

DETROIT (Reuters) -- About 5,000 General Motors Co salaried workers took buyouts to leave the company, putting the company well on the way to hitting a \$2 billion cost-cutting target, the automaker's chief financial officer said Tuesday.

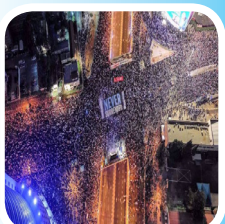
GM shares were trading down nearly 2% at midday, even though CFO Paul Jacobson said demand for GM's trucks and SUVs remains strong in the United States.

LONDON (Reuters) -- Hundreds of Google employees staged a walkout at the company's London offices on Tuesday, following a dispute over layoffs. In January, Google's parent company Alphabet (GOOGL) announced it was laying off 12,000 employees worldwide, equivalent to 6% of its global workforce. The move came amid a wave of job cuts across corporate America, particularly in the tech sector, which has so far seen companies shed more than 290,000 workers since the start of the year, according to tracking site Layoffs.fyi.

Viewpoint

Time to End US Military Presence in Iraq

Top General: U.S., Zionists on Road to Collapse



Iranian Wrestling Teams to Compete at Asian Championships



Zionist Army Intelligence Head Warns Regime of Weakening Strategic Position



Mourners Throng Streets for Miles in Tehran Huge Farewell Rally for Martyrs of Zionist Aggression

TEHRAN -- Tens of thousands of mourners on Tuesday poured to the streets here to pay their homage to two military advisers of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), martyred in an Israeli airstrike near the Syrian capital last week.

The massive ceremony started in the morning, with the mourners carrying the coffins of Milad Heidari and Meqdad Mehqani, draped in the Iranian flag, on their shoulders.

Chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hussein Salami, commander of IRGC Quds Force Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani, and many other high-ranking Iranian officials were in attendance.

The IRGC military advisers were martyred in aerial assaults conducted by the occupying regime of Israel on Damascus suburbs Friday.

Heidari, a 32-year-old father of two, was from Kurdistan province. He was living in Tehran's Qarchak county. Mehqani, 31, later succumbed to his injuries he sustained during the Israeli attack. He was from Golestan province and had a two-year-old son. Iran maintains an advisory mis-

sion in the Arab country, helping it in the face of foreign-backed terrorism. Back in 2017, the advisory assistance helped Syria vanquish the takfiri terrorist group of Daesh.

First Vice President Muhammad Mokhber decried the crime, saying that the air raid was a flagrant violation of international law.

Known as one of the main supporters of terrorist groups that have battled the government of President Bashar al-Assad since foreign-backed militancy erupted in Syria in early 2011, the Zionist regime frequently violates Syrian sovereignty and conducts attacks in the Arab country.

The targets usually include residential buildings. Military positions especially those of the Hezbollah resistance movement, which has played a key role in helping the Syrian army in its fight against foreign-backed terrorists, are also frequently hit by Israeli strikes.

The occupying regime of Israel largely remains silent about the attacks. Damascus has repeatedly complained to the UN over the assaults, urging the Security Council to take action against Tel Aviv's crimes. The calls have, however, fallen on deaf ears.

Ayatollah Khamenei Tells State Officials: Most Important Issue is People's Livelihood



Ayatollah Khamenei addresses the heads of the three branches of power, lawmakers and former social and cultural officials in Tehran on Tuesday.

TEHRAN -- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said here Tuesday that economy is the first issue of the country, calling on state officials and institutions to put people's welfare on top of their priorities.

"The most important issue of the country is people's livelihood. This year's motto is an important motto," the Leader said, referring to his labeling of the new Iranian year as the year of controlling in-

flation and boosting production. "The fact that the motto for this year is an economic motto does not mean we are heedless of cultural and social issues. They are also important in their own place, but a disordered economy also affects the culture of the society," he said.

The Leader made the remarks in an address to the heads of the three branches of power, senior managers of various institutions,

lawmakers, former officials and social and cultural activists.

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the country's high inflation for several years in a row, saying it is a "very important" problem which affects the income distribution.

"This renders the income distribution unbalanced; some people remain deprived, and some people have their pockets filled in various ways. This leads to corruption on

both sides," the Leader said.

"Sometimes we were able to control inflation, but it came with stagnation, which is to the detriment of the country. It is not a good thing to bring down the inflation while recession dominates the economy. It is important to be able to control inflation without production being stagnant.

"Production should grow and this is possible," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran's capacities are enormous, citing the country's hardware portfolio, natural resources, geographical location, economic infrastructure, factories, software facilities, creative manpower, motivated young people, scientific and technological capacities as well as new thoughts.

"All these facilities should serve to curb inflation and spur production growth... All of these capacities should be used. We should use external communications. Foreign relations are not only relations with America and four European countries. The world consists of two-hundred and odd countries, each having a capacity. These external communications can be used for our purpose."

Another requirement for the implementation of this year's motto is stability in economic policies and decisions, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

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Wary of U.S.: EU in a Quandary Over China Ties

BEIJING (AFP) -- The European Union is seeking a reset in its ties with China, though Beijing's refusal to condemn Moscow's war in Ukraine clouds prospects for any grand rapprochement.

A flurry of European leaders has descended on Beijing in a push to get dialogue going, with key visits by French President Emmanuel Macron and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen scheduled this week.

They follow German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, European Council President Charles Michel and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, all of whom have visited Beijing since China dropped its zero-COVID restrictions in December 2022.

EU Commission President von der Leyen acknowledged last week that ties have become "more distant and more difficult" in recent years.

"Understanding each other starts with speaking with one another," she said.

The goal of Michel's December visit was to revive dialogue between the European Union and

China, a European ambassador said in a recent briefing to journalists.

And the long-term objective is to hold an EU-China summit in Beijing in June or July, according to diplomatic sources.

The EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell will also visit China soon, the same sources said.

"We can see there is this desire to re-establish contacts and above all to weigh in as the EU," Valerie Niquet, head of the Asia program at France's Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), told AFP.

The idea is to "strike up normal relations again", she added.

Analysts say a re-establishment of "business as usual" could also be beneficial from Beijing's perspective.

"China is interested in the EU for two reasons: In terms of economics, it's an essential market," Niquet said.

"And it could eventually be a way of circumventing American pressure at various levels, and driving a wedge into any sort of Western unity against China."

High on the agenda for the

meetings in Beijing this week is the conflict in Ukraine.

Both Macron and von der Leyen appear set on reiterating the European Union's commitment to Ukraine in their discussions with China's Xi Jinping.

"Far from being put off by the atrocious and illegal invasion of Ukraine, President Xi is maintaining his 'no limits friendship' with Putin's Russia," von der Leyen said Thursday (Mar 30).

"How China continues to interact with Putin's war will be a determining factor for EU-China relations going forward."

Xi's visit to Moscow in March saw the Chinese and Russian leaders hail a "new era" in ties between their two nations.

"The way China positions itself on the war in Ukraine is a disappointment for Europe," a European diplomat currently posted in Beijing told AFP.

But she was skeptical China would be persuaded by the European Union to alter its position, because Beijing still sees Europe as "the United States' little brother".

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Washington Post Reveals: Europeans Told Not to Talk About Nord Stream

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- After saboteurs severely damaged the Nord Stream natural gas pipelines last September, German officials zeroed in on a rented sailboat that appeared to have taken part in planting explosive devices deep below the surface of the Baltic Sea.

But after months of investigation, law enforcement officials now suspect that the 50-foot yacht, the Andromeda, was probably not the only vessel used in the audacious attack, the Washington Post has reported.

They also say the boat may have been a decoy, put to sea to distract from the true perpetrators, who remain at large, according to officials with knowledge of an investigation led by Germany's attorney general, the paper said.

Officials hope that the true purpose of Andromeda in the deep-sea demolition will provide further insight in a high-stakes, international whodunnit that could eventually lead to those responsible and explain their motives, which remain unclear. However, "for all the intrigue

around who bombed the pipeline, some Western officials are not so eager to find out," the Post wrote.

At gatherings of European and NATO policymakers, officials have settled into a rhythm, said one senior European diplomat: "Don't talk about Nord Stream." Leaders see little benefit from digging too deeply and finding an uncomfortable answer, the diplomat said, echoing sentiments of several peers in other countries who said they would rather not have to deal with the possibility that Ukraine or allies were involved.

"Even if there were a clear culprit, it would not likely stop the provision of arms to Ukraine, diminish the level of anger with Russia or alter the strategy of the war, these officials argued. The attack happened months ago and allies have continued to commit more and heavier weapons to the fight, which faces a pivotal period in the next few months," the Post said.

Since no country is yet ruled out from having carried out the attack,

officials said they were loath to share suspicions that could accidentally anger a friendly government that might have had a hand in bombing Nord Stream.

In the absence of concrete clues, an awkward silence has prevailed. "It's like a corpse at a family gathering," the European diplomat said, reaching for a grim analogy. Everyone can see there's a body lying there, but pretends things are normal. "It's better not to know."

In February, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published a bombshell report that said the U.S. was behind the Nord Stream bombings. Hersh alleged that U.S. Navy divers planted explosives on the pipelines in an operation ordered by President Biden and carried out with the cooperation of Norway.

The Post report said suspicion for the attacks has fallen on Ukraine and Poland. It does not mention Hersh's findings but casts doubt on a new narrative that the perpetrators of the bombings

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