

Mideast on Edge

Jordan FM in Tehran amid heightened tensions



Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani (3rd L) meets with top Jordanian diplomat Ayman al-Safadi (3rd R) in Tehran on August 4, 2024.

ANA

What is the antidote to Israel's terrorism?



By Seyyed Abdolamir Nabavi
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EXCLUSIVE OPINION

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh was no ordinary incident within Israel's ongoing campaign to eliminate Hamas leaders and top members. Rather, strike targeted Tehran's authority more than anything else. The assassination could have occurred at any other time and place, probably with less hassle. However,

eliminating Haniyeh in Tehran at this particular time was a direct blow to the new Iranian government, forcing Iran to hit back immediately and nervously and undermining its efforts to improve foreign relations and the economic situation from the very beginning.

Iran also wants to revive the myth of its intelligence power, which was severely damaged by the October 7 attack. Although Israel has not, by tradition, claimed responsibility for the deadly operation, it is clear who the main suspect is and where the assassination order came from.

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US assures Netanyahu about Israel's security



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

PERSPECTIVE

Despite Israel's involvement in severe incidents such as the assassination of Hamas Politburo Chief Ismail Haniyeh and the targeted killing of Hezbollah commander Fuad al-Shukr in southern Lebanon, the United States has once again assured Tel Aviv that Washington is committed to protecting Israel's security from threats posed by Tehran.

According to a White House spokesperson, on Thursday, US President Joe Biden informed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington is determined to ensure Israel's security against all threats from Iran and is prepared for direct military intervention if necessary. The United States has increased its naval presence in the region with the latest air defense systems. Biden's call was made to boost Netanyahu's morale after threats of attacks on Israel following the assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran.

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Iranian envoy hails 'win-win' Iran-Russia gas deal

Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali described the Iran-Russia gas transfer as a win-win deal. In an interview with IRNA which was published on Sunday, Jalali said that the landmark project would benefit both sides.

In the past, there were some speculations that Tehran and Moscow were rivals when it came to energy, the diplomat said. Jalali went on to say that, however, when policies are adopted based on mutual interests, they will turn into lasting policies. The Iranian envoy also called the Iran-Russia gas deal a mega-project.

Russia ranked first from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, in terms of making investments in Iran, Jalali underlined. To finalize the deal on gas transfer, the two countries held intense talks, he added.

On June 26, an MoU on Russian gas transfer to Iran was signed during a ceremony attended by the high-ranking officials of the two countries. "A strategic memorandum has been signed with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)", a statement by Gazprom said, adding "the parties proceed from developing long-term mutually beneficial cooperation going forward".

Iran's Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji said the signing of the memorandum will yield favorable changes in the energy balance in the region, where Iran will be fully ready to receive gas from Russia with its infrastructure and gas transmission lines.

The gas agreement, he added, will bring about a revolution in the energy and industrial ecosystem of the region.

Iran-EAEU free trade deal soon to be launched

The deputy head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the free trade agreement (FTA) between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will be launched soon. Mohammad Sadeq Qannadzeh stated that the FTA is under review by the Iranian Parliament and will be put to a vote in the near future, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Speaking in a news conference of an event entitled "Introducing Iran Investment Opportunities," the deputy chief of the

organization said once the FTA is ratified, more than 87 percent of the tariff code between the two sides will be reduced to zero level, he added.

Qannadzeh went on to say that the launch of the Free Trade Agreement with neighboring Pakistan and also the launch of an FTA with the Sultanate of Oman has been put on the agenda.

He put the number of Iran's commercial envoys stationed in various countries at 22, adding that the organization is



dispatching 11 other envoys to foreign countries in line with strengthening ties in the fields

of trade and economy. In the first year of the administration of President Masoud

Pezeshkian, the number of commercial envoys will reach 60, he added.

De facto economic chief steps in



By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

Ali Tayebnia, former Iranian minister, was ap-

pointed as the chief advisor of newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday. Tayebnia joined Pezeshkian's campaign team during the recent presidential race and helped bolster his economic platform. He played an active role on the campaign trail and

came out strongly against statements made by Pezeshkian's main rival, Saeed Jalili. Rumors had it that he was poised to become the first vice president, but after Mohammad-Reza Aref took the position, Tayebnia welcomed the appointment in a video message, saying that "I was not ready" for the top post due to "personal reasons". However, he emphasized that he would stand by Pezeshkian's side "until the very last day" and would do his utmost to ensure the "success and victory" of the upcoming government.

The now 64-year-old Tayebnia was once the youngest minister during former president Hassan Rouhani's first term from 2013 to 2017. He made his way into the cabinet with the highest vote of confidence (274 votes)

in the history of the Islamic Republic up to that point to take the helm of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. The four-year term was one of the most important and, according to some, the most successful period of his career, as he managed to remarkably bring down inflation and liquidity rates.

He and other members of Rouhani's economic team promised to implement a comprehensive program to curb the 35% inflation rate by adopting austerity measures and reducing it to single digits.

Tayebnia strongly opposed government intervention in the economy and advocated for the privatization of various economic sectors. He was also against cash handouts and believed that subsidies could not fundamentally com-

bat poverty and inequality in Iran's economy.

During the recent election campaign, one of Tayebnia's economic plans was to grant more tax concessions to businesses. He suggested that the tax exemption ceiling for self-employed individuals and owners of small businesses be tripled and doubled for salaried employees.

Now, with his appointment as the top advisor to President Pezeshkian, which is a position outside the cabinet, Tayebnia seems to have more leeway to steer Iran's sanction-hit economy to salvation as the unofficial "economic commander" of the Pezeshkian government. Tayebnia, however, believes that overcoming challenges gripping Iran's economy will only be possible through a coordinated and collective effort.

Iran eyes becoming a petrochemical power

More than 70 domestic and foreign companies and their representatives are attending the Iran Petrochemical Forum (IPF) in Tehran, which is held under the motto of "clean technology" with the aim of exploring new horizons for sustainable development in the petrochemical industry.

The National Petrochemical Company (NPC)'s planning and development director Hassan Abbaszadeh told the two-day forum's inauguration on Sunday that the effective participation and support of the private and public sector in holding the forum promises a better future, Press TV wrote.

Petrochemistry is deemed as a strategic industry, the continued development of which can extricate the Iranian economy from the choking grip of sanctions. For decades, the United States has imposed waves after waves of sanctions on Iran's oil and gas industry in order to choke off the country's main source of revenues. The steps have crippled

crude exports at times but not sales of fuel and petrochemicals, which have boomed in recent years.

Iran exported petrochemicals and petroleum products worth almost \$20 billion in 2020, twice the value of its crude exports.

While the sanctions apply to petrochemicals as well, sales of petrochemical products are more difficult to trace. Crude can be identified as Iranian by its grade and other features, while big oil tankers are more easily tracked via satellite.

The NPC is a subsidiary to the Iranian Petroleum Ministry which is owned by the government. In recent years, it has been increasingly shifting to the private sector in order to offset the volatile market for crude oil exports.

According to NPC Managing Director Morteza Shahmirzaee, there are nearly 75 petrochemical complexes in the country with an annual capacity of 95 million tons, which is expected to increase to 140 million tons



in 2025. They produce 550 grades of petrochemical products which are set to grow with new investment.

The sector now represents the highest added value in Iran's oil industry value-chain, further solidifying its strategic importance. It accounts for 30 percent

of its non-oil exports. Hence, a rapid expansion of the country's petrochemical industry is currently underway.

Under the general policies of sea-centered development outlined by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the coasts of the Per-

sian Gulf and the Sea of Oman are the focus of Iran's petrochemical expansion plans.

Several important and strategic projects are being worked on across Asaluyeh, Siraf, Kangan, the Parsian Energy Intensive Industrial Special Economic Zone of Lamerd, which will transform the industry and diversify the petrochemical products portfolio, besides bringing about economic growth and employment in the region.

The Mokran Petrochemical Complex (MPC) will come online by the end of the current Persian year in March 2025. That will make Chabahar in southeasternmost corner of Iran the country's third petrochemical of Iran after Mahshahr and Asaluyeh.

Shahmirzaee says internalizing the needs of the petrochemical industry and relying on domestic power is key to its growth and development.

The country is already all but self-sufficient in producing catalysts for the petroleum sector,

as well as plastic and chemical industries. "Iran's petrochemical industry relies on the power and expertise of Iranian and local knowledge in the path of development and progress," he said.

In Iran, refinery and petrochemical catalysts are a major part of consumption. These catalysts play a crucial role in enhancing efficiency, reducing production costs, and improving product quality in the petrochemical industry.

Russia and Venezuela are extensively using Iran-made catalysts. In December 2022, Shahmirzaee said Chabahar in southeasternmost corner of Iran the country's third petrochemical of Iran after Mahshahr and Asaluyeh.

Russian energy companies have been increasingly shifting their focus to petrochemicals in a drive to capitalize on the fast-growing sector and offset the volatile market for crude oil exports.

Sardasht, a Kurdish oasis of culture and natural wonders

Iranica Desk

Sardasht, sits at an altitude of 1,510 meters above sea level and is one of the Kurdish cities in the southern part of West Azarbaijan Province. Sardasht lies at a zero border point, sharing a 100-kilometer border with Iraq.

Nestled in a mountainous and forested region at the foothills of Mount Gardesur, the city is supplied with water from a spring fed by this mountain and the surrounding peaks. The local inhabitants of Sardasht are primarily Kurds, and the city features border markets like Kileh, Qasem Rosh, and Ashkan, which play a crucial role in the export of domestic products.

While some residents work in these border markets, only the Kileh market operates officially and continuously; the others are not always open, and access routes may be periodically closed. Consequently, many businesses have shifted towards agriculture, animal husbandry, or employment in brick kilns. Agriculture and animal husbandry in Sardasht remain traditional and are not mechanized. The region's climatic conditions, rugged terrain, and mountainous climate mean most farmers primarily cultivate rain-fed legumes, wheat, and grains. Additionally, the cultivation of both red and brown varieties of sumac is common.

Sardasht is well-known for its agricultural and horticultural produce, with many locals planting grapevines on the slopes of the mountains or their farmland. Alongside the famed black grapes of Sardasht, the honey from this area also enjoys great popularity, prompting beekeeping to be a significant profession in addition to horticulture. Despite these opportunities, the residents face numerous challenges, including a lack of infrastructure, underdevelopment, and limited communication with neighboring cities, resulting in a less favorable economic situation.

With an 8,000-year history and rich civilization, Sardasht boasts pristine and unique natural beauty. Archaeological remains



Kani Gravan Mineral Spring

● chtn.ir



Bisotoun Bathhouse

● visitiran.ir



Shalmash Waterfall

● snaptrip.com

from 3,000-year-old civilizations have also been discovered in the area, now housed in museums across Iran. Previously known as "Nizeh Rou" before the arrival of Islam, this historical site included five strong towers and walls, remnants of which still exist today. Many significant historical aspects and artifacts in the region remain undiscovered. Sardasht is home to several tourist attractions that draw numerous visitors, a few of which are highlighted below.

Bisotoun Bathhouse

The historical Bisotoun Bathhouse dates back to the Qajar dynasty and was commissioned by Aziz Khan Mokri, the then-com-



Nature of Sardasht

● snaptrip.com

mander-in-chief of the Iranian army during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. Urged by his sister to construct this structure, the bathhouse is located near what was previously the of Elias Aqa Caravanserai. It remained in public use until a few years ago. Following the construction of a new bathhouse, the Bisotoun Bathhouse underwent restoration in 2016 under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Organization. The restoration included modifications to the dome, repairs to the interior walls, reconstruction of the tiled roof, and updates to electrical and mechanical installations, alongside the manufacturing of wooden doors. Featuring all

traditional bathing spaces, the Bisotoun Bathhouse was registered as a national heritage site in Iran on July 19, 1998.

Kani Gravan Mineral Spring

The Kani Gravan Mineral Spring is classified as a cold mineral spring. Its carbonated and non-potable water is beneficial for treating various skin diseases, joint issues, and rheumatism due to beneficial mineral salts. Adjacent to this spring is a sedimentary mass rising 16 meters, formed over time from carbonated and calcareous salts. This colorful sedimentary rock, showcasing stunning striations in shades of yellow, orange, cream, white, and brown, attracts many tourists, especially in spring and summer.

The Kani Gravan Spring flows from the ground and travels approximately 30 meters, leaving behind minerals that continuously increase the sedimentary mass volume.

Shalmash Waterfall

The Shalmash Waterfall, located 10 kilometers south of Sardasht near Shalmash village, is one of the area's scenic attractions. This waterfall, originating from the Zab River, creates a beautiful pool at the valley's base where swimming is prohibited. The name Shalmash, meaning large stone slab in Kurdish, refers to the large rock from which the water cascades.

Shalmash consists of three waterfalls, with the first being accessible and visible just above the parking area. The other two waterfalls are located further down the valley and can be reached by descending stairs built into the rocky mountainside. Access to these waterfalls is safe for all visitors, despite the 400 steps and protective barriers in place.

The Shalmash Waterfall is full and roaring during spring, but its water volume decreases as summer approaches. The area remains cool until the end of May, making the best time to visit from the latter half of May through mid-autumn. The Shalmash Waterfall has also been registered as a natural heritage site in Iran.

Tracing the legacy of the Elamite Civilization in Seymareh

The ancient city of Seymareh is located in Seymareh Valley, south of a river that shares its name and north of Kabirkuh, within what is now Darreh Shahr in Ilam Province. It is believed to be the same city known as Madakto during the Elamite civilization, later referred to as Mehregan Kadak and Seymareh. Historical texts describe Seymareh as a vibrant city featuring two fortresses, but it fell into ruin and became uninhabited approximately a thousand years ago; some historians attribute this decline to a significant earthquake.

The first archaeologist to visit Seymareh was Sir Henry Rawlinson, who conducted an expedition at the site in 1836, considering it to have belonged to the Sassanid dynasty. In 1891, Jaques de Morgan explored the site and identified it as the

ancient city of Madakto. Aurel Stein made further attempts to explore Seymareh in 1936.

The remains of the historical city spread over an area of approximately 120 hectares, making it the largest archaeological site in western Iran. One notable section is Tappeh Pamil, discovered in 1983 CE, which is the highest point of the city dating back to the Sassanid dynasty and was damaged during an earthquake. Throughout the city, remnants of Sassanid bridges, structures, fortifications, and ruins can be found. During an expedition in 2005, archaeologists uncovered 246 ancient artifacts and structures from the Neolithic era and beyond. A subsequent expedition in 2011 revealed an additional 30 hectares of land, now known as Barzqavaleh, which also showed evidence of a strong earthquake.



Another significant area, Shahneshin Sikan, spans 20 hectares and contains artifacts from the Achaemenid to Sassanid pe-

riods. Other notable sites include Yuzhandar II; Tappeh Tapeh; Dej-e Chubineh; and Cham Nemesht, which features a nearby Chahr-



● visitiran.ir

taq; as well as Tappeh Qaleh Gol, surrounded by the remnants of twelve towers. Alongside these archaeological structures, nu-

merous handmade artifacts and pottery have been excavated, enriching our understanding of this ancient civilization.

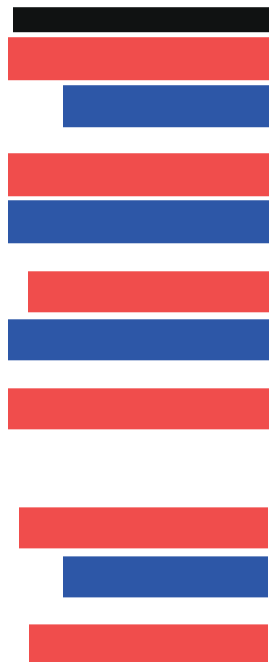
Impact of US presidential election on Middle Eastern countries



By Hoda Yousefi
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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In November, the American people will exercise their right to vote in the presidential election. This event carries immense significance not only for the United States but also for other nations around the globe, and the governments of the Middle East are no exception. Since its establishment, the United States has consistently maintained a distinct focus on the Middle East.



The illustration shows Kamala Harris (L) and Donald Trump, candidates for the 2024 US presidential election.
● FT



The initial significance of the region stemmed from its favorable geopolitical position and the vital issue of energy. The waterways situated in the Middle East have played a significant role in shortening the route for commercial ships traveling from the West to the East, thereby eliminating the need to circumnavigate the continent of Africa. Furthermore, the discovery of oil and gas resources has underscored the importance of the Middle East and has been a primary factor in the presence of the United States in the region. In the wake of World War II and the increasing influence of communism, the United States found itself politically engaged in the Middle East. In the 21st century, the United States has also prioritized security considerations as part of its objectives for involvement in the region.

While it is acknowledged that there has been a shift in US foreign policy towards East Asia in the past decade, it is important to underscore the continued significance of the Middle East for Washington. Additionally, the close security ties that many Middle Eastern countries have with the United States make a complete US withdrawal from the region, at least in the short term, seem unlikely.

The confluence of these factors has prompted American politicians to articulate a clear plan regarding their position on the Middle East. Simultaneously, leaders of Middle Eastern governments are closely monitoring political developments in the White House. This matter also holds significance in the context of the forthcoming US presidential election. Following President Joe Biden's decision not to seek re-election, Kamala Harris assumed his position, prompting various speculations about her ability to contend with Republican candidate Donald Trump. Many are curious about her prospective stance on the Middle East, and discussions have arisen as to which candidate Middle Eastern governments may prefer to emerge victorious.

Trump favorable for Saudi Arabia, unfavorable for Iran

During his presidency, Donald Trump made an official visit to Riyadh as part of his first Middle Eastern trip. His administration maintained a particularly close relationship with Mohammed bin Salman throughout his four years in office. Given President Trump's emphasis on economic

considerations in international affairs, Saudi Arabia viewed his election victory as a more advantageous outcome. Furthermore, President Trump's consistent support for Saudi Arabia led Riyadh to feel less pressure to address its regional challenges.

With the change in the administration to Joe Biden, Riyadh found it necessary to explore different avenues to ensure its security. Consequently, it pursued a normalization of relations with its neighbor, Iran, in order to mitigate potential future tensions. Concurrently, it sought to cultivate strong partnerships with China and Russia, emphasizing its commitment to diversifying its strategic alliances.

In general, Saudi Arabia tends to favor Republican control of the White House for several reasons. Firstly, they perceive that Republicans focus less on human rights issues, potentially leading to fewer accusations directed at Riyadh regarding its involvement in Yemen compared to when Democrats are in power. Secondly, Saudi Arabia finds that Republican Middle East policies are more aligned with its interests. For example, Republicans take a firmer stance on Iran than Democrats, which creates a sense of reduced threat for Saudi Arabia in the short term. Thirdly, Saudi Arabia notes that Republicans place less emphasis on climate change issues, a factor of importance for Riyadh due to its heavy reliance on oil exports.

The situation presents a set of unique challenges for Iran. During his presidency, Trump imposed significant sanctions on Iran, unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA nuclear agreement, and authorized the military action that resulted in the death of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force. Consequently, Trump's return to the White House would create a particularly challenging scenario for Iran.

In relation to the Palestinian issue, President Trump expressed unwavering support for Israel in the region, most notably through the introduction of the "Deal of the Century" during his tenure. There is an expect-

tation that a victory for Trump could lead to a significant increase in US military assistance to the Israeli cabinet amid the Gaza conflict, potentially further complicating the prospects for a two-state solution, particularly in the short term. Additionally, a re-election for Trump could stimulate the revival of the Abraham Accords, potentially prompting more Arab nations to establish diplomatic ties with Israel. In the event of a victory for Trump and the heightening of tensions with China, the Middle East could potentially experience new conflicts and shifts in alliances. It is believed that, under such circumstances, maintaining close relations with both Beijing and Washington simultaneously would present challenges for many countries. While it is possible to glean insights into Trump's Middle East policies from his previous presidency, it's important to recognize that the current dynamics in the Middle East differ significantly from the time when Trump was in the White House. For instance, a notable development is the peace agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as a shift in international support for Israel makes it more challenging to back Tel Aviv on the global stage.

Harris carrying on legacy of Obama

Kamala Harris's primary position regarding the Middle East entails non-intervention in regional conflicts. Her senior foreign policy and national security advisor, Philip Gordon, previously served as the special assistant to president Obama for the Middle East and North Africa. Gordon's perspective is that the interventions in Iraq and support for movements during the Arab Spring inadvertently bolstered Islamism in the region. Accordingly, he advocates for the United States to pursue a strategy of refraining from direct intervention in Middle Eastern regional affairs.

Harris places a strong emphasis on addressing humanitarian issues and has consistently expressed concern about the difficult conditions faced by civilians in the conflicts in Yemen and Gaza. This position may raise concerns for countries like Saudi Arabia, particularly in light of President Joe Biden's past criticisms of Saudi actions in Yemen. It's important to note that Harris has not supported the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Regarding the Palestinian issue, Vice

Then US president Donald Trump (sitting) holds a proclamation recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights as he is applauded by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (c) and others in the White House on March 25, 2019.

● REUTERS



US Vice President Kamala Harris (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2nd-R) walk to their seats prior to talks in the vice president's ceremonial office at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, DC, on July 25, 2024.
● ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP

President Harris holds nuanced positions. She has consistently voiced her support for Israel, emphasizing Tel Aviv's right to defend itself and the need to secure the unconditional release of Israeli captives. At the same time, she has underlined the significance of upholding the human rights of Palestinian civilians.

Harris has expressed opposition to the annexation of Palestinian territories by Israel and has condemned the violence in the West Bank. She has specifically called for the Israeli military to implement additional measures to protect civilians following a Rafah incident. Harris advocates for the two-state solution as the optimal

means to address the Palestinian issue. In the context of Iran, it is worth noting that Democratic policies have historically had a less detrimental impact on Iran's national interests. It is recognized that Iran's opposition to the US is unlikely to wane; however, a Republican victory would pose considerably

greater challenges for Tehran. The Democrats' non-intervention policy in Middle Eastern internal affairs is seen as beneficial to Iran's prominent role in the region. Conversely, a Trump victory would likely lead to heightened regional tensions and increased sanctions against Iran, thereby placing the country in an unfavorable po-

sition. While Donald Trump is currently leading in the polls, the outcome in November remains uncertain. The question of whether Obama's non-interventionist policies in the Middle East will persist or if Trump will seek to assert control over Middle Eastern affairs is yet to be answered.



A farmer holds a wad of Cuban money at a vegetable stall at a market in Sagua La Grande, in the province of Villa Clara in central Cuba on October 12, 2013.

● DESMOND BOYLAN/REUTERS

How four US presidents unleashed economic warfare across globe

By Jeff Stein and Federica Cocco
Reporters

PERSPECTIVE

Today, the United States imposes three times as many sanctions as any other country or international body, targeting a third of all nations with some kind of financial penalty on people, properties, or organizations. They have become an almost reflexive weapon in perpetual economic warfare, and their overuse is recognized at the highest levels of government. But American presidents find the tool increasingly irresistible. By cutting their targets off from the Western financial system, sanctions can crush national industries, erase personal fortunes, and upset the balance of political power in troublesome regimes — all without putting a single American soldier in harm's way. But even as sanctions have proliferated, concern about their impact has grown.

In Washington, the swell of sanctions has spawned a multibillion-dollar industry. Foreign governments and multinational corporations spend exorbitant sums to influence the system, while white-shoe law firms and K Street lobbying shops have built booming sanctions practices — in part by luring government officials to cash in on their expertise.

Sanctions — or even just the threat of them — can be an effective policy tool, a way to punish bad behavior or pressure an adversary without resorting to military force. Sanctions have allowed US governments to take moral, economically meaningful stands against perpetrators of war crimes. They helped bring an end to South Africa's apartheid regime and contributed to the eventual overthrow of Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic. Even when they fail, proponents say, they can be preferable to the alternative, which might be doing nothing — or going to war.

Still, North Korea has been sanctioned for more than a half-century without halting Pyongyang's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles. US sanctions on Nicaragua have done little to deter the regime of President Daniel Ortega. Two years of sanctions on Russia over its assault on Ukraine have degraded Moscow's long-term economic prospects and raised the costs of military production. However, these sanctions have also spawned a "dark fleet" of ships selling oil outside international regulations, while bringing the Kremlin into closer alliance with Beijing.

And yet, despite recognition that the volume of sanctions may be excessive, US officials tend to see each individual action as justified, making it hard to stop the trend. The United States is imposing sanctions at a record-setting pace again this year, with more than 60 percent of all low-income countries now under some form of financial penalty, according to a Washington Post analysis. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 gave rise to a new form of the weapon: an international blockade of exports to Iraq. After the Gulf War, comprehensive sanctions made it impossible for Iraq to export oil or import supplies to rebuild its decimated water and electrical systems, and illnesses such as cholera and typhoid surged.

At the same time, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was emerging as the world's unrivaled superpower, both financially and militarily. Governments and banks around the world were dependent on the US dollar, which remains the dominant currency on Earth. Treasury officials can impose sanctions

on any foreign person, firm, or government they deem to be a threat to the US economy, foreign policy, or national security. There's no requirement to accuse, much less convict, anyone of a specific crime. But the move makes it a crime to transact with the sanctioned party.

Coming under US sanctions amounts to an indefinite ban from much of the global economy. The system was built slowly. Initial targets (in addition to communist Cuba) were drug cartels in places like Mexico and Colombia and rogue regimes like Libya. As recently as the 1990s, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) was responsible for implementing just a handful of sanctions programs. Its staff fit comfortably in a single conference room. One of its major responsibilities was blocking American sales of Cuban cigars.

All that changed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Congress enacted legislation to compel financial institutions to maintain records of consumer transactions and hand them over to law enforcement. Suddenly, US officials had volumes of information on the world's banking customers, just as the rise of digital banking gave new insights into the worldwide flow of money.

In 2003, North Korea alarmed the world by withdrawing from a nuclear weapons treaty. Treasury officials under president George W. Bush not only targeted the Macao bank that processed payments for Pyongyang but also threatened any banks that traded with that one.

North Korean officials howled — and the measures stymied Pyongyang's finances. The episode was a revelation for Treasury staffers: America appeared to have cowed a foe halfway around the

world without firing a single bullet or spending a single penny.

'Every little thing we do is sanctions'

The playbook soon shifted to include bigger targets and more aggressive enforcement. In 2010, president Barack Obama worked with Congress to approve sanctions designed to force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. The Justice Department began levying billions of dollars in fines on Western banks that defied Treasury prohibitions.

These sanctions applied not just to Iran, but also to firms trading with Iran, undercutting Tehran's links to international markets. Iranian leaders buckled, deciding to seek a nuclear deal that promised an end to financial isolation. This display of power led to fresh demand. By Obama's second term, sanctions had been imposed on a growing list that included military officials in the Democratic Republic of Congo, suppliers of the Yemeni military, Libyan officials connected to Moammar Gaddafi, and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Congress got in on the act, flooding the State Department and the White House with requests for sanctions that, in some cases, appeared intended to cut off foreign competition to home-state industries.

In 2011, at a holiday party in the Hotel Harrington in downtown Washington, Adam Szubin, then director of OFAC, sang a song titled "Every Little Thing We Do Is Sanctions" to the tune of "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" by the Police. Szubin confirmed in an email. Some experts saw the surge as spiraling out of control.

In 2014, Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine presented the Treasury with a huge challenge. Countries like



● HELEN JAMES/SWI

North Korea and Iran were viewed as serious national security threats, but nobody believed they were integral to global finance. Now, the Treasury was forced to confront one of the 10 biggest economies in the world. A wrong move could send global markets reeling.

Challenges emerge as sanctions rise

But government officials began to notice problems with the Treasury's complicated new regime. Sanctions on Russia targeting allies of President Vladimir Putin and state banks had no apparent effect on control of Crimea. European leaders grew angry over fines levied on their banks. Wall Street power brokers started to grumble about the costs of complying with the dizzying new instructions.

The number of sanctioned entities appeared to be growing too fast for OFAC to keep up. Nuance bred confusion; requests for clarification poured in, and the number of lawsuits against the agency tripled. Turnover intensified, as the rising stakes allowed Treasury staffers to bolt for private-sector paydays that could quadruple their earnings.

A more existential challenge emerged, as well: The power of sanctions lay in denying foreign actors access to the dollar. But if sanctions make it risky to depend on dollars, nations may find other ways to trade — allowing them to dodge US penalties entirely.

And yet the incoming Trump administration again found new uses for the financial weapon as it applied more sanctions than ever. As president, Donald Trump used sanctions for retribution in ways never conceived — ordering them, for instance, on officials with the International Criminal Court after it opened a war crimes investigation into the behavior of US troops in Afghanistan.

Reform plans shelved

By the time of Biden's inauguration, a consensus had emerged among his transition team that something had to

The US government is putting more sanctions on foreign governments, companies, and people than ever. However, these powerful tools of economic warfare can have unintended consequences, hurting civilian populations and undermining US foreign policy interests.

change. In late 2022, senior White House advisers again held discussions about reforming US sanctions. In closed-door talks that included Biden, aides talked about the need to set guidelines for economic statecraft, including limiting the use of sanctions to moments when "core international principles that underpin peace and security are under threat," one of the officials said. But those ideas were shelved in the face of more pressing demands. "The mentality, almost a weird reflex, in Washington has just become: If something bad happens, anywhere in the world, the US is going to sanction some people. And that doesn't make sense," said Ben Rhodes, who served as deputy national security adviser in the Obama administration. "We don't think about the collateral damage of sanctions the same way we think about the collateral damage of war," Rhodes said. "But we should."

The full article first appeared on *The Washington Post*.



A pharmacist fills a prescription order at a drugstore in Iran. Officials have repeatedly claimed that US unilateral sanctions against Iran led to a shortage of drugs in the country, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

● IRNA

Wrestling event underway as Iran yearns for Olympic glory

Sports Desk

With less than a week until the closing ceremony of the Paris Olympics, Iran is yet to claim a single medal in the French capital but the wait could come to an end when two members of the Greco-Roman wrestling squad begin their quest for the coveted prize in Grand Palais Éphémère today.

Reigning world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh, who was unlucky to miss out on the Olympic podium in Tokyo three years ago, will be looking to continue his commanding run in the 130kg weight class, while Mahdi Mohsennejad will hope to be the Iranian dark horse in the 60kg contests.

History vs. form

Wrestling great Mijain Lopez will still be the man to watch in the 130kg event as the 41-year-old Cuban is eager to win the gold in a remarkable fifth Olympic Games – a feat never accomplished by any athlete in the 128-year history of the sporting extravaganza.

Lopez will be in action for the first time since he grabbed the gold at the Tokyo Olympics – a victory that put him in the pantheon of four-time Olympic champions with female Japanese wrestler Kaori Icho, Danish sailor Paul Elvstrom, athletics' Al Oerter and Carl Lewis of the United States, and legendary American swimmer Michael Phelps.

Lopez has compatriot Oscar Pino to thank for making it to the sixth Olympics of his career as it was the latter who won the



Iranian world champion Amin Mirzazadeh (R), pictured in a training session in Tehran, will participate in the Greco-Roman 130kg contests of the Paris Olympics. IAWF

world bronze in Belgrade last year to secure the Olympic quota for Cuba.

"I feel in optimal condition. It has been a very important time for me to keep the motivation to get to my sixth Olympic Games and fight for my fifth medal," Lopez told the United World Wrestling official website.

"I have tried to avoid injuries and

will be with motivation, desire and impetus which I always had for the Olympics."

you have to go all the way back to 2015 for the Cuban's last defeat, when he was beaten by Turkish Riza Kayaalp in the world final. In fact, since his first Olympic triumph in 2008, Lopez has conceded only two losses – the other also coming against Kayaalp

in 2011.

Perhaps, the only wrestler standing between Lopez and a historic gold will be Iranian Mirzazadeh. The two have met once before, with the Cuban scoring an emphatic 8-0 in the quarterfinals in Tokyo, but a probable second meeting in Paris will see the Iranian step onto the mat in his prime.

Mirzazadeh, who came from behind to defeat Kayaalp to the world gold last year, has been the superheavyweight to beat since his world final loss to the Turkish in September 2022, winning double golds at the Asian Championships as well as the ultimate prize in the Asian Games over that period. Mirzazadeh enters the event

as the top seed of his class and will begin his campaign against an unseeded wrestler in the round of 16, while Lopez is not in UWW's 130kg top-eight seeds, meaning the two could go head-to-head at any stage.

Mountain to climb

Iranian Mohsennejad, meanwhile, will be facing a mammoth task to finish on the podium in the 60kg contests – an event dominated by the Asian wrestlers in the World Championships last year.

A two-time Asian silver medalist, Mohsennejad – No. 5 in the class – will meet an unseeded opponent in the first round, and a win will likely see him lock horns with four-time world medalist and Olympic silver winner Kenichiro Fumita of Japan in the quarterfinals, with two-time defending world champion of Zholaman Sharshenbekov of Kyrgyzstan in the same half of the draw.

Mohsennejad fell to a last-four defeat against Sharshenbekov – the number-one seed in Paris – in Belgrade and was then beaten by Uzbekistan's Islomjon Bakhromov in the bronze-medal bout, but still managed to come out on top against Armenian Gevorg Gharibyan to secure the Olympic berth for the country.

North Korean Ri Se-ung, European 63kg champion Murad Mammadov of Azerbaijan, and Cuban Kevin de Armas are also among the contenders for the Olympic medal.

The repechage battles and the medal bouts of the two classes will take place on Tuesday.



Paris Olympics:

American Ledecy wins record-equalling ninth swimming gold

BBC – American swimming superstar Katie Ledecy equalled the record for the most gold medals by a female Olympian as she won the 800m freestyle title at the Paris Games.

Ledecy clocked eight minutes 11.04 seconds to become the only woman – and only swimmer other than the great Michael Phelps – with four Olympic golds in the same event.

It was Ledecy's ninth Olympic gold, moving her level with former Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina, and taking her overall tally to 14 medals. Phelps has the most medals of any Olympian with 28, including 23 golds.

"The four-times record is the one that means the most to me," Ledecy, 27, said afterwards.

"3 August is the day I won in 2012, and I didn't want 3 August to be a day I didn't like moving forwards.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself, so I'm happy I got the job done."

Earlier on Saturday, Summer McIntosh's astonishing debut Games continued, with the Canadian 17-year-old securing her third gold with victory

in the women's 200m individual medley.

Athletics

Julien Alfred stormed to the women's 100m title in Paris to make history as St Lucia's first Olympic medallist.

As the rain teemed down at a raucous Stade de France, Alfred, 23, dominated the final and sealed victory by a clear margin in a national record 10.72 seconds.

American world champion Sha'Carri Richardson took silver in 10.87, with compatriot Melissa Jefferson (10.92) third. Jamaican sprint icon Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce withdrew from the competition before her semi-final.

Elsewhere, Thea LaFond made history for the Caribbean island nation of Dominica by winning gold in the triple jump to claim the country's first-ever Olympic medal.

Jamaica's Shanieka Ricketts took silver and American Jasmine Moore claimed bronze. American Ryan Crouser became the first man to "threepeat" in the Olympic shot put on Saturday, adding another gold medal to his packed trophy cabinet with a mighty throw of 22.90 metres.



American swimmer Katie Ledecy poses with the women's 800m freestyle gold at the Paris Olympics on August 3, 2024. BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

His compatriot Joe Kovacs won his third straight silver and Jamaica's Rajindra Campbell took bronze.

Gymnastics

Simone Biles won her third Olympic gold of the Paris Games when she took the vault title in emphatic fashion.

After helping the USA to women's team gold and then taking the all-around title, the 27-year-old reclaimed another of the titles she first won at Rio 2016, having lost them in Tokyo when she pulled out of several events. She nailed her huge Biles II

vault before sticking her 'easier' vault – whose difficulty is harder than many attempt as their best vault – to score an average of 15.300.

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, the only gymnast who has skills that can come close to Biles and who won the title in Tokyo, took silver with 14.966

and American Jade Carey got bronze with 14.466.

Tennis

Zheng Qinwen became the first Chinese player to win an Olympic tennis singles gold medal when she held off Croatia's Donna Vekic for a 6-2 6-3 win in a tense final on Saturday.

The 21-year-old sixth seed was given enthusiastic backing by a sizeable Chinese contingent inside Roland Garros's Court Philippe Chatrier and responded with a composed performance.

Vekic, herself bidding to become Croatia's first Olympic singles champion, battled hard to try to turn around the match but failed to capitalise on her opportunities.

"This Olympic journey has not been easy, I had a lot of tough fights and some matches I nearly lost," Zheng, runner-up at the Australian Open this year, told reporters. "But there is a strength holding me. I never give up."

"For the final today the atmosphere was incredible, all the Chinese fans yelling for me. Two years ago that would have been pressure but today I kept calm and handled it well."

Jordan FM in Tehran amid heightened tensions



Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani (l) shakes hands with top Jordanian diplomat Ayman al-Safadi ahead of their meeting in Tehran on August 4, 2024.
● ALI HADDADI ASL/MEHR

International Desk

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi visited Tehran on Sunday amid growing fears over Iran's retaliation against Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the capital. Top Jordanian diplomat held talks with Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani, during which they discussed latest regional and international devel-

opments as well as relations between the two countries. The Jordanian foreign minister told Al Jazeera that he did not come to Iran to convey a message from the Israeli regime to Tehran or vice versa. Safadi underlined that the purpose of his trip is to resolve the differences between Amman and Tehran in a clear and transparent manner. The Jordanian foreign minister

also emphasized that the first step to prevent the escalation of tension in the region is to stop Israel's aggression in Gaza. The Jordanian foreign minister's rare visit came a day after he held two phone calls with his Iranian and Egyptian counterparts about the consequences of the Israeli regime's assassination of Haniyeh. Safadi is the first senior Jordanian official to pay an official visit

to Iran in over 20 years. Jordan is a close Western ally and helped intercept scores of missiles and drones fired by Iran toward Israel in April in retaliation for the killing of its generals in an Israeli strike in Syria. The Jordanian Foreign Ministry earlier said Safadi would deliver a message from King Abdullah II to the Iranian president on "the situation in the region and bilateral relations." The political head of Hamas was killed early on Wednesday in Tehran where he was attending the inauguration of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian. Iran's Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday that Haniyeh was killed by a "short-range projectile" launched from outside his accommodation in northern Tehran. Iran and the Hamas have vowed to retaliate and blamed the strike on Israel, which has declined to comment. Tehran repeatedly reaffirmed its "inherent right" to take action against Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the regime is at "a very high level" of preparedness for any scenario -- "defensive and offensive." Haniyeh's killing came hours after Israel killed a senior commander of the Lebanese Hez-

bollah movement, Fuad Shukur. Hezbollah has also vowed to avenge the assassination of its commander. The tense situation in the region following the assassination of Haniyeh has prompted many countries, especially European ones and the United States, to urge their nationals to leave Lebanon, Iran and the occupied territories. Many international airlines have also suspended their flights to Lebanon and Israel. The United States, Israel's closest ally, has also said it is moving warships and fighter jets to the Middle East to protect US personnel and defend Israel. The US claims its military build-up in the region is a defensive measure with a goal of de-escalating tensions in the region, a White House official said on Sunday. "The overall goal is to turn the temperature down in the region, deter and defend against those attacks, and avoid regional conflict," Jonathan Finer, White House National Security Council deputy adviser, said on the CBS program "Face the Nation." US President Joe Biden on Saturday expressed hope that Iran would stand down despite its threat to avenge Haniyeh's killing.

Israel pounds schools, hospital in deadly strikes on Gaza



Palestinians mourn a member of their family in the aftermath of an overnight Israeli strike that hit tents used as temporary shelters by displaced people in the courtyard of the al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir el-Balah in the Gaza Strip, on August 4, 2024.
● AFP

International Desk

An Israeli airstrike hit two schools in Gaza City on Sunday, killing at least 30 people, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said. Gaza's Government Media Office said that since Israel's war on Gaza began, Israeli forces have targeted 172 shelters hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs), of which 152 were schools. It said at least 1,040 people have been killed inside those shelters. Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) official Nebal Farsakh, who was at the scene of the Israeli strikes on the two schools said that its ambulance teams managed to evacuate several Palestinians who were wounded but "many are still missing under the rubble." Farsakh described "horrific scenes" with "women screaming" as they looked for their children in the debris. "This attack is again another proof that there is no safe place in Gaza. These two schools are housing displaced civilians who have been forced to leave multiple times, and now even they have been forced to flee another time after this attack," she said. "Israel has been systematically targeting civilians." Earlier on Sunday, Israeli forces also bombed tents housing displaced Palestinians in the yard of al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah, killing at least five and wounding 18 others. Gaza health officials said at least 44 Palestinians were killed on Sunday. The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that at least 39,583 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its devastating war on Gaza on October 7. Up to 91,398 others have been injured in the 10 months of war, the ministry said in a statement. A 34-year-old Palestinian killed two Israeli settlers and wounded three others in an alleged stabbing attack on Sunday before being shot dead by police, Israeli authorities said. The stabbings took place during morning rush hour in the city of Holon, near Tel Aviv. The attacker stabbed people near a gas station and a park. The Hamas group said in a statement that the stabbing attack was a "natural response" to Israeli attacks on Palestinians and to the assassination of the group's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, last week in Tehran. Hamas says it has initiated a broad consultation process to select a new leader following the assassination of its political chief in the Iranian capital. Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said Haniyeh was killed by a "short-range projectile" and threatened Israel with a "severe" response.

Pezeshkian unveils three new appointments

National Desk

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian made three new appointments on Sunday to complete his inner circle after winning the presidential election on July 5. Pezeshkian has appointed former finance minister Ali Tayebnia as his senior adviser. Tayebnia, as a veteran and decorated economist in Iran, is a graduate of the University of Tehran and the London School of Economics and is known for

reining in the runaway inflation under former president Hassan Rouhani. In another decree, Pezeshkian appointed Hamid Pourmohammadi as his vice president and head of the Planning and Budget Organization. Pourmohammadi, 56, has served as the deputy head of the Central Bank of Iran and deputy chief of Banking Affairs of the Finance Ministry among other posts. Shahram Dabiri was also appointed by the president as

his deputy for parliamentary affairs. Earlier on Thursday, former Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was named as the strategy deputy of the Iranian president. Meanwhile, spokesman of the Parliament's Presiding Board Alireza Salimi said that Pezeshkian and the Parliament's Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf have agreed to postpone the submitting of the list of proposed ministers to the parliament as the government has



yet to complete the final list. Salimi said that the list will be probably sent to the Parliament by the end of the week. The parliament has two weeks to review the proposed ministers.

What is the ...

In the meantime, how Iran responds to this attack is important. Iran's military ca-

pabilities are undisputable, as demonstrated in April this year. Still, everyone knows that the region cannot withstand

a large-scale war, a war whose flames may quickly spread to other countries. Recent political and diplomatic efforts, especially

by regional Arab countries, have aimed to prevent the possibility of a major conflict. While they have condemned Haniyeh's assassination, they are concerned that, given the other regional and global crises, the situation may spiral out of control. This calls for foresight and tact on the part of Iranian statesmen and military officials to respond appropriately to Israel's terrorist attack without creating new problems. Perhaps one point to consider when deciding how to retaliate and, in general, to the approach of the incumbent Israeli government, is that it has become clear to all politicians in the region and the world in the past few weeks

that Netanyahu is fighting for his political life and has no regard for human lives, be they Palestinian or Israeli. In fact, he is primarily to blame for the failure of several rounds of talks between Hamas and Israel representatives in Cairo to secure a cease-fire, exchange captives, and deliver aid to the displaced people in the Gaza Strip. Every time the negotiations have reached a conclusion with the efforts of mediators such as Egypt, he has disrupted the process by taking new measures or making new excuses. This has led political experts and media pundits in Israel itself to come to the conclusion that he has no interest in resolving the crisis and is merely concerned with maintaining his grip on power. If this is accepted, it can

be concluded that any act that leads to a more critical situation and the spillover of conflicts will bring Netanyahu closer to his goal and create favorable conditions for him and Israeli radicals to stay in power. In other words, the antidote to Israel's terrorist act may not be a direct confrontation or attack this time, but rather continue political and diplomatic support for the Palestinians and calm the situation for a cease-fire in Gaza, which will, in fact, cause greater troubles for Netanyahu's cabinet. While this point is bitter, it will eventually bear sweet fruit by improving the catastrophic conditions in Gaza and toppling someone who has caused trouble for the entire region for years in the name of maintaining Israel's security.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Book 'Golestan Gallery' unveiled



◀ Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, an Iranian novelist, (L) is seen during the unveiling ceremony of the book 'Golestan Gallery' in Tehran on August 4, 2024.
● MEHR

a moment, which is highly valuable," Dowlatabadi said. The novelist also cited the Iranian poet, writer, and painter, Sohrab Sepehri's character and work as a clear example of simplicity and complexity, saying, "Leili Golestan and Sohrab Sepehri were friends, and interestingly, Golestan Gallery was inaugurated with an exhibition of Sohrab Sepehri's works."

Sepehri (1928 - 1980) was an Iranian poet, writer, and painter. He is considered as one of the most important contemporary Iranian poets, and his poems have been translated into many languages.

"Running a gallery for 35 years, especially in a country facing various challenges daily, is no small feat. With each exhibition, Leili Golestan has given thought to future generations, and I am glad that thanks to her efforts, part of our visual arts history has been documented for posterity," Dowlatabadi added.

He concluded that, "Leili Golestan's focused mind, even amid Iran's social turmoil, has always been admirable to me."



NLAI, AI organization sign memo to boost tech capacities

Arts & Culture Desk

The National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) and the country's National Artificial Intelligence Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance technological capacities and infrastructures.

The MoU was signed by the NLAI chief, Alireza Mokhtarpour, and Mohammad Saeed Sarrafraz, Secretary of the National Steering Council and head of the National Artificial Intelligence Organization, Mehr news agency reported.

During the signing ceremony, Mokhtarpour underlined the significance of this cooperation, expressing hope

that, "This memorandum will be a significant step towards promoting the use of modern technologies and improving access to scientific and historical data for researchers and policy-makers through artificial intelligence."

"This collaboration can aid in the development of technological infrastructures and protect against potential harms that the Persian language may face in new environments, especially as these advancements are realized by the country's youth," he said.

Meanwhile, the head of the National Artificial Intelligence Organization said that books and documents, as one of the most critical data

sources, play a vital role in the advancement of artificial intelligence. Utilizing this valuable data can assist in developing AI models and help preserve and expand the Persian language in the digital space, significantly enhancing the quality of services for researchers and scholars, Sarrafraz said.

Securing the increase of digital data at the NALI, assisting in enhancing the usability of artificial intelligence in organizational functions and missions, producing necessary interactive software for researchers through AI, and aiding in the development of AI models are part of the provisions of this memorandum.

Arts & Culture Desk

The book 'Golestan Gallery' including the portfolio of Leili Golestan art gallery was unveiled during the reopening ceremony of the exhibition "Darrous, 34" in Tehran.

According to Mehr News Agency, Golestan Gallery was launched simultaneously with the reopening of the Darrous, 34 exhibition at Artibition Gallery.

These two events focused on Leili Golestan's 35 years of activity as a gallery owner

in celebration of her 80th birthday. Golestan Gallery had been founded in 1989 by Lili Golestan.

Available for art enthusiasts, Golestan Gallery is the first gallery established in Iran after the Islamic Revolution (1979), and the Darrous, 34 exhibition features works from 46 artists who have previously exhibited at the gallery.

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, an Iranian novelist, remarked during the book unveiling that, "We are heavily indebted

to Leili Golestan, and we highly appreciate her contributions."

Lili Golestan is a prominent Iranian gallerist, known for founding the Golestan Gallery, a prominent contemporary art space in Tehran. She was awarded the French Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of Arts and Letters) in November 2014 by the French Ambassador to Tehran.

"She has a profound respect for work and throughout my half-century of knowing her, she has never paused for even

'Cold Sigh' nominated for Grand Prize at Richmond int'l festival



● MEHR

Arts & Culture Desk

The film 'Cold Sigh,' directed by Nahid Seddiq, has been nominated for the Jury's Grand Prize at the Richmond International Film Festival in the United States.

According to IRNA, 'Cold Sigh,' produced by Reza Mohaqeq, has made its latest global appearance as a contender for the Jury's Grand Prize (Best Film) at the 13th Richmond International Film Festival in Virginia.

This event will take place from September 24 to 29 in the historic city of Richmond, Virginia, where 'Cold Sigh' will screen for audiences on Saturday, September 28, at 7 PM at the Bowtie Movieland theater. To date, the movie, which tells the story of a strange revenge, has participated in several international festivals, including Santa Barbara (US), Moscow, Chuvashia, Peskov, Ischia (Italy), and the international section of the Fajr Film Festival.

'Cold Sigh' has won several national and international awards so far. Recently, it received the Grand Prix of the 17th Cheboksary International Film Festival in Cheboksary, Russia, in May. Earlier in April, it won three prizes at the 46th Moscow International Film Festival (MIFF) in Russia. The movie won the Best Director Award, the Audience Choice Award for the Best Film and the NET-PAC (Network for the Promotion of Asia Pacific Cinema) Special Mention. Last year, the film won the Special Jury Award for Best Film in the International Competition of the Fajr Film Festival.

US assures Netanyahu ...

After the terror act, US Secretary of State Tony Blinken clarified that the US had no involvement in the killing and was unaware of it. This statement by Blinken has astonished knowledgeable people and analysts worldwide. Analysts, including those in Israel, are calling the US Secretary of State a liar.

The world's largest intelligence agency, the CIA, which controls tens of satellites in space that collect information by focusing on any part of the world, is claimed to be unaware that its ally was targeting a political figure who could save the world from the flames of war. During a joint call, Biden and his Vice President Kamala Harris, a potential Democratic presidential candidate, assured Netanyahu that if Iran attacked Tel Aviv, the US would directly intervene to ensure its security.

Last month, during his visit to the US, Israeli prime minister, who has been officially declared a terrorist by Pakistan, lamented Washington's hesitance regarding Tel Aviv's long-standing desire to attack Iran's nuclear program. He urged the US administration to recognize the rapidly advancing Iranian nuclear program as a significant threat. How serious-

ly the US administration took Netanyahu's pleas will become apparent in the near future, but we cannot ignore that Israel's actions are succeeding in provoking Tehran. The assassination of Haniyeh is not a minor event, especially since he was an official guest of Iran. This period is very challenging for the Iranian security establishment. They need to answer important questions, and as long as silence prevails, suspicions will remain. Iran had responded to Israel in April 2024, when Israel targeted Iranian diplomatic buildings in Damascus with missiles. Iran managed to breach Israel's security. The increasing crimes of Israel are supported by the US and Western countries, allowing Tel Aviv's rulers to trample international laws like an intoxicated elephant. Israel does not respect the sovereignty of any country and dreams of seizing every inch of Palestine by suppressing all voices. The ruling class of Israel is completely controlled by right-wing extremist elements with absurd ideologies, who seek to perform religious ceremonies using the blood of a red cow. This thought is repugnant, claiming to be part of a civilized society, and how can we tolerate the killing of 92,000 Palestin-

ians for such a ridiculous idea? Why can't the global community punish Israel? Why can't it impose economic and arms import sanctions on Tel Aviv? This way, there will be no peace in the world, and we should not speak of justice. The time has come to cleanse the sacred land of Palestine from extremists who were brought from around the world to this holy land by global imperialism and were given power through the force of arms. After the assassination of Hamas political bureau chief, who represented Hamas in ceasefire negotiations in Qatar and Egypt, efforts to reduce broader tensions in the region without punishing Israel are ongoing by the US and European countries. This situation arises while Israeli aggression in Gaza reached its 300th day on Thursday. After the targeted killing of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, the families of Israeli prisoners held by Hamas have begun questioning the diminishing prospects of their release. These families are urging the Israeli government to reach a ceasefire agreement. Besides weekly protests in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities, protesters demanding a ceasefire took to the streets on Wednesday night, chanting slogans against Netanyahu. Affected families

and protesters blocked main roads in Tel Aviv on Thursday morning. The protesters stated that silence against Netanyahu's cabinet means destruction. Families of the prisoners claim that delays in ceasefire negotiations reduce the chances of their loved ones' survival. They stated that they are a step away from a multi-front war and are uncertain about the future of Israelis. Families of the protesters, like those of Metan, revealed that most Israeli families have cut their expenses by 80%. They are unsure how they will live post-war as people have limited their businesses, the entire system is disrupted, factories are shut down, and electricity production has been reduced. They question whether Israelis will face unemployment. Without answers to these questions, Israelis are becoming mentally distressed. They never imagined what they are now experiencing. The prospects for a ceasefire in the north appear bleak, with 460 families displaced from this front feeling helpless while Netanyahu's administration demands they endure harsh conditions for minimal aid. How long do they want to continue this? We want to return to our homes and breathe freely again.