

TEHRAN/ BAGHDAD – Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said on Tuesday that Iran is an important and influential neighbor that should be engaged through direct dialogue.

"Iran is an influential country, and cooperation with it should take place through direct discussions," Sudani said in remarks carried by Baghdad Al-Yaum.

TEHRAN – Iran is ready to mediate between Pakistan and Afghanistan to help resolve their disputes, President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday.

Pezeshkian made the remarks during a meeting with Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on the sidelines of the 4th ECO Interior Ministers Meeting in Tehran. He described Iran-Pakistan ties as "warm and outstanding," rooted in brotherhood and mutual trust, and expressed hope their relations could serve as a model for other countries.

Viewpoint

Capital Punishment Awaits Netanyahu and all War Criminals

Iran Vows Vigilance Against U.S., Israeli Aggression

TEHRAN – Iran said on Tuesday that the threat of military action by the United States is ever-present and reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining readiness while continuing diplomatic engagement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Speaking at a weekly press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei warned that U.S. actions against Iran have consistently violated international law, describing Washington's behavior as criminal.

He said Tehran's constant preparedness reflects prudence and foresight, but rejected the notion that it anticipated attacks while negotiating with global powers.

"The possibility of U.S. military aggression has always existed, and it cannot be denied. Measures contrary to international law by the United States against Iran have always been in place," Baghaei said.

"Maintaining vigilance is a sign of foresight and wisdom, but we did not expect these events during negotiations."

Turning to Israeli threats, Baghaei touched on Tel Aviv's ongoing attempts to harm the Iranian population. "The Israeli regime has spared no effort to target the Iranian people," he said.

"It is the Iranian nation that stood firm and prevented the aggressors from achieving their goals." He emphasized that Iran's focus remains on strengthening capabilities across multiple sectors to ensure national defense.

Baghaei rejected reports that Russian mediation had persuaded

ed Tehran to reduce tensions with Israel, saying Iran has learned to remain vigilant and cannot rely on Israeli commitments.

On regional developments, Baghaei highlighted Iran's consultations with Syria, describing the stability of its neighbor as a shared priority. He also condemned Israel for violating ceasefires in Gaza and continuing violence in Lebanon, saying Tehran stands against the expansion of Israeli attacks in the region.

Baghaei's comments came amid heightened tensions in Latin America. He criticized U.S. threats against Venezuela as illegal and dangerous, describing them as part of a broader pattern of unilateral American intervention under the guise of combating drug trafficking.

"We are facing a unilateral process at the international level. The most important rule of international law is the prohibition of the use of force and respect for state sovereignty. These rules are being violated in Latin American countries under the pretext of drug trafficking," he said.

"There is no doubt about the illegal and criminal nature of U.S. actions threatening Venezuela and some other countries in the region."

Baghaei linked U.S. regional actions to concerns over the influence of countries opposed to American dominance, including Russia, China, and Iran. "These measures are clearly a reaction to the growing influence of anti-U.S. countries in the Caribbean and Latin America," he said.

Qazvin Excavations Reveal 6th Millennium BCE Village Life



Girls' Handball Wins First-Ever Asian Youth Games Gold



ECO Summit, Tehran: Security, Economy in Spotlight



President Masoud Pezeshkian attends the opening of the 4th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Interior Ministers Meeting in Tehran Tuesday.

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called for stronger regional security and cooperation at the opening of the 4th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Interior Ministers Meeting here Tuesday, emphasizing that stability is a prerequisite for economic development.

The summit, convened after a 15-year hiatus, brought together interior ministers and senior officials from Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. ECO Secretary-General Asad Majid Khan, along with officials from Oman and Iraq, attended as guests.

Opening the session, Pezeshkian described the resumption of the ECO meeting as a signal

of renewed commitment among member states to strengthen cooperation across economic, security, and administrative sectors.

"After a long hiatus, holding the 4th ECO Interior Ministers Meeting demonstrates the shared resolve of member states to deepen coordination in areas of mutual interest," he said.

Pezeshkian stressed that interior ministries play a central role in providing the stable administrative and security frameworks necessary for regional economic collaboration.

"Success in regional economic cooperation requires, among other things, solid, predictable, stable, and resilient common frameworks and platforms," he said. "The interior ministries are pivotal in ensuring these prereq-

uisites are met."

He highlighted the challenges faced by the ECO region, including illegal migration, drug trafficking, human smuggling, terrorism, and other forms of organized crime. According to Pezeshkian, effective regional cooperation and economic integration are only possible if these threats are addressed through coordinated action.

A major point in Pezeshkian's remarks was the proposal to establish a joint regional police force, tentatively called "ECO Police" or "ECOPOL." He noted that the ECO region is one of the few in the world without a shared law enforcement institution, which limits cooperation on cross-border crime and complicates coordination with international policing organizations.

"The absence of a unified police force in the ECO region represents a critical gap in our collective security infrastructure," Pezeshkian said.

"Establishing ECOPOL would enhance our capacity to combat organized crime, human trafficking, and other transnational threats, while facilitating cooperation with other regional and international law enforcement bodies."

In addition to law enforcement, Pezeshkian highlighted judicial cooperation as a key element for ensuring that economic and security collaborations are effective. He called for mechanisms to harmonize legal frameworks, share information, and coordinate actions across member states to strengthen the rule of law in the region.

Pezeshkian also reflected on the broader historical and geopolitical context, emphasizing that the ECO region has long faced

external pressures and interventions.

"Our region has witnessed significant foreign interventions in recent history," he said. "It is imperative that we establish a security architecture that is coherent, stability-creating, and development-oriented, rooted in our own capacities and aspirations."

The Iranian president described the ECO as "the heir to decades of effort, synergy, and persistence by member states for economic convergence." While the organization has achieved important milestones, he said, significant untapped potential remains.

Pezeshkian pointed to the recent summit of ECO leaders in Khankendi, Azerbaijan, and the upcoming "ECO Vision 2035," which aims to provide a strategic roadmap for regional economic integration and development.

Beyond security, Pezeshkian highlighted the role of local governance and urban diplomacy in strengthening regional ties. He encouraged initiatives such as sister city partnerships, municipal exchanges, and cross-border infrastructure projects as avenues for fostering economic and cultural collaboration.

Pezeshkian also noted emerging security challenges, including crimes involving artificial intelligence, cyber threats, and other technology-driven risks. He emphasized that the ECO must adopt coordinated strategies to anticipate and mitigate these new threats.

In closing, Pezeshkian reiterated that the region's stability and economic prosperity depend on cooperation across multiple domains, from law enforcement to governance.

"The ECO is a valuable platform for dialogue, exchange of experiences, and solidarity in all areas," he said. "By working together, we can build a prosperous and secure future for our peoples."

Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, speaking to reporters after the meeting, reinforced Pezeshkian's message, stressing that Iran is committed to strengthening relations and expanding economic cooperation with ECO member states.

"Iran's firm policy is to enhance relations and develop economic interactions with ECO countries," he said.

Momeni praised the high-level participation at the Tehran summit, noting that beyond the ten member states, Iraq, Oman, and several international organizations also attended.

"The content of the discussions reflected a strong convergence of views," he said. He added that

Hezbollah Support Drives U.S. to Push Lebanon to Edge

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanese President Michel Aoun has signaled a shift in stance toward Hezbollah, resisting mounting U.S. and Western demands that the country disarm the resistance movement, reflecting a growing determination in Beirut to defend national sovereignty amid external pressure.

Aoun, who has long navigated Lebanon's sectarian and political divides, made clear that the country will not be coerced into measures that could spark internal unrest.

His office emphasized that Lebanon must adhere to its constitutional and legal frameworks, even as U.S. envoy Tom Barrack warned that his upcoming visit will be his "last" unless Lebanon commits to direct negotiations with Israel under American supervision and disarms Hezbollah.

Barrack is set to meet Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam,

and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri on Wednesday.

"I will inform the president, the prime minister, and the speaker of parliament that they have one last chance," Barrack reportedly told sources cited by Al-Akhbar.

"Either they learn their lesson and enter into direct negotiations with Israel ... or Lebanon will be left to its fate, with no one to care about it, neither in America nor in the region, and no one will be able to pressure Israel to prevent it from doing whatever it deems appropriate to undertake disarmament by force."

The threat underscores the blunt coercion employed by Washington and its allies, which analysts say is part of a broader campaign to weaken Lebanon's independence and impose external control over the country's political and security decisions.

President Aoun's cautious resistance is bolstered by widespread

popular support for Hezbollah, particularly in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and Beirut's southern suburbs.

Surveys and public rallies show that many Lebanese view Hezbollah not as an armed faction but as a legitimate defender of the country, especially in the face of repeated Israeli incursions.

For decades, Hezbollah's military presence has been seen by most Lebanese as essential to deterring attacks and defending the country's territorial integrity.

Barrack's warnings follow the arrival of U.S. Deputy Special Envoy Morgan Ortogus, who has led Washington's push to disarm Hezbollah since February.

Ortagus met with Speaker Berri in Beirut, offering Lebanon a stark choice: either enter direct talks with Israel or continue coordination via the existing UNIFIL-led ceasefire mechanism.

Analysts describe this as forc-

ing Lebanon to violate its own laws while turning a blind eye to repeated Israeli attacks, which have claimed at least 27 lives this month alone, including civilians and Hezbollah commanders.

Hezbollah leaders insist that their armed presence is legitimate and necessary. Sheikh Naim Qassem, secretary-general of Hezbollah, said in an interview with Al-Manar TV on Sunday that the movement's resistance is "an integrated way of life" and a core element of Lebanon's security.

"We do not tire, and the party's journey is strong and firm. We cannot surrender just because of fatigue. Instead, we continue to defend and stand firm," he said.

Reflecting on last year's confrontation with Israel, Sheikh Qassem praised Hezbollah's fighters for halting the advance of more than 75,000 Israeli soldiers, preventing incursions toward Beirut,

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