods, especially those that offer competitive pricing and high quality.

Adding to the conversation, Julia Moeen, Commercial Attaché of the Bangladeshi Embassy in Tehran, invited Iranian companies to participate in the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) 2024. Scheduled to be held from January 1 to February 1, 2024, the fair is one of Bangladesh's largest trade exhibitions, drawing participants and visitors from around the world. Moeen stressed the importance of Iranian traders attending such events to foster direct trade relationships and increase visibility for Iranian products in the Bangladeshi market.

"The Dhaka International Trade Fair is a prime opportunity for Iranian companies to showcase their products and establish direct commercial links with Bangladeshi buyers," Moeen said. She urged relevant Iranian institutions to encourage participation in the exhibition, emphasizing that this could be a key step toward overcoming existing trade barriers.

Both countries are keen to enhance their economic relationship, but the road to closer cooperation requires tackling existing obstacles, especially those related to financial transactions and indirect trade routes. Increased communication, direct engagement through trade delegations, and participation in international trade fairs are seen as vital steps toward improving trade relations.

While Iran is a major supplier of goods like bitumen to Bangladesh, removing the reliance on third countries for exports would significantly lower costs and allow for more direct economic benefits for both nations. The commercial ties between Iran and Bangladesh remain strong, but with targeted efforts to remove barriers and improve mutual awareness, these relations can grow even stronger in the coming years.

With a combined focus on improving financial systems and fostering direct trade channels, officials from both sides are optimistic that these efforts will lead to a new chapter in economic cooperation between Iran and Bangladesh.

Pakistan Determined to Strengthen Trade Relations With Iran



TEHRAN - Mr. Mudassar Tipu, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran said that the two brother countries should leverage the full potential of their neighborhood to further deepen trade ties. He made these remarks while addressing representatives of prominent Iranian companies engaged in business with Pakistan during a dinner hosted by him at Pakistan House.

Ambassador Tipu further emphasized that both nations should build on their strong cultural and historical ties to create mutually beneficial economic partnerships and further enhance trade and cooperation.

The dinner was attended by leading figures from Iran's business community, including: - Mr. Karim Akhavan Akbari, President, Rice Importers Association of Iran; Mr. Saber Khalafi, Limak Export; Mr. Saleh Adibzadeh, Chairman, Tohfeh Foods; Dr. Hamidreza Habibi, Shana Food; Mr. Abbas Naseri, CEO, Halvayeh Oghab; Mr. Amirhossein Naseri, Halvayeh Oghab; Mr. Sharifi, Milad Group and Mr. Asghar Taghipour, CEO, Worldcotton.

The gathering focused on fostering increased collaboration between Pakistani and Iranian businesses, highlighting the shared potential for growth in sectors such as food, agriculture, and textiles.

The respected guests thanked Ambassador and assured of their support to strengthen the ties.

15% Growth in Iran's Exports to Turkmenistan



TEHRAN - The spokesperson for the Commission on International Relations and Trade Development of the Iran Chamber of Industry, Mine, and Trade announced that in the first half of this year, over 702,000 tons of non-oil goods valued at \$239,879,286 were exported from Iran to Turkmenistan. This represents a 12.1% increase in volume and a 14.6% increase in value compared to the first six months of the previous year.

Seyed Rouhollah Latifi stated on Thursday, ahead of the president's visit to Turkmenistan, that in 2023, more than 1,359,000 tons of non-oil goods valued at \$445,170,186 were exported from Iran to Turkmenistan. Of this, 228,000 tons, valued at \$117 million, were dairy, agricultural, and food products.

He added that in addition to agricultural and food products, Iran exported pharmaceuticals, household appliances, construction materials, electrical goods, industrial equipment, plastics, consumer goods, and machinery to Turkmenistan.

Latifi also mentioned that in 2023, over 38,000 tons of goods valued at \$38,657,446 were imported from Turkmenistan into Iran. Based on customs data, in the first half of this year, Iran imported 10,000 tons of goods valued at \$12,285,006, with the majority being textiles, fabrics, and yarn.

According to the spokesperson, in 2023, approximately \$3.5 billion worth of goods were sold to Turkmenistan from around the world, with Iran's exports amounting to \$445 million, capturing around 12.5% of Turkmenistan's market share.

Meanwhile the deputies of the railways of Iran and Turkmenistan agreed to increase the exchange of trains at the Sarakhs rail border to 400 wagons per day.

According to the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran, following previous virtual meetings and a border session in Sarakhs, Iran, between the representatives of the railways of Iran and Turkmenistan, the deputies of the two countries' railways held a virtual and online meeting on Monday morning (October 7). The purpose of this meeting was to organize train movements, expedite, and increase the exchange of trains through the Sarakhs rail border.

In the meeting, Mohammad Hadi Ziaei Mehr, Deputy of Commerce and Operations of the Railway Company, referred to the increase in cargo transportation with Turkmenistan during the current year and proposed increasing the exchange of trains to 400 wagons per day, which Turkmenistan accepted.

Iran Proposes Cross-Border Payment Platform for BRICS



TEHRAN - At a recent BRICS summit, Mohammad Reza Farzin, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, emphasized the necessity for the BRICS nations to create a platform to streamline cross-border payments among member states.

Farzin, representing Iran, a newly inducted member of BRICS, highlighted the role artificial intelligence (AI) can play in enhancing electronic banking, and expressed Iran's readiness to share its experiences with the BRICS bloc.

He underscored that, with the political will present in the group, combined with technical investments, BRICS could pave the way for an independent financial communication system that could facilitate cross-border transactions, reduce costs, and create a more competitive international financial environment.

Farzin's remarks also touched upon the economic resilience of BRICS countries amid high geopolitical and geo-economic challenges, including sanctions and protectionism. Despite these hurdles, he noted that BRICS nations, including Iran, have demonstrated notable GDP growth.

Iran, which joined BRICS in 2023-2024, has achieved significant economic growth despite limitations, Farzin stated. This growth reflects broader trends within BRICS, where member nations have outpaced the economic growth of developed countries.

Farzin emphasized that this resilience is even more remarkable considering the high geopolitical tensions and risks posed by fragmentation in the global economic landscape, including rising protectionism and interest rates.

He positioned Iran's recent growth as evidence of BRICS' capacity

to prosper despite adverse external conditions, highlighting the bloc's collective potential to serve as a counterbalance to developed economies and their influence over global financial systems.

Farzin also called for reforms in the global economic and financial governance structures, noting that the current system, established under the Bretton Woods Agreement, is dominated by Western political interests, particularly those of the United States. He pointed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as an institution that lacks sufficient lending capacity and is unable to adequately respond to global financial crises.

Acknowledging the leadership of Russia's Central Bank in 2024, Farzin praised the efforts of BRICS nations to assess the shortcomings of the existing global financial system. He emphasized the importance of these countries working together to create a more inclusive, credible, and accountable financial framework that reflects the interests of developing nations.

Farzin further stressed that reforming global financial governance is essential to give developing countries a greater voice and influence, ensuring that the economic system serves a wider range of stakeholders and is more equitable.

A major theme of Farzin's address was the urgency of establishing a platform specifically designed for settling cross-border payments among BRICS members. He proposed the development of a system, tentatively called the BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (CBCPI), which could leverage Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) systems or Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) of BRICS members.

20m Liters of Diesel Smuggled Daily



TEHRAN - The head of the Economic Security Police of FARAJA announced that the amount of fuel smuggling discovered in the country indicates that about 20 million liters of diesel are smuggled daily. Even one million liters is considered a very large amount for us, and through special plans, we are fighting against off-network fuel distribution and identifying smuggling chokepoints.

During a meeting with Keramat Veys-Karami, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, General Hossein Rahimi rejected some figures reported in the media regarding the amount of gasoline smuggling in the country. He stated that these figures are not accurate at all, and given the increasing number of domestic vehicles, most of the gasoline produced in the country is consumed by local vehicles.

In this meeting, while expressing appreciation for the efforts of the oil industry managers, especially the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, for their extensive cooperation in combating fuel smuggling, General Rahimi emphasized that the organization is fully prepared to use all its capacities to cooperate with various governmental sectors in the fight against off-network fuel distribution.

Keramat Veys-Karami, during the meeting aimed at establishing broad cooperation and synergizing the capabilities of both parties in fighting fuel smuggling, praised the Economic Security Police for their efforts in identifying smuggling chokepoints and combating off-network fuel distribution across the country.

He appreciated the extensive cooperation of the FARAJA Economic Security Police in fighting the widespread smuggling of fuel during the challenging days of fuel consumption imbalances. He stressed that serious efforts to combat fuel smuggling require collaboration from all executive and security bodies of the country, and in this regard, the newly established Economic Security Police has always been a strong supporter and ally of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company.

Veys-Karami further mentioned the effective role and efforts of the Economic Security Police in discovering smuggled fuel shipments and fighting off-network fuel distribution. He highlighted that in just five years since its establishment, the Economic Security Police has made valuable contributions toward preventing fuel loss, which is considered a national asset.

The managing director also noted that fuel smuggling, beyond its harmful economic consequences, clearly violates the rights of the people, undermines national interests, and diminishes the tireless efforts of the oil industry workers in the country's fuel supply and distribution chain. He expressed his appreciation to the Economic Security Police for maintaining order and security in the national economy by scientifically detecting economic crimes, identifying fuel smuggling chokepoints, and ensuring the supply and distribution of oil products.

Boeing to Cut 10% of Workforce as It Sees Big Q3 Loss

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Boeing announced Friday that it plans to cut 10 percent of its workforce as it projected a large third-quarter loss in the wake of a machinist strike in the Seattle region.

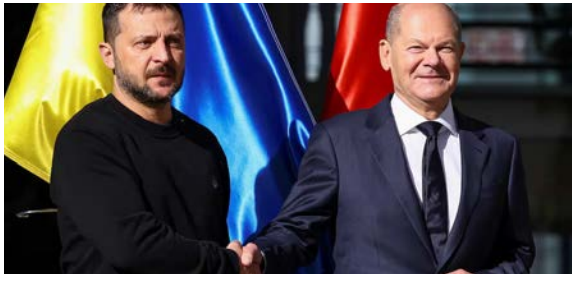
The aviation giant must "reset our workforce levels to align with our financial reality," Chief Executive Kelly Ortberg said, adding that the cuts of 17,000 positions globally "will include executives, managers and employees."

The company announced a series of belt-tightening measures and production delays in the wake of the nearly month-long strike of 33,000 workers that has added to the company's litany of problems.

Boeing staff with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers walked off the job on September 13 after overwhelmingly rejecting a contract offer. Boeing said the strike contributed to \$3 billion in pre-tax charges to its commercial aviation results in the third quarter, part of an anticipated loss of \$9.97 per share.



Scholz Announces More Military Aid as Zelenskiy Visits Berlin



BERLIN (Dispatches) - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Friday announced a 1.4 billion euro (\$1.53 billion) military aid package for Ukraine by the end of 2024, telling President Volodymyr Zelenskiy that it was a signal to Russia that the West would not stop supporting Kyiv.

The aid will be given jointly with partner countries Belgium, Denmark and Norway and includes more air defence, tanks, combat drones and artillery.

"It is a clear message to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin - playing for time will not work. We will not let up in our support for Ukraine," Scholz said.

Zelenskiy has been meeting allies in Europe this week to present a "victory plan" to end the war while also pressing to use long-range weapons that can strike deeper into Russian territory.

The details of his plan have not been divulged publicly. A U.S. official has previously described it as a repackaged request for more weapons and a lifting of restrictions on the use of long-range missiles.

A European diplomatic source also said that there appeared to be nothing especially new in the victory plan.

It centred around giving Ukraine quick access to NATO and a substantive increase in weapons supplies, including long-range missiles that could hit targets across the border so that Moscow would be more willing to enter peace talks.

"It is crucial for us that assistance does not decrease next year," Zelenskiy said alongside Scholz at the chancellery in Berlin. The two men are meeting for the fourth time this year, and Zelenskiy called it one of the most important meetings since the war began.

"Today I will present Olaf with a plan how, in our opinion, to force Russia to peace, that is, how to end this war - preferably no later than next year. And guarantee non-recurrence of aggression."

Zelenskiy's trip has been stymied by the cancellation of a major summit of allied leaders in Ramstein, Germany planned for this month after U.S. President Joe Biden postponed his visit to focus on Hurricane Milton.

Western Leaders Urge Israel to Stop Harming UN Peacekeepers in Lebanon

PARIS (Dispatches) - Western leaders urged Israel Friday to stop harming UN peacekeepers in Lebanon after explosions wounded two of them near the country's border.

The Israeli military (IDF) said its forces on Friday fired at a threat near a UN peacekeeping mission position.

A spokeswoman for the UNIFIL mission said two Sri Lankan peacekeepers were hurt in the second such incident in two days. U.S. President Joe Biden told reporters he was "absolutely, positively" asking Israel to stop firing at UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.

France's President Emmanuel Macron said it was "absolutely unacceptable" that peacekeepers were "deliberately targeted". The foreign ministry summoned the Israeli ambassador, saying the incident constituted "serious violations of international law and must cease immediately".

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned the firing, which she said violated a UN resolution, as "unacceptable". Italy has more than 1,000 troops in Lebanon.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez demanded an "end to all violence" against UN peacekeepers in Lebanon. He called Friday's incident "absolutely unacceptable".

Ireland's foreign minister Micheal Martin called it a "shocking" and "unacceptable" development and "a very serious intensification of IDF hostility towards UN forces". Ireland has about 350 soldiers in UNIFIL.

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Meanwhile leaders of nine European Union member states in the Mediterranean on Friday called for an immediate ceasefire after a sharp escalation in conflict between Israel and forces of Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"Amid the backdrop of the conflict in Gaza in the broader region, we express our deep concern at the escalation of a military confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah," a statement from EU leaders attending a summit, known as MED9, read after meeting in Cyprus.

"We seek an immediate ceasefire throughout the Blue Line and the timely dispatch of humanitarian aid to Lebanon," leaders including France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal said in a joint statement, referring to a U.N. mapped demarcation line separating Lebanon from Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah erupted one year ago when the Iranian-backed group began launching rockets at northern Israel in support of the Palestinian militant group Hamas at the start of the Gaza war, which followed a bloody rampage by Hamas through communities in southern Israel that killed 1,200 people in a matter of hours.

The conflict has intensified in recent weeks, with Israel bombing southern Lebanon, Beirut's southern suburbs and the Bekaa Valley, killing many of Hezbollah's top leaders, and sending ground troops into areas of southern Lebanon. Hezbollah for its part has fired rockets deeper into Israel.

Chinese PM Hopes Tokyo, Beijing Keep Relations on Right Track



BEIJING (Dispatches) - Chinese Premier Li Qiang said he hopes Japan can meet China halfway and keep bilateral relations on the right track, state media reported, as the two countries try to ease escalating tensions in the region.

In talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on the sidelines of a conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Li also said he hoped China and Japan can continuously strengthen dialogue and cooperation, according to the official Xinhua news agency on Friday.

Li noted that the two countries should jointly safeguard the stability and smooth flow of industrial and supply chains and the global free trade system.

Li made the comments after the leaders' meetings on East Asia cooperation held in Vientiane, Laos, Xinhua news reported.

Ishiba said that Japan has no intention of decoupling or severing industrial and supply chains with China, and that his country is willing to work with the world's second-largest economy to strengthen high-level exchanges, intensify dialogue and communication at all levels, Xinhua reported.

Ishiba, who became Japan's new prime minister late last month, also said his country wants to resolve pending issues through consultation, and firm up talks with China on international and regional issues.

Trump Ratchets Up Rhetoric, Calls for Death Penalty for Migrants Who Kill Americans

AURORA (Dispatches) - Donald Trump portrayed migrants as dangerous criminals during a rally in Aurora, Colorado, on Friday, calling for the death penalty for migrants who kill U.S. citizens as he escalates the anti-immigration rhetoric that has fueled his presidential run.

Flanked by posters of alleged members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, Trump also said that if elected he would launch a national "Operation Aurora" to target the gang members.

Trump, the Republican presidential candidate, has noticeably hardened his anti-immigration rhetoric in the final weeks of the Nov. 5 election campaign, where he aims to defeat Democratic candidate Kamala Harris. Illegal immigration is a top voter concern, and Trump is seen by most voters as the person best able to address it, opinion polls show.

"I'm hereby calling for the death penalty for any migrant that kills an American citizen or a law enforcement officer," Trump said to loud cheers from a large crowd of supporters.

Trump has already proposed an expansion of the death penalty for other offenders, including people convicted of sex trafficking women and children.

Nearly half of U.S. states ban the death penalty. While there is a federal death penalty, it is rarely used, according to the Death Penalty Information Center, a non-profit group. An expansion of eligible crimes would require an act of the U.S. Congress.

One of the hallmarks of Trump's third presidential run has been his focus on what he calls "migrant crime", even though academic studies show immigrants do not commit crimes at a higher rate than native-born Americans.

The Harris campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment related to the death penalty proposal.

Vice President Harris toughened her stance on border security after becoming the Democratic nominee in August, and faults Trump for helping stifle a bipartisan border security bill in Congress earlier this year.

During a Sept. 10 presidential debate with Harris, Trump claimed that members of Tren de Aragua controlled several dilapidated Aurora apartment complexes - allegations refuted by top city officials.



At the rally on Friday, he reiterated a pledge to focus enforcement on Aurora if reelected.

"I will rescue Aurora and every town that has been invaded and conquered," Trump said. "We will put these vicious and bloodthirsty criminals in jail or kick them out of our country."

Despite Trump's dramatic statements aimed at rousing his base, no town in America has been taken over by migrants.

Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman, a Republican, said in a statement ahead of the rally that "concerns about Venezuelan gang activity have been grossly exaggerated" and welcomed Trump to tour the city.

Major crimes in Aurora have dropped year-on-year, according to Aurora Police Department statistics.

V Reeves, a community organizer with the Housekeys Action Network, said residents were nervous about the Trump visit.

"They're worried about Trump supporters showing up and threatening them," Reeves said.

At two of the apartment buildings at the center of the controversy, Reuters observed broken windows and litter on Thursday. One building had portable police camera stations that residents said were installed this week.

Jesus, a 30-year-old Venezuelan who works in landscaping and lives in one of the buildings, said that all Venezuelans are being blamed for the actions of a few.

"We are not all bad people," said Jesus, who declined to provide his last name.

The dispute over gang activity in Aurora stems from an effort by the city to force the owner of several apartment complexes where migrants lived to address repairs, trash, pest infestations and other complaints.

A public relations firm hired by the landlord, CBZ Management, said in early August that Tren de Aragua gang members had taken over the properties, according to documents obtained by Reuters through a Colorado Open Records Act request.

CBZ Management did not respond to requests for comment.

Japan's Nihon Hidankyo Wins 2024 Nobel Peace Prize

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, in a warning to countries that have nuclear weapons not to use them.

Many survivors of the only two nuclear bombs ever to be used in conflict, who are known in Japanese as "hibakusha", have dedicated their lives to the struggle for a nuclear-free world.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said in its citation the group was receiving the Peace Prize for "its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again".

"The hibakusha help us to describe the indescribable, to think the unthinkable, and to somehow grasp the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by nuclear weapons," the committee said.

"I can't believe it's real," Nihon Hidankyo co-chair Toshiyuki Mimaki told a press conference in Hiroshima, site of the Aug. 6, 1945 atomic bombing during the closing stages of World War Two, as he held back tears and pinched his cheek.

Mimaki, a survivor himself, said the award would give a major boost to its efforts to demonstrate that the abolition of nuclear weapons was necessary and possible and faulted governments for waging wars even as their citizens yearned for peace.

"(The win) will be a great force to appeal to the world that the abolition of nuclear weapons and everlasting peace can be achieved," he said. "Nuclear weapons should absolutely be abolished."

In Japan, hibakusha, many of whom carried visible wounds from radiation burns or developed radiation-related diseases such as leukaemia, were often forcibly segregated from society and faced discrimination when seeking employment or marriage in the



years following the war.

"They are a group of people delivering the message to the world, so as a Japanese I think this is truly wonderful," Tokyo resident Yoshiko Watanabe told Reuters, as she wept openly in the street.

There were 106,825 atomic bomb survivors registered in Japan as of March this year, data from the country's health ministry showed, with an average age of 85.6 years.

Without naming specific countries, Joergen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, warned that nuclear nations should not contemplate using atomic weapons.

"In a world ridden (with) conflicts, where nuclear weapons is definitely part of it, we want to highlight the importance of strengthening the nuclear taboo, the international norm, against the use of nuclear weapons," Frydnes told Reuters.

"We see it as very alarming that the nuclear taboo ... is being reduced by threatening, but also how the situation in the world where the nuclear powers are modernising and upgrading their arsenals."

Frydnes said the world should listen to the "painful and dramatic stories of the hibakusha".

"These weapons should never be used again anywhere in the world ... Nuclear war could mean the end of humanity, (the) end of our civilisation," he said in an interview.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly warned the West of potential nuclear consequences since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

He declared last month that Russia could use nuclear weapons if it was struck with conventional missiles, and that Moscow would consider any assault on it supported by a nuclear power to be a joint attack.



Djokovic Progresses to Shanghai Semifinals

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic proved his staying power, beating an opponent 18 years his junior 6-7 (4/7), 6-1, 6-4 to claim the last spot in the Shanghai Masters semi-finals. The 37-year-old's victory over the Czech Republic's Jakub Mensik came a day after one of his greatest rivals and contemporaries, Rafael Nadal, announced he would retire in November. The Serb, who is aiming for a 100th singles title in Shanghai, will next face world number seven Taylor Fritz after the American beat Belgium's David Goffin 6-3, 6-4 earlier on Friday. "Overall, big battle, it took the best out of me to win it," said Djokovic after the match. Both Djokovic and 65th-ranked Mensik brought serious firepower to the court, their hard-hitting rallies driving the stadium wild with tension. The first set was closely fought, with Djokovic's break in the ninth game matched immediately by Mensik in the next. The veteran pulled ahead early in the tiebreak, but seemed to lose focus, allowing the 19-year-old to come from behind to win. The 24-time Grand Slam champion dominated the second set though, breaking in the second and sixth game. Mensik recovered to pile on the pressure again in the third, but Djokovic got a crucial break in the fifth game to be crowned winner. Djokovic called his opponent "one of the best players we have on the tour", adding "the future is very bright for him".

"These kind of matches against teenagers is something that really motivates me... and pushes me to really dig deep and to show to the world that I still got it, you know, and my legs can still go the distance with the young guy," he said. The fact Djokovic's triumph came the day after the retirement announcement from Nadal -- who he called "the greatest rival that I ever had" -- was not lost on him. "I'm a bit overwhelmed, to be honest, but, you know, I still have the desire to play," the Serb said of being the last man standing from tennis' golden era. The 26-year-old Fritz, who said he grew up watching Nadal on television, said it was "the end of an era". The American quickly took charge in the first set of his earlier match, breaking the 66th-ranked Goffin in the second and sixth games. Underdog Goffin -- who knocked out second seed Alexander Zverev in the last round -- looked stronger in the second set, but ultimately couldn't replicate his feat with another top 10 scalp. It is the first time US Open finalist Fritz has progressed past the third round in Shanghai. He has lost to Djokovic at every one of their previous nine encounters. "We've played a lot of times and I've never gotten him... (So I'm) waiting for that time that, you know, maybe I can get a first win on him," said Fritz. "I'm only getting better and better, and I'm excited for the opportunity to play him." Djokovic said he expected the match-up to be tight.

England Thump Pakistan by Innings and 47 Runs for Historic Test Win



MULTAN (Dispatches) - England, riding on the sublime batting of Harry Brook and Joe Root, became the first team to win a test by an innings after conceding more than 500 runs in the first stanza, sealing the victory early on the fifth day of the series opener on Friday. After a record-breaking day in which the duo helped England post a colossal 823-7 before the bowlers ran through Pakistan's top order, the tourists completed an extraordinary innings and 47-run victory well before lunch. With Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed not batting due to illness, England reduced the hosts to 220-9 after some early resistance as Jack Leach bagged the three wickets needed and sparked huge celebrations among a small but vocal group of travelling fans. While the bowlers completed the job, it was a stupendous batting effort that set up the win after man-of-the-match Brook scored 317 and Root made 262 in a partnership that ground the hosts to dust. "We knew the way to win this game was to put a mammoth score on the board," England's stand-in skipper Ollie Pope said. "I think that's credit to (Brook and Root) for the skills they've got with the bat, the determination they had to put the team in a winning position. So it was awesome." Pakistan resumed on a precarious 152-6 and Salman Agha was the first to depart in the morning after a defiant 63, with the introduction of Leach helping England snap his 109-run stand with Aamer Jamal. England's pace bowlers peppered the two overnight batsmen with bouncers earlier and Jamal recovered after being hit on the side of the head by a fiery ball from Brydon Carse to bring up his own half-century. He was then granted a lifeline when Pope dropped a tough chance at square-leg - England's fifth dropped catch of the innings - and was not out on 55 when he ran out of partners. Leach pulled off a stunning catch off his own bowling to remove Shaheen Afridi, before having Naseem Shah stumped to finish with figures of 4-30. England declared after their highest total in 86 years and extracted the most from a lifeless pitch at the Multan Cricket Stadium to rattle Pakistan on Thursday. The hosts flexed their muscles in the early part of the test with 556 in the first innings, but found themselves under the gun, trailing England by 115 runs at the end of the fourth day and they eventually folded under pressure. Pakistan's tally was the joint third-highest first-innings total in a losing cause and marked the first time in more than 700 tests in Asia that a team had lost after making 500-plus runs in the first innings. Skipper Shan Masood said his team were pained after their sixth straight loss and sought a strong response when the sides meet in the second of three matches next Tuesday. "We're hurt as a nation, but the beauty of the game is it always gives you another chance. Life gives you another chance so the quick turnaround might be quite beneficial for us and we're all looking forward to it," Masood said. "We're getting into good positions. You ask your batting side to put up a good score in the first innings, and the onus on us now is to set the game up well so we can finish it off."

Germany Win in Nations League as 10-Man Dutch Rescue Point

PARIS (Dispatches) - Deniz Undav scored twice as Germany defeated Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-1 to edge closer to the Nations League quarter-finals on Friday as 10-man Netherlands rescued a 1-1 draw in Hungary. Bayer Leverkusen's Florian Wirtz laid on a backheel for Undav's opener after 30 minutes in Zenica. The Stuttgart forward then made it two when he turned in Maximilian Mittelstaedt's cross. Bosnia hit back with 20 minutes remaining when 38-year-old former Manchester City forward Edin Dzeko headed in from a corner for his 67th international goal. "After they scored, things heated up a bit, but we controlled things confidently," Undav, making just his second international start, told German broadcaster RTL. The win moves Germany onto seven points from three games, two ahead of the Netherlands with the heavyweights facing each other on Monday in Munich. "We scored too few goals for the number of chances we had," said Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann. At the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary and Dutch players, as well as spectators, observed a minute's silence in



memory of former Netherlands great Johan Neeskens who passed away this week at the age of 73. Hungary took the lead in the 32nd minute when Roland Sallai scored with a close-range finish after being teed up by Zsolt Nagy. It was the perfect start to the game for Hungarian coach Marco Rossi who was taking charge of the national team for the 69th time. Hungary were looking at defeating the Dutch in the teams' first meeting since they were mauled 8-1 in 2013. That prospect brightened when Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk was red-carded in the 79th minute. However, four minutes later, the Dutch made a mockery of their one-man disadvantage when Denzel Dumfries headed in a free-kick from Cody Gakpo. "Even with ten men, we tried to put pressure forward," said Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman. "I did think we were going to score." Wales squandered a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 with Iceland in Reykjavik. Tottenham's Brennan Johnson, scoring for the seventh consecutive game for club and country, and Harry Wilson gave Craig Bellamy's team a comfortable 2-0 lead at the break but Iceland hit back in the second half.

European Leagues and Union Appeal to EU Against FIFA Over Crowded Calendar



BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Leagues umbrella body, FIFPRO players' union and Spain's LaLiga plan to file a joint complaint to the EU on Monday against global governing body FIFA over the ballooning soccer calendar. Elite clubs are increasingly concerned at the impact of expanding schedules on wellbeing of players, some of whom say they are struggling with the physical and psychological strain despite the enormous salaries they can earn. The three organisations' appeal to EU antitrust regulators, first announced in July, presents yet another challenge to FIFA. Two weeks ago, Europe's top court ruled that FIFA's player transfer regulations breach EU laws following a challenge by former player Lassana Diarra from France. Disgruntled athletes and sports bodies have increasingly turned to the EU antitrust enforcer to help secure a level playing field and chip away at the power of governing bodies. European Leagues, FIFPRO and LaLiga say the international match calendar, including an expanded Champions League and Club World Cup, has become unsustainable for national leagues and a health risk for players. They accuse FIFA of abusing its market power. FIFA says the calendar was unanimously approved by its council after a comprehensive consultation, including FIFPRO and league bodies. The European Commission, which acts as the competition enforcer for the 27-country bloc, can order companies to stop anti-competitive practices and also fine them.

Comoros Shock Tunisia, Salah, Mbeumo Strike in AFCON Qualifiers

JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - Comoros shocked Tunisia 1-0 on Friday to end a run of 16 consecutive home victories in Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers by the Carthage Eagles. Premier League sharpshooters Mohamed Salah and Bryan Mbeumo struck key goals, South Africa hit a record-equalling five and Nigeria snatched a late win in other matchday 3 qualifiers. French second-tier league forward Rafiki Said scored midway through the second half in Rades to lift Comoros to second in Group A, one point behind Tunisia halfway through the campaign. Comoros, a tiny island nation off the south-east coast of Africa, have a habit of causing upsets, most notably when beating Ghana to reach the second round at the 2022 AFCON. But the islanders were given little chance of succeeding away to former champions Tunisia, who are ranked fifth in Africa, and 82 places above Comoros in the world. The lack of an international-standard stadium in Moroni means the Comorans must host Tunisia in matchday 4 on Tuesday in Abidjan, the Ivorian commercial capital. Record seven-time African champions Egypt faced stubborn resistance from Mauritania in Cairo until Mahmoud 'Trezeguet' Hassan netted 69 minutes into the Group C clash. Prolific Liverpool scorer Salah put the outcome beyond doubt with a second goal 10 minutes later to maintain the perfect record of the Pharaohs after three rounds. Runaway leaders Egypt have nine points, leaving Cape Verde, Botswana and Mauritania -- all with three -- battling to claim the second qualifying place for the 2025 finals in Morocco. Mbeumo, whose six goals for Brentford has been bettered only by Erling Haaland of Manchester City this season, netted



just before half-time to put Cameroon two goals ahead of Kenya. Cameroon, who boast the second best AFCON record with five titles, went on to triumph 4-1 in Yaounde with Vincent Aboubakar, Martin Hongla and Christian Bassogog the other scorers. Victory lifted Cameroon to the top of Group J with seven points. Zimbabwe have five, Kenya four and Namibia are pointless. South Africa, third at the AFCON this year behind hosts and winners Ivory Coast and Nigeria, matched a 5-0 scoreline against Guatemala in a 2010 World Cup warm-up as they outplayed Congo. Tebogo Mokoena, sidelined by Mamelodi Sundowns because of a dispute with his coach, showed no rustiness as he headed a corner into the net, then scored again via a half-volley. Further goals from Bathusi Aubaas, who stretched the lead to 3-0 by half-time, Lyle Foster and substitute Iqraam Rayners completed the rout of a poor Congolese side. The Group K match in Gqeberha was halted by the Mauritanian referee for 18 minutes during the first half after several spectators entered the pitch to join goal celebrations. However, South Africa coach Hugo Broos warned his team to expect a much tougher return match in Brazzaville on Tuesday. "Come tomorrow, our five-goal victory will be history. We have got to repeat the fantastic mentality shown tonight," said the Belgian who coached Cameroon to the 2017 AFCON title. Uganda and South Africa have seven points each, Congo three and South Sudan none. The co-leaders can both clinch qualification if they win on Tuesday.