

Addressing the 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Geneva, Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf Says He Is Echoing the Voice of the Oppressed But Strong People of Lebanon in These Hard Times

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi Says the Process of Indirect Talks Between Iran and the United States Via Oman's Intermediary Role Has Been Halted "Due to the Specific Circumstances of the Region."

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DOMESTIC



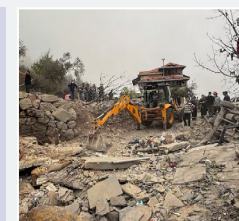
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No Need for Outsiders, Regional States Can Ensure Security on Their Own



TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Masoud Pezeshkian says the presence of foreign countries in the region will not be to the benefit of regional nations.

The Iranian president underscored the significance of observing territorial integrity of all states.

Pezeshkian made the remarks during a meeting with Shahin Mustafayev, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister, in Tehran on Monday.

Iran believes regional countries can ensure security and bring about solutions through cooperation, Pezeshkian said.

Pointing to the historical and cultural commonalities between Iran and Azerbaijan, Pezeshkian placed a premium on the development of relations and acceleration of the implementation of agreements.

Iran welcomes all projects conducive to the expansion of relations among Muslim countries, he said.

"There is no need to build walls on the borders in order to strengthen and promote security and establish peace and communications among countries."

Pezeshkian said Muslim countries should open their markets to each other and pave the way for cooperation among businessmen.

The president noted that Iran welcomes the establishment of railways and highways with Azerbaijan and, at the same time, wants to expand cooperation in energy and agriculture.

Mustafayev, in his turn, said Azerbaijan is keen to expand relations with Iran in the areas of economy, trade, energy, culture, transit. Baku attaches great significance to enhanced security and defense cooperation with Tehran, he said.

The Azeri official said his country is after the promotion of peace in the region and has no territorial claims against any country, while it does not accept any country's claim regarding its territorial integrity.

Baku believes diplomacy is the key to the resolution of regional issues, he said.

Mustafayev was apparently referring to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but has been populated by ethnic Armenians. In 2020, Azerbaijan made significant territorial gains in a six-week war that killed thousands on both sides, before Moscow brokered a ceasefire deal that included the deployment of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers to the region for a five-year period.

Since the truce, the two sides have accused each other of breaching the peace deal.

IRGC Warns U.S. Warns of Retaliation If Provoked



TEHRAN (PressTV) - An advisor to the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned the US against committing any "foolish act" vis-à-vis Iran, saying American ships, military bases and interests are "within the reach of our weapons."

"The Americans should know that if one day they enter the battlefield and want to take action against the Islamic Iran, their bases, interests and ships will be within the reach of our weapons," Brigadier General Ebrahim Jabbari said.

"We have brave and capable forces who will definitely respond to any overstepping the bounds by the Americans."

However, Jabbari said that Washington was unlikely to commit such a "foolish act."

"Although the Americans support Israel, it is unlikely that they will commit a folly and engage in a conflict with Iran. They always advise the regime not to engage in a conflict with the Islamic Republic."

Jabbari stressed that the US "is not prepared at all to confront us, the axis of resistance and the Muslim world."

His remarks came as the United States confirmed that its military is sending an anti-missile system operated by American troops to aid the Israeli forces following the Tel Aviv regime's failure to defend itself against Iran.



Mass Funeral Held in Tehran for IRGC Commander Assassinated by Israel

TEHRAN- Iranians attend a funeral ceremony in Tehran for Major General Abbas Nilforoushan, a senior Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) commander who was assassinated last month along with the Hezbollah chief in an Israeli airstrike on Lebanon.

The ceremony took place on Tuesday, with mourners carrying Nilforoushan's coffin, draped with the national Iranian flag, in Tehran's iconic Imam Hussein Square.

General Nilforoushan was pronounced martyred in the Israeli attack that targeted a number of residential buildings in Beirut's southern suburb of Dahiyeh on September 27.

He was assassinated along with Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

The body of the Iranian commander was taken from Beirut to the holy Iraqi city of Karbala, where a large crowd attended his funeral, including representatives of Iraqi political groups.

General Nilforoushan's funeral prayers were led by a representative of Iraq's top cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

A large number of high-ranking officials including Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami and Iran's Judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei participated in the event.

On the sidelines of the funeral, the deputy commander of the IRGC emphasized: The martyrdom of commanders and leaders will not harm the righteous front of the Islamic Revolution.

Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi stated: "The criminals of the world, because they are cowards, follow the path of assassination. From the very beginning, the Zionists were formed based on terrorism,

but with these assassinations, they will not achieve their desired goals."

He continued, saying: "The most essential characteristic of a Muslim, a Shia, a resistance fighter, a Revolutionary Guard, and a Basiji is 'faith in the divine promise.' Martyrdom is the desire of the fighters. Those who have walked this path for 40 years see martyrdom as their highest wish, and those who remain see martyrdom as the point of their victory. This is why, when Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah and other commanders were martyred, the evil fools of the world thought Hezbollah was finished. But today, they see that Hezbollah is stronger than before, carrying out more effective operations and delivering irreversible blows to the Zionists."

The body of General Nilforoushan returned home more than two weeks after he was assassinated.

About a week later, the IRGC launched a volley of hypersonic ballistic missiles at Israeli military targets in the occupied Palestinian territories in retaliation for the assassination of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and Nasrallah and Nilforoushan in Beirut.

Another funeral procession was held in Najaf, an Iraqi city that houses the holy shrine of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam.

Nilforoushan's body was transferred to Tehran on Tuesday.

More ceremonies are planned in the Iranian cities of Mashhad and Qom before the martyred commander's burial in Isfahan on Thursday.

Hezbollah's Guided Missiles Afflict Casualties on Israeli Forces Advancing in S. Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has carried out a successful retaliatory strike against a group of Israeli forces advancing towards a town in the country's extreme south.

The operation was carried out near the town of Aita al-Shaab on Monday, the group announced.

"While three Merkava tanks of the Israeli enemy were advancing towards the outskirts of the town, the fighters of the Islamic Resistance bombed them with guided missiles, achieving direct hits," it said.

"Tongues of fire were seen erupting from the vehicles, and their occupants were killed and wounded," the movement added.

Hezbollah has launched hundreds of such strikes against the occupied Palestinian territories since last October, when the Israeli regime began bringing the Gaza Strip under a genocidal war and intensifying its deadly attacks against Lebanon. The war and the escalation have so far claimed the lives of more than 42,280 Palestinians and upwards of 2,300 Lebanese people.

Also on Monday, the group announced using rocket salvos to target gatherings of enemy forces at a radar site and the Barkhta farm in Lebanon's Tel Aviv-occupied Shebaa Farms as well as the Ruwaisat al-Alam site in the country's Kfar Shuba Hills, which is likewise under Israeli occupation.

Groups of enemy troops were also struck in the settlements of Margaliot and Kiryat Shmona, Khallet Warda, and the Zarit barracks in the northern parts of the occupied territories.

The operations came only a day after Hezbollah reported carrying out a drone strike on the military base for the Golani Brigade in Binyamina south of the city of Haifa in the northern areas, leaving four of the regime's forces dead and dozens more injured.

And a day earlier, it had also launched a retaliatory strike against the outskirts of the city of Tel Aviv with a squadron of kamikaze drones.

The group has vowed to sustain its strikes until the regime ceased its aggression against Gaza and Lebanon.



Meanwhile the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has roundly denounced the latest Israeli military onslaught on the northern Gaza Strip, saying the offensive is meant to ethnically cleanse the Palestinian population in the area.

"The aim of the current Israeli onslaught is to displace the population of northern Gaza towards the south. The Israeli army aims to use maximum firepower in Gaza to paint

an image of achievement and success," Osama Hamdan, the Gaza-based group's senior representative in Lebanon, said on Monday.

He stated that the so-called general's plan, proposed to Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Knesset (parliament) by a group of retired generals, is only meant to play with the emotions of the illegal settlers in the occupied territories, as the regime has failed to achieve any of its "goals" in the Gaza war.

The plan reportedly seeks to give Palestinians a week to leave the northern third of the Gaza Strip, including Gaza City, before declaring it a closed military zone. Those who remain would be considered combatants, and denied food, water, medicine and fuel.

"There must be efforts to support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in Gaza. Resistance operations will continue and expand to defend our people despite all circumstances," the senior Hamas official told Al Jazeera.

He described the unfolding developments in Gaza as a genocide process in the besieged coastal territory, calling upon the international community to spring into action and stop the Israeli aggression.

"Israeli aggression will spread if it is not stopped," Hamdan pointed out.

This came UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has condemned the "large number of civilian casualties in the intensifying Israeli campaign in northern Gaza."

"He (Guterres) strongly urges all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and emphasizes that civilians must be respected and protected at all times," his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

Iran Leads OPEC in Oil Production Increase



TEHRAN - According to a report by the Secretariat of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), secondary sources reveal that Iran produced 3.316 million barrels of crude oil per day in September 2024, an increase of 21,000 barrels compared to August 2024.

The report also notes that OPEC's 12 member countries collectively produced 26.044 million barrels of oil in September, which is 604,000 barrels less than the 26.648 million barrels produced in August.

Among OPEC members, Saudi Arabia retained the top position with a daily production of 8.971 million barrels, followed by Iraq with 4.112 million barrels per day. Iran, with 3.316 million barrels per day, maintained its rank as the third-largest oil producer within the organization.

While Iran's production increased by 21,000 barrels per day in September, Saudi Arabia and Iraq saw decreases of 23,000 and 155,000 barrels per day, respectively. This makes Iran the OPEC member with the largest production increase during the month.

Despite a 2.3% overall decline in OPEC's oil output, Iran's production increased by 0.6% during the same period. Additionally, oil production among OPEC+ members (including both OPEC and non-OPEC countries) rose by 47,000 barrels per day, reaching 14.060 million barrels in September, up from 14.013 million barrels in August. However, Russia's production fell by 28,000 barrels per day during the month.

In total, OPEC and OPEC+ countries saw a combined reduction of 557,000 barrels per day in oil output, bringing the total from 40.661 million barrels in August to 40.104 million barrels in September.

According to secondary sources, Iran's oil production in September was the highest among the four OPEC members that increased production—namely Iran, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Kuwait. Iran's increase of 21,000 barrels per day was the most significant. Iran, Venezuela, and Libya are exempt from OPEC+ production cut agreements.

The latest OPEC monthly report also revealed a 5.2% decline in the price of Iran's heavy crude oil, which fell by \$4.04 per barrel from August 2024 to \$73.59 in September 2024. The average price of Iran's heavy crude oil in 2024 so far has been \$81.85 per barrel. Meanwhile, OPEC's basket price reached \$73.59 per barrel in September, a 6.1% drop from August.

Iran Condemns EU, UK Sanctions as Attempt to Divert Attention From Israeli Genocide



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has condemned new sanctions by the European Union and the United Kingdom against the Islamic Republic as an attempt to divert the public attention from Israeli genocide of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the warmongering acts of the Zionist regime.

In a statement on Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei stressed that the new sanctions by Britain and the European bloc against several Iranian individuals and entities were based on false and unfounded pretexts.

He strongly denounced that the move as an unjustifiable action that violates the international law, especially human rights.

Over the alleged transfer of ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the Ukraine war, the EU imposed sanctions against flagship carrier Iran Air, Saha Airlines and Mahan Air, Iran's Deputy Defense Minister Seyyed Hamzeh Ghalandari, prominent officials of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, and the IRGC Aerospace Force.

This is while Tehran has strongly rejected such allegations.

The UK also announced sanctions targeting senior figures in the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, Iran's Air Force and organizations linked to Iran's ballistic and cruise missile development, claiming that the sanctions came after what it alleged to be Iran's dangerous and destabilizing activity across West Asia.

"The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the Ukraine conflict is clear and principled. From the very beginning of the conflict, Iran has opposed the war and emphasized the importance for all countries to respect each other's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, while advocating for a diplomatic solution to resolve the disputes between Russia and Ukraine," Baghaei said.

IRAN NEWS



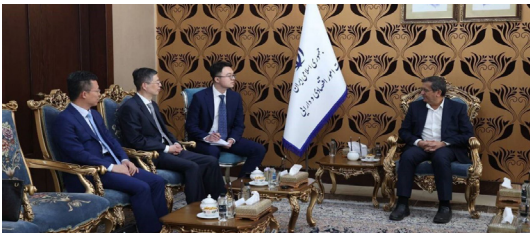
General Ghaani Attends Ceremony Held in Tehran

TEHRAN (IP) - In the early hours of Tuesday, Major General Esmail Ghaani, Commander of the IRGC Quds Force, alongside senior military and civilian officials, participated in the reception ceremony for the body of Martyr General Abbas Nilforoushan at Mehrabad Airport in Tehran. General Abbas Nilforoushan, a high-ranking military advisor to the Islamic Republic of Iran in Lebanon, was recently martyred in an Israeli attack in Beirut. His remains were returned to Tehran this morning, greeted with full military honors.

The event was marked by the presence of General Ghaani, fellow military officials, and Nilforoushan's family and comrades, all paying their respects to the fallen commander.

In recent weeks, rumors circulated on social media regarding the whereabouts and health of General Esmail Ghaani, leading to widespread speculation. However, Iranian officials had already dismissed these claims, confirming that Ghaani was in good health and performing his daily duties.

Minister Emphasizes Importance of Implementing Iran-China Agreements



TEHRAN - Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Abdolnasser Hemmati, stressed the importance of implementing agreements between Tehran and Beijing during a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Iran.

The meeting took place on Monday, October 14, 2024, when Hemmati met with Zhong Peiyu, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Iran.

During the meeting, held at the Ministry of Economy at the request of the Chinese Ambassador, Hemmati followed up on discussions from the BRICS economic ministers' meeting in Samarkand and emphasized the significance of executing agreements between the two nations.

Hemmati also referred to the joint economic commission as an ideal platform for discussing economic, trade, and investment cooperation, expressing support for the upcoming 19th session of the joint commission in Tehran.

Zhong Peiyu, the Chinese Ambassador, reiterated that Beijing is committed to accelerating the practical implementation of these agreements with the aim of deepening bilateral ties.

Both sides reaffirmed their governments' determination to expand comprehensive cooperation, expressing hope that consultations between senior officials from Iran and China would continue to strengthen their relationship.



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Two-Thirds of National Development Fund Resources Used by Gov'ts

TEHRAN - Mehdi Ghazanfari, head of the National Development Fund (NDF), discussed the challenges facing the fund and its role in Iran's seventh development plan. He emphasized that the NDF is perhaps the only institution capable of achieving the goal of decoupling Iran's economy from oil dependence.

Ghazanfari explained that many oil-rich and other countries established funds to save surplus revenues for future use. These funds are aimed at various objectives. Some countries, like China and Hong Kong, accumulate trade surpluses, while others benefit from revenues from specific goods, such as oil and gas. In Iran, the NDF was designed to manage surplus oil revenues.

Ghazanfari warned that transferring large oil revenues into the economy can have negative consequences, as was the case before the 1979 revolution. He likened the economy to a bowl that can only hold a limited amount of water; pouring too much into it will cause it to overflow and result in damage. He explained that economies have a limited capacity to absorb oil revenues, and exceeding that capacity leads to economic harm, such as the Dutch disease. To avoid this, surplus revenues should be saved or invested abroad.

According to Ghazanfari, sovereign wealth funds, like the NDF, are generally established with three primary objectives: Preservation: Some funds are designed to safeguard surplus revenues for future generations; Development: Others aim to promote economic development, both domestically and internationally; and Stabilization: These funds are used to stabilize government budgets during years when revenues are lower than expected.

Ghazanfari noted that the NDF's official mandate in Iran leans towards preservation, despite being labeled a "development" fund.

He revealed that the NDF has accumulated around \$160 billion in surplus oil revenues. However, of this amount, nearly \$110 billion has been utilized by various governments, either for development purposes or to stabilize the national budget. This has led to concerns about the fund's diminishing reserves,

as withdrawals have outpaced contributions in recent years.

He emphasized that more than two-thirds of the NDF's resources have been loaned to governments, which deviates from the fund's original mission.

Ghazanfari criticized the government's growing reliance on the NDF for budget stabilization, which he says is contrary to the fund's intended purpose. He referred to remarks made by the Supreme Leader, who has criticized governments for making withdrawals from the fund without proper legal procedures. Ghazanfari stressed that these withdrawals, while legally approved, often contradict the fund's mission.

Another major challenge, according to Ghazanfari, is the banking sector's inability to manage the NDF's resources effectively. He described how some banks overcommitted themselves by offering more in loans than they could cover with their own assets, leading to non-repayment by borrowers. This mismanagement has further strained the NDF's resources.

He highlighted the ongoing debate about transforming the NDF into a stabilization fund, which would allow it to be used more flexibly in times of financial need. However, he questioned whether such a change would solve the country's broader economic problems, noting that the fund has already been used for stabilization purposes without addressing underlying issues such as energy sector inefficiencies and budget imbalances.

He concluded by stressing the need for a new economic governance model, arguing that current practices, which resemble those of failed socialist economies, are unsustainable. He warned that unless Iran adopts a more market-driven approach, even large sums of money in the NDF will be insufficient to resolve the country's financial imbalances.

In summary, Ghazanfari's comments highlight the critical role of the NDF in Iran's economic future and the pressing need for reforms to ensure the fund's sustainability.

Re-Launching the ECO Train: Iran-Turkey Railway Resumption on the Horizon



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a significant move for regional transportation, the revival of the ECO (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad) train is expected to take a step forward soon, according to Jabbar Ali Zakeri, Director General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways. Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting regarding the Kerman-Sirjan railway project, Zakeri provided updates on the state of the international train service and the ongoing efforts to restart operations after a lengthy suspension.

The ECO train, which had a trial run two years ago, was disrupted due to issues in Turkey following a recent earthquake. The quake affected the railway route from Van to Ankara, causing delays in resuming the service. Zakeri confirmed that a meeting is scheduled for next week between representatives from Iranian Railways and their Turkish counterparts to address these issues. "A preliminary meeting was already held last week," he said, expressing optimism about reaching agreements to reopen the route.

He explained that the initial phase of the plan focuses on reactivating the Tabriz-Van and Tehran-Van trains. "Once Turkish railways are ready to resume train services on the Van-Istanbul and Van-Ankara routes, we will also restart passenger trains from Iran on this route," Zakeri noted.

He emphasized that these efforts are a precursor to re-launching the ECO train. "The first step in activating the international train is through Turkey, and once the Turkish side is ready, the ECO train will be re-launched," he added.

In addition to the ECO train updates, Zakeri also provided insights into the progress of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway project, an important link between Iran and Iraq. Following the Iranian President's recent visit to Iraq, several agreements were finalized, particularly regarding financial supply and funding. The project now

faces two key challenges that the Iraqi side is working to resolve: obtaining a permit for the destruction of unexploded ordnance found during demining and securing approval from Iraq's environmental inspection authorities to confirm the demining process.

Despite these hurdles, Zakeri noted positive developments, including Iraq's completion of land acquisition in Basra and the Iranian contractor's readiness to proceed. He also mentioned the involvement of a Spanish contractor, which won a tender to lay tracks for the Basra-Shalamcheh railway after offering a competitive price.

In a major development for Iran's domestic railway network, Zakeri highlighted the investment of 7.2 trillion tomans to enhance the Kerman-Sirjan railway. This project, which is expected to improve the efficiency of freight transport, will have the capacity to move 9.5 million tons of goods annually. "The launch of this route will reduce transport distance by 320 kilometers, thereby decreasing costs and increasing efficiency," Zakeri explained.

The Kerman-Sirjan railway is part of a broader national effort to connect key industrial and cargo hubs, particularly those involved in steel, oil, and chemical production. Zakeri stressed that expanding the railway network is essential for increasing the total volume of transported goods and boosting overall income for the sector.

Iran has also issued a call for investment in its rail projects, with the aim of attracting private sector participation. Zakeri assured potential investors that the railways would respond to applications within three months. "If our colleagues do not respond within this time, the request will be considered approved according to regulations," he said, encouraging businesses to take advantage of the opportunities in the expanding railway sector.

Rise in Electricity Transit with Neighboring Countries



TEHRAN - Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi, referring to the extensive historical ties between Iran and Azerbaijan, stated: "To continue and strengthen cooperation between the two sides, we have many plans in place."

He mentioned the cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan on the Khodaafarin Dam, stating: "This dam was jointly constructed by both countries."

The Minister pointed out that there is a comprehensive plan underway for the Qiz Qalasi and Ordubad dams, which are currently progressing. As per the agreement, it was decided to accelerate the implementation of these projects.

Aliabadi added that the electrical connection between Iran and Azerbaijan is currently established, and it is hoped that by next summer, this will increase. It has been proposed to initiate negotiations between Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia on this matter.

He further stated: "Negotiations with Russia have already taken place, and it has been agreed to follow up on this issue at the next meeting. Establishing this electrical line will be economically beneficial for both parties. Technical-specialized discussions have been held, and based on these, readiness for visits to the technical facilities of both countries has been expressed."

The Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Azerbaijan-Iran Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, in this meeting, also emphasized the broad relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, adding: "Significant cooperation in the fields of water and electricity exists between the two countries. The Khodaafarin and Qiz Qalasi projects are notable examples."

Shahin Mustafayev referred to the discussions during the joint meeting with the Minister of Energy for expanding cooperation in the energy sector, adding: "There is also ongoing collaboration between Iran and Azerbaijan in the construction of power plants."

He highlighted the strong cooperation in the water sector, noting that about three years ago, Azerbaijan celebrated the 50th anniversary of water cooperation with Iran.

Shahin Mustafayev added that discussions were held on the implementation of the Marazad and Ordubad agreements, signed in 2014, and it was decided to expedite the process.

He concluded by stating that electrical connections between Iran and Azerbaijan are established at five points, and it was agreed to review cooperation in this area. Discussions also took place regarding the synchronization of electricity among Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia, and it was decided that an Iranian company would conduct a technical-economic evaluation of this initiative.

Iran Becomes a Member and Shareholder of BRICS Bank



TEHRAN - The Governor of the Central Bank stated that during the period when Iran chaired BRICS, significant agreements were made with the Central Bank of Russia. We reached good agreements on connecting card networks and financial cooperation, and all of these were discussed within BRICS. For instance, today in BRICS, one of the key topics was conducting trade transactions using local currencies, and excellent progress was made in this area. There were also positive agreements regarding global reserve payments and the use of bonds for settlements.

Farzin said: Currently, the global financial system is mostly based on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and Western countries. Unfortunately, due to political interactions with those countries, the world is now seeking alternative arrangements. Certainly, within the framework of BRICS member countries, such arrangements will be established.

He pointed out: We have a payment system between countries based on local currencies, which was one of the topics discussed in this meeting. China, Russia, and Iran are very interested in this matter. We have moved toward conducting transactions with local currencies with other countries and are reducing the role of the U.S. dollar in international transactions. Russia has also made significant progress in this area.

Red Cross Calls for Protection of Medical Workers in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The International Committee for the Red Cross called on Monday for Lebanon's health care system to be protected after reports that Israeli strikes hit medical staff during fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

"I really... appeal for the protection of healthcare workers, for ambulances, for hospitals, for primary health centers," said Nicolas Von Arx, the ICRC's regional director for the Near and Middle East.

"Attacks on health facilities are deeply worrying," he added.

Such strikes mean "a hospital that doesn't function anymore. That means thousands, tens of thousands of people who cannot get healthcare, who cannot deliver in a safe place, who cannot get their wounds treated," he said.

After nearly a year of cross-border fire, Israel on September 23 dramatically escalated its air strikes targeting Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon.



Cuban President Leads Pro-Palestinian March in Havana



HAVANA (Dispatches) - Thousands of Cubans, led by President Miguel Diaz-Canel and other leaders of the communist-run island, marched in Havana on Monday to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

The demonstrators, including some 250 Palestinian medical students living in Cuba, carried a large banner that read "Long live free Palestine," while the president and his allies wore traditional keffiyeh scarves.

"We are here to support the just claim of the Palestinian people, for their sovereignty, their freedom (...) and against the genocidal crusade that Israel practices towards the Palestinian people," Michel Marino, a 20-year-old international relations student, told AFP.

The march had been due to take place on the anniversary of the brutal attack by Hamas on Israel, but it was postponed due to Hurricane Milton, which lashed Cuba and Florida last week.

The October 7 attack, which triggered the war in Gaza, resulted in the deaths of 1,206 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures. That number includes hostages killed in captivity.

Out of 251 people taken hostage that day, 97 are still being held inside the Gaza Strip, including 34 who the Israeli military says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory military campaign in Gaza has killed 42,289 people, the majority civilians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The UN has described the figures as reliable.

"For a whole year our Gaza has not had a single day of calm, not a single day of peace and our people in the West Bank suffer daily aggression while the world remains paralyzed and unable to stop this tragedy," said Mohammed Suwan, a Palestinian student, as he addressed the participants.

In June, the Caribbean island joined a lawsuit filed by South Africa against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over its military campaign in Gaza.

UN Expresses Concern About Peacekeepers as Israel Continues Crimes



BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israel expanded its targets in its war with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon on Monday, killing at least 21 people in an airstrike in the north, health officials said, while millions of Israelis took shelter from projectiles fired back across the border.

So far the main focus of Israel's military operations in Lebanon has been in the Bekaa Valley in the east, the suburbs of Beirut, and in the south, where incidents involving Israeli troops and U.N. peacekeepers have created tension.

The U.N. Security Council on Monday expressed strong concern after several peacekeeping positions in southern Lebanon came under fire amid clashes between the Israeli military and Hezbollah.

The strike in the Christian-majority northern town of Aitou hit a house that had been rented to displaced families, the town's mayor Joseph Trad told Reuters. In addition to the deaths, eight people were injured, the Lebanese health ministry said.

Rescue workers at the site of the strike searched through piles of rubble on Monday, where burned vehicles and trees could be seen strewn across the ground.

Israel ordered residents of 25 villages in southern Lebanon to evacuate to areas north of the Awali River, which flows some 60 km (35 miles) north of the Israeli frontier.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, visiting a military base in central Israel where four soldiers were killed on Sunday by a Hezbollah drone strike, said Israel would continue to attack the Iran-backed movement "without mercy, everywhere in Lebanon - including Beirut".

In central Israel, residents rushed to shelters as sirens sounded. The military said three projectiles that had crossed from Lebanon had been intercepted. No injuries were reported.

The Israeli military said about 115 projectiles fired by Hezbollah crossed from Lebanon into Israel on Monday.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah resumed a year ago when the militant group began firing rockets at Israel in support of Palestinian militants Hamas at the start of the Gaza war.

It has escalated sharply in recent weeks, with Israel saying its operations are aimed at securing the return of tens of thousands of people displaced from their homes in northern Israel.

Israeli military operations in northern Gaza have also increased, with Israeli forces killing at least 10 people while they were queuing for food in Jabalia, according to Palestinians medics.

As Israel has pushed its forces through south Lebanon in an attempt to wipe out Hezbollah and its military infrastructure, tensions have increased between Israel and the U.N. peacekeeping force UNIFIL.

The U.N. said Israeli tanks had burst into its base on Sunday.

Netanyahu on Monday rejected accusations that Israeli troops had deliberately harmed UNIFIL peacekeepers as "completely false" and repeated a call for them to withdraw from combat zones close to the border with Israel.

He said Hezbollah uses UNIFIL positions as cover for attacks that have killed Israelis, including on Sunday, when a drone attack on a military base killed four soldiers.

"Israel has every right to defend itself against Hezbollah and will continue to do so," Netanyahu said in a statement.

The force's spokesperson on Monday said in a video posted on X that the peacekeeping mission would stay.

"We are staying ... we are in south of Lebanon under a Security Council mandate. So it's important to keep an international presence and to keep the UN flag in the area," Andrea Tenenti said.

Since announcing its ground operation near the border, the Israeli military says it has destroyed dozens of Hezbollah tunnel shafts, rocket launchers and command posts.

UNIFIL has said previous Israeli attacks limited its monitoring abilities and U.N. sources say they fear any violations of international law in the conflict will be impossible to monitor.

Meanwhile, the Middle East remains on high alert for Israel to retaliate against Iran for an Oct. 1 barrage of missiles launched in response to Israel's assaults on Lebanon.

On Monday, the U.S. embassy in Lebanon strongly encouraged its citizens to leave immediately, warning that additional flights laid on by the government to help U.S. citizens leave since Sept. 27 would not continue indefinitely.

Australia warned its citizens not to travel to Israel and urged Australians there to leave the country while commercial flights remained available.

Harris Labels Unhinged Trump a Menace to Democracy



PENNSYLVANIA (Dispatches) - Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris yesterday slammed Donald Trump for his ominous comments about "the enemy within" the United States and threat to deploy the military domestically, in a renewed effort to paint her Republican opponent as a threat to democracy.

In a rare move at her own campaign rally in the political swing state Pennsylvania, the US vice president showed a clip of Trump, the former president, telling his supporters "those people are more dangerous — the enemy from within — than Russia."

Harris, 59, has recently pressed Trump to release his health records, as she has, and knocked him for meandering tangents and focus on fictional characters such as Hannibal Lecter.

"A second Trump term would be a huge risk for America, and dangerous. Donald Trump is increasingly unstable and unhinged," Harris told the Erie crowd after playing the clip.

She went on to say that Trump poses a danger because he believes those who do not agree with him are the enemy.

Trump in recent rally speeches has hinted about facing "an enemy from within," more dangerous than a foreign adversary. His campaign did not immediately return a request for comment.

Canada Expels Top India Diplomats

OTTAWA (Reuters) - Canada expelled six Indian diplomats including the high commissioner on Monday, linking them to the murder of a Sikh separatist leader and alleging a broader effort to target Indian dissidents in Canada.

Earlier in the day, India retaliated by ordering the expulsion of six high-ranking Canadian diplomats including the acting high commissioner and said it had withdrawn its envoy from Canada, contradicting Canada's statement of expulsion.

The diplomatic row represents a major deterioration of relations between the two Commonwealth countries. Ties have been frayed since Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last year he had evidence linking Indian agents to the assassination of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian territory.

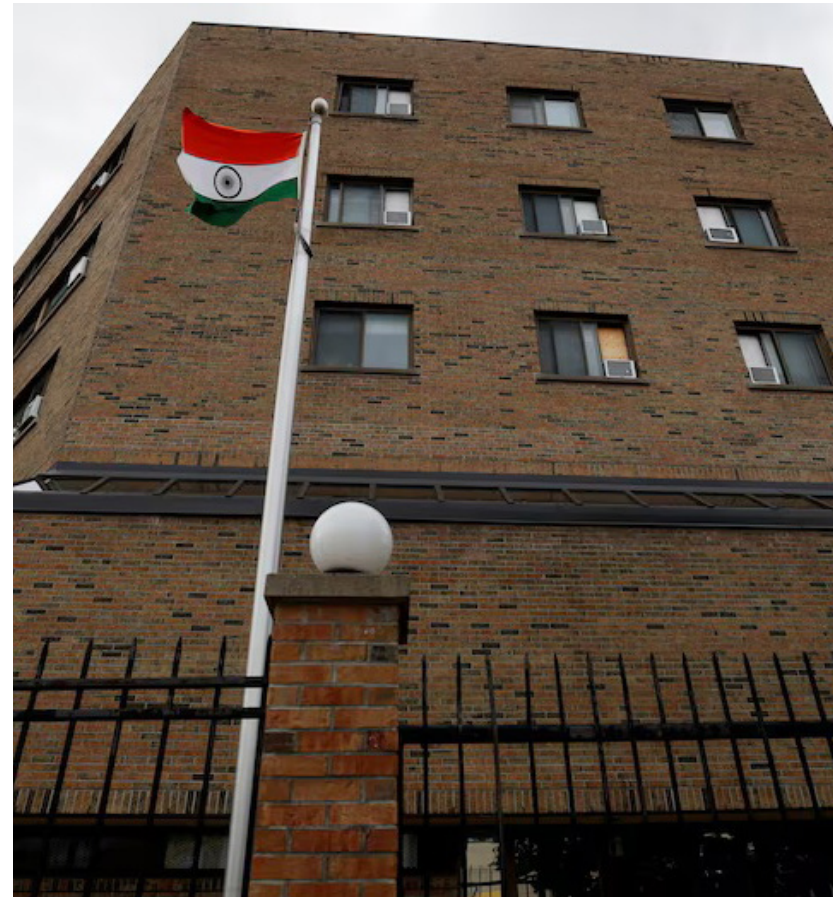
The government now has "clear and compelling evidence that agents of the government of India have engaged in and continue to engage in activities that pose a significant threat to public safety," Trudeau said at a news conference.

These activities involved clandestine information gathering techniques, coercive behaviour, targeting South Asian Canadians and involvement in over a dozen threatening and violent acts, including murder, he said.

"This is unacceptable," he said, adding that India had committed a fundamental error by engaging in criminal activities in Canada.

India has long denied Trudeau's accusations. On Monday, it dismissed Canada's move on the inquiry and accused Trudeau of pursuing a "political agenda."

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in an earlier news conference the government of India had undertaken a broad campaign against Indian dissidents including homicides and extortion. It had also used organised crime to target the South Asian community in Canada and interfered in democratic processes, police said.



"The decision to expel these individuals was made with great consideration and only after the RCMP gathered ample, clear and concrete evidence which identified six individuals as persons of interest in the Nijjar case," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

India said it had asked six Canadian diplomats to leave by Saturday. The ministry also said it had summoned Acting High Commissioner in India Stewart Wheeler, currently Canada's top diplomat in the South Asian country.

India said it was withdrawing its diplomats from Canada because it was not confident that their safety could be guaranteed.

"We have no faith in the current Canadian Government's commitment to ensure their security. Therefore, the Government of India has decided to withdraw the High Commissioner and other targeted diplomats and officials," India's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Canada's Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said the government had requested India to remove the diplomatic immunity of six diplomats so that the Canadian investigative agencies could question them regarding the allegations of criminal activity.

But since India did not co-operate, it had to expel the diplomats.

"We're not seeking diplomatic confrontation with India," she said.

"But we will not sit quietly as agents of any country are linked to efforts to threaten, harass or even kill Canadians."

Canada withdrew more than 40 diplomats from India in October 2023 after New Delhi asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence.

"We have gone from a rift to a major rupture in the relationship with India," Fen Osler Hampson, professor of international relations at Ottawa's Carleton University said in a telephone interview. "It is hard to see at this juncture that a return to normalcy will happen any time in the foreseeable future."

Canada is home to the highest population of Sikhs outside their home state of Punjab and demonstrations in recent years have irked India's government

Russia Could Be Able to Attack NATO by 2030

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Russia will likely be capable of launching an attack on NATO by 2030 and is ramping up efforts to disrupt Ukraine's Western supporters through sabotage, German intelligence chiefs warned Monday.

Germany, Kyiv's second biggest military backer behind only the United States, is itself being increasingly targeted by Russian spying and sabotage activities, they said.

"Whether we like it or not, we are in a direct confrontation with Russia," BND foreign intelligence chief Bruno Kahl told a parliamentary hearing.

President Vladimir Putin's long-term goal was to weaken the West, Kahl said, while a military clash with NATO was "becoming an option for Russia".

"In terms of personnel and material, Russian armed forces are likely to be capable of carrying out an attack against NATO by the end of the decade at the latest," Kahl said.

Kahl spoke at a hearing in the Bundestag alongside the heads of Germany's domestic and military intelligence services, who took turns to warn of the growing threat from Russia against the backdrop of the invasion of Ukraine.

"Russian espionage and sabotage in Germany are increasing, both qualitatively and quantitatively," domestic intelligence chief Thomas Haldenwang said.

He listed suspected sabotage activities, including a near miss involving an exploding package and a DHL cargo plane.

The parcel had burst into flames on the ground at the airport in Leipzig in July before it could be loaded onto the plane, in what Haldenwang called a "lucky accident".

"If it had exploded onboard during the flight, there would have been a crash and the debris could have hit all the people here in Germany who, openly or secretly, sympathise with Putin," he said.

Haldenwang said Russia was also engaged in disinformation campaigns, had deployed



drones to spy on critical infrastructure and was looking to recruit people, including from the world of organised crime.

Moscow's campaign of disruption had grown from a storm to a "real hurricane" moving west, Haldenwang said, noting that Germany's eastern neighbours Poland and the Baltic states faced an even more "brutal" threat.

Germany has been shaken by several cases of alleged spying for Russia and alleged acts of sabotage since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In April, investigators arrested two German-Russian men on suspicion of spying for Russia and planning attacks in Germany -- including on US army facilities -- to undermine military support for Ukraine.

Subsequently, a German military base was sealed off after a hole was discovered in the fence in a suspected act of sabotage, while trespassers have allegedly sought entry to NATO camps in the country.

The German armed forces had seen a "significant increase" in espionage and sabotage activities linked to Russia, the head of military intelligence Martina Rosenberg said at the parliamentary hearing.

Among the activities undertaken by Russia were "reconnaissance of German arms deliveries to Ukraine" as well as surveillance of military training and armaments projects, she said.

The trio of intelligence chiefs pleaded for more powers to counter Russian activities among other threats on German soil.

The intelligence services were "fighting fires on all sides", Haldenwang said, noting the threat posed by possible Chinese and Iranian-backed activities, as well as radical Islamists and the far right in Germany.



Germany Into Nations League Quarters, France and Italy Win

PARIS (Dispatches) - Germany secured a place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals with a 1-0 win over old rivals the Netherlands on Monday, while France won in Belgium and Italy continued their recent revival.

Jamie Leweling of Stuttgart scored on his debut to give Germany victory over the Netherlands in Munich and guarantee them one of the top two spots in Group 3 of League A.

It was the eighth meeting of the teams in the last six years but, for the Dutch, there was nothing familiar about Leweling.

The 23-year-old was an addition to the Germany squad for this month's games following an injury to Jamal Musiala.

He was then called off the bench to start the game after an injury to club teammate Deniz Undav in the warm-up.

Leweling found the net after just two minutes only for that effort to be ruled out for an offside in the build-up, but he then blasted in the winner on 64 minutes.

"Jamie had an outstanding debut -- it's not often the Allianz Arena gives you a reception like that -- he did well," said captain Joshua Kimmich.

Germany have 10 points from four games and will definitely take part in the quarter-finals next March. The Netherlands, who were without the suspended Virgil van Dijk, are level on five points with Hungary.

The Hungarians won 2-0 on Monday away in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with captain Dominik Szoboszlai, of Liverpool, opening the scoring late in the first half and adding a penalty after the break.

Italy remain top of Group A2 after easing to a 4-1 win at home to Israel in Udine.

Mateo Retegui opened the scoring with a penalty shortly before half-time and captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo netted twice in the second half.

Davide Frattesi also scored for Italy, with Mohammad Abu Fani pulling one back for Israel.

France are a point behind Italy after they again won in the absence of Kylian Mbappe, a double by Randal Kolo Muani securing a 2-1 victory in Belgium.

Kolo Muani's opener from the penalty spot in the 35th minute at the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels was cancelled out by Lois Openda in first-half stoppage time.

But Kolo Muani, who has had a difficult start to the season with his club, then headed in the winner just after the hour mark.

France, who saw Belgium's Youri Tielemans squander an early spot-kick, held on with 10 men after stand-in captain Aurelien Tchouameni was sent off late on.

The result was France's second win in as many games in this international break, despite them being minus skipper Mbappe, who was allowed to sit out the matches following a recent thigh injury.

As Les Bleus took to the field in the Belgian capital, a newspaper report in Sweden emerged claiming that Mbappe was being investigated for rape following a visit to Stockholm last week.

Elsewhere on Monday, Turkey won 4-2 in Iceland to stay top of Group B4, with all their goals in Reykjavik coming in the final half-hour.

Irfan Can Kahveci, Hakan Calhanoglu of Inter Milan, Real Madrid's Arda Guler and Kerem Akturkoglu all scored for Turkey.

With 10 points, they are two ahead of Wales in the race for promotion to League A.

Crag Bellamy's team beat Montenegro 1-0 in Cardiff thanks to a Harry Wilson penalty.

The Czech Republic are top of Group B1 after a 1-1 draw against Ukraine, while Albania defeated Georgia 1-0.

In Group C1, Sweden won 3-0 in Estonia and Slovakia beat Azerbaijan 3-1 away.

Mbappé Says Victim of "Fake News"



PARIS (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappé said Monday he was the victim of "fake news" after a Swedish newspaper reported an investigation had been opened for rape following a visit by the Real Madrid star's entourage to Stockholm.

Mbappé claimed in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, that there was a link between the report in the Aftonbladet newspaper and his hearing before a French league committee on Tuesday in his bitter dispute over unpaid wages with his former club Paris Saint-Germain.

"FAKE NEWS !!!! It's becoming so predictable, on the eve of the hearing, as if by chance," Mbappé posted.

The 25-year-old player's entourage called the report a "slandorous rumour" and threatened to take legal action.

Mbappé claims he is owed 55 million euros (\$60 million) by the Qatari-owned French champions.

The 2018 World Cup winner was not selected for France's Nations League fixtures last week, and spent Thursday and Friday in the Swedish capital.

On Thursday, Mbappé and a group of people accompanying him dined at a restaurant, then went to a nightclub, according to Aftonbladet's report.

The newspaper said a rape was committed "in Stockholm city centre", citing a formal complaint made to police on Saturday that it had seen.

Aftonbladet said the complaint was made after the alleged victim had sought medical attention but did not say who was named in the accusation.

A prosecutor investigating the accusation told AFP: "A probe is under way into a crime that was reported on October 10 in the centre of Stockholm."

Football Leagues, Unions File EU Complaint Against FIFA in Calendar Dispute

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Major bodies representing footballers and clubs in Europe on Monday filed a complaint to the European Commission accusing FIFA of abusing its position over changes to the international match calendar and tournament expansions.

Football's world governing body "holds conflicting roles as governing body and competition organiser, which give rise to a conflict of interest," FIFPro Europe, the European Leagues body and Spain's La Liga said in a statement.

The bodies presented their complaint at a press conference in Brussels, saying that FIFA's "imposition of decisions on the international calendar is an abuse of dominance and violates EU law".

FIFPro is the global players' union while European Leagues brings together more than one thousand clubs from 33 countries around Europe.

Its member leagues include the English Premier League, as well as the leagues in Italy, Germany and France, but not La Liga, which joined the complaint separately.

Citing recent European court rulings related to the breakaway Super League and the Lassana Diarra case, the bodies said FIFA's rules and conduct "harm the economic interests of national leagues, and the health and safety of players in European football".

"A legal challenge before the European Commission has become a necessary course of action to safeguard the European football sector," they added.



FIFA has been accused of a failure to consult over recent changes to the calendar, such as the introduction of a 32-team Club World Cup.

The first edition of the expanded Club World Cup will take place in the United States in June and July next year and 12 European clubs are due to feature.

Many of the continent's leading players will therefore be obliged to participate at a time when they would otherwise have been afforded a long close-season break, a year ahead of the expanded 48-team World Cup in North America.

A recent FIFPro report accused football's governing bodies of putting players' health at risk amid a constantly growing calendar, while some leading players have evoked the possibility of going on strike to protest against the increasing demands being made of them.

Representatives of domestic leagues, meanwhile, have voiced concerns that their competitions will suffer the most as top players will inevitably miss more domestic matches in order to rest, damaging their brands.

FIFA has previously hit back at criticism and accused leagues of acting with "commercial self-interest (and) hypocrisy".

"Those leagues apparently prefer a calendar filled with friendlies and summer tours, often involving extensive global travel," the body said in July after it first emerged that legal action was planned.

Nigeria Refuse to Play in Libya as Algeria, Cameroon Qualify



JOHANNESBURG (Dispatches) - Nigeria's refusal to play an Africa Cup of Nations fixture in Libya after alleged "inhumane treatment" of their squad, overshadowed Algeria and Cameroon qualifying on Monday for the 2025 finals.

"This is getting scary," said forward Victor Boniface on social media after the Nigerian squad were stranded at an airport 225 kilometres (140 miles) by road from Benghazi, the match venue.

"We have been stuck at the airport for almost 13 hours with no food, Wi-Fi or place to sleep. Africa, we can do better," he added on X (formerly twitter).

Former African Footballer of the Year Victor Ikpeba, who accompanied Nigeria to north Africa, told AFP: "If CAF know their job, Libya ought to be banned from international football."

Nigeria beat Libya 1-0 in Uyo last Friday in Group D and the teams were set to meet again in the fourth round in Benghazi on Tuesday.

Furious at the way they were allegedly treated, the Nigerian delegation returned home on Monday, a CAF official confirmed to AFP.

A Libyan Football Federation statement said: "We reject any claims that suggest foul play or sabotage in this situation."

"There are no grounds to accuse the... Libyan Football Federation of deliberately orchestrating the incident. Such actions are inconsistent with our values and principles."

"It is important to highlight that just last week our own national team faced significant challenges upon arrival in Nigeria."

CAF reacted to the incident by saying in a statement that they had been in contact with Libyan and Nigerian authorities.

"The matter has been referred to the CAF disciplinary board for investigation and appropriate action will be taken against those who violated CAF statutes and regulations," it said.

Ahead of the Group D fixtures on Tuesday -- Rwanda host Benin in the other -- Nigeria and Benin were well placed to fill the top two places and qualify for the finals.

Three-time AFCON champions Nigeria have seven points, Benin six, Rwanda two and Libya one, halfway through the six-round qualifying competition.

In Group J, Cameroon substitute Boris Enow beat Kenya goalkeeper Bryne Omondi off a free-kick outside the area to give the five-time AFCON title-holders a 1-0 win and qualification.

Djokovic Confirms Plans to Compete Next Season

LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic insisted yesterday that he plans "to compete and play next season" despite suffering another loss at the hands of world number one Jannik Sinner.

The 37-year-old Serb, the holder of a men's record 24 Grand Slam titles, went down 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 to the Italian in the final of the Shanghai Masters.

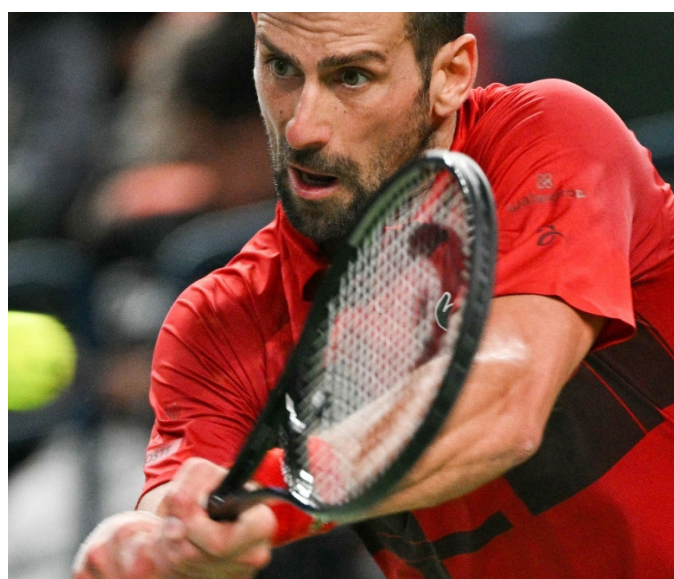
It was Djokovic's third defeat in his last four clashes against the Australian Open and US Open champion.

However, Djokovic said he has no intention of following career-long rival Rafael Nadal into retirement even though he endured by his own admission "one of the worst-performing seasons in terms of results".

"I don't know what the future brings, I'll just try to kind of go with the flow to see how I feel in a given moment, but I still plan to compete and play next season," he told reporters.

Djokovic failed to add to his Grand Slam haul in 2024 as Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz, who claimed the French Open and Wimbledon titles, took possession of the sport's major honours.

However, Djokovic was crowned Olympic champion, winning



an emotional roller-coaster of a final against Alcaraz in Paris in August. That was his 99th career title.

The loss left him frustratingly short of becoming just the third man after Jimmy Connors and Roger Federer to win 100 titles.

"It's not a live-or-die type of goal for me, I think I've achieved all of my biggest goals in my career," he said.

"Right now it's really about Slams and about still seeing how far I can kind of push the bar for myself."

Djokovic hailed Sinner who at 23 is 14 years his junior. His title in Shanghai was his seventh of the year.

"He's very solid from the forehand and backhand, doesn't make too many mistakes, and just tries to take away the time from the opponent," said Djokovic.

"That's something that reminds me of myself throughout my career, that's what I've done for so many years consistently, playing fast-paced tennis, taking away time from the opponent, kind of suffocating the opponent in a certain way."