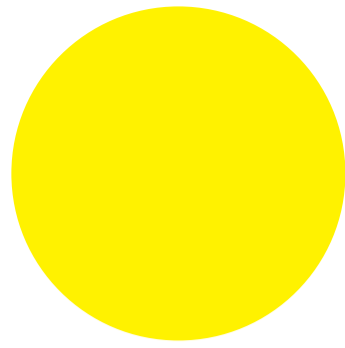


President urges unity, coordination for progress

Sunni MPs optimistic about Pezeshkian's 'inclusive governance'

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EDITORIAL

As the presidential election was held in Venezuela under the supervision of international observers who confirmed Nicolas Maduro's victory with 52% of the vote, Western countries, led by the United States, have once again attempted to topple his legitimate government. This time, the protests against Maduro's government is orchestrated with familiar tactics but with new players. In the 2024 unrest, Maduro's rival Edmundo Gonzalez has taken center stage, replacing Juan Guaido, and Elon Musk is now backing this plot, stepping into the role previously occupied by George Soros.

Venezuela is paying a heavy price for its independence and refusal to give in to imperialist powers in a region traditionally viewed as America's backyard. For 25 years since the Bolivarian Revolution, the country has been the target of plots hatched by US spy agencies. Venezuela's support for the oppressed people of Palestine and its solidarity with Iran against US sanctions have undoubtedly made it a target for retribution. Despite the interference of Latin American countries sympathetic to Western interests and the involvement of Argentine President Javier Milei and other regional presidents and officials in Venezuela's internal affairs, no unified front formed against the legitimate Venezuelan government. While countries like Russia, China, and Iran recognized the election, others like the US, Canada, and EU member states rejected the results.

The individuals and governments stoking the street protests in Caracas and pushing for sweeping political change through a velvet revolution are determined to drag Venezuela out of the axis of resistance. It is obvious in the Venezuelan government's support for the Palestinian cause and its closure of the Israeli embassy, a decision Gonzalez has vowed to reverse if elected.

Despite such challenges and Western machinations, the Bolivarian government has prevented the unrest from spiraling out of control in Caracas.

Venezuela Stands Strong

Pezeshkian slams interference in Venezuelan election

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A supporter of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro shouts slogans during a rally in Caracas on July 31, 2024. **JUAN BARRETO/AFP**

Obstacles posed by US, Israel in Pezeshkian's foreign policy

By Hossein Mousavian
International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

President Masoud Pezeshkian's government, like previous Iranian administrations, will strive to improve and develop relations with neighboring countries, the Muslim world, the Global South, and the powers of the Eastern bloc, particularly China, Russia, and India, and will achieve certain successes. However, as in the past, unilateral sanctions from the US will continue to pose significant obstacles for the new government in establishing extensive, safe, and transparent economic relations.

In the 45 years since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, tensions and hostilities between the US and Iran



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have been the primary dilemma of Iranian foreign policy, a challenge that the new government will also confront.

The regional situation, especially following the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, indicates that two significant challenges—the US and Israel—and the risk of a regional war at the onset of the current government are more severe than during previous administrations over the past four decades.

Tehran and Washington averted the likelihood of a vast military confrontation in 2020 when Trump's administration assassinated Iran's Major General Soleimani on Iraqi soil. However, the US move was countered by Iran's missile attack on a US military base in Iraq. The critical point was that neither the Trump administration nor Iran was inclined to persist in military conflict.

Yet, the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran is distinct for three reasons; first, it constitutes a violation of Iran's national sovereignty.

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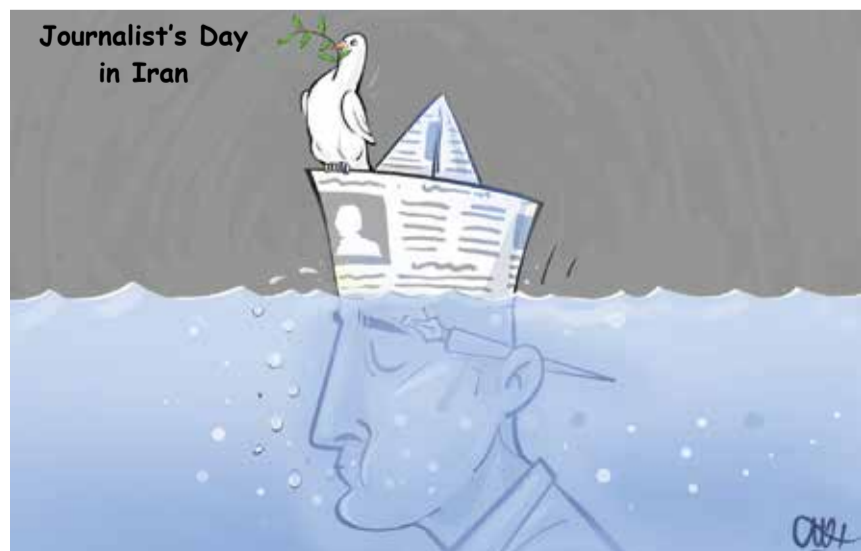
Iran's Qeshm, Russia's Dubna economic zones ink MoU

Iran's Qeshm Free Zone Organization and Dubna Special Economic Zone (SEZ Dubna) of the Russian Federation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to attract mutual investment and enhance infrastructure development. The MoU was signed by Edris Ramouz, deputy for cultural, social and tourism affairs of the Qeshm Free Zone Organization, and Igor Koroglov, deputy CEO of the Dubna Special Economic Zone, IRNA reported. On the sidelines of the ceremony, Ramouz said that the MoU was signed in order to develop the international relations of Qeshm Island, improve profitable and mutual cooperation in the field of free and special economic zones management, and attract foreign investment. A delegation of Qeshm Free Zone, which has traveled to Russia within the framework of signing the memorandum also met with Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Moscow.

16m tons of goods transited via Iranian road, rail last year

A deputy ministry of roads and urban development said 16 million tons of goods were transited via Iran's railway and roads in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 20, 2024). Kamal Hadianfar who is the Head of Roads and Urban Development for Transportation Organization said that 14.75 million tons of commodities were transited from the country via road while 1.59 million tons of goods were transited through rail, as reported by Tasnim News Agency. Speaking in the first session of the specialized commission of National Transit and Logistics Headquarters on Tuesday, he described the transit of 16 million tons of goods from the country via rail and road as a new record.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi Cartoonist



Annual petchem exports expected to hit 34m tons: NPC

Iran has plans to produce a sum of 83 million tons of petrochemical products during the current Iranian year (March 20, 2025), said the director of planning and development of National Petrochemical Industries Company, adding that 34 million tons of the figure is expected to be destined to international markets. Addressing the closing ceremony of the 15th Iran Petrochemical Forum on Monday, Hassan Abbaszadeh stated that by launching new units, the nominal production capacity of the country will hit 103 million tons. Abbaszadeh went on to say that petrochemical

complexes of Iran churned out 74 million tons of products during 2023 which included 10 million tons of methanol, 5 million tons of ammonia, 7 million tons of ethylene and about 8 million tons of urea. As per the seventh Development Plan of Iran (2024-2029), a total of 60 petrochemical projects will be implemented across the country which will increase the nominal production of Iran by 35 million tons, the NPC official said. Abbaszadeh stressed that the projects have progressed over 50 percent, and a sum of \$24 billion is needed to complete the projects.



SHANA

Iran-Tajikistan visa-free system to begin Aug. 10

Iran and Tajikistan have agreed to scrap visa requirements for travels between the two Farsi-speaking countries as of August 10. Speaking to Tasnim on Tuesday, the director

general of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's consular department said the governments of Iran and Tajikistan are going to roll out reciprocal visa-free programs as of August 10 to make

travel easier for their nationals. Alireza Mahmoudi said the holders of ordinary passports of Iran and Tajikistan can travel to the other country for 30 days without a

visa. In the first phase, the implementation of the visa-free system will be applied only for those using the Dushanbe-Tehran and Tehran-Dushanbe air routes.

Obstacles posed by ...

Second, it reflects a setback for Iranian security apparatus, which failed to protect its guest, one of the most important leaders of resistance in the Islamic world. The perpetrators of this assassination are Israel, which effectively orchestrated this act to incite Iran and the US into a regional conflict. Iran has asserted that it will certainly retaliate; however, whether we desire it or not, the nature of Iran's response will delineate the extent of American intervention. Both Iran and the US do not seek warfare; nevertheless, for Netanyahu, it is a matter of "political life and death." Despite Netanyahu's success in devastating Gaza, resulting in approximately 40,000 fatalities, displacing two million individuals, and assassinating many key leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, he

has failed to conclude the Gaza war and secure the release of prisoners. He faces unprecedented domestic and global opposition, with millions protesting against him in the US and the Western countries, transforming the global perception of Israel from "the victim of the Holocaust" to "the perpetrator of a new Holocaust." Simultaneously, he grapples with substantial legal challenges within Israel. As such, Netanyahu perceives a regional conflict as his sole avenue for salvation, anticipating that it will mobilize the unconditional support of the United States and the Western world for Israel.

Three strategic decisions in history of the Islamic Republic In my view, the most consequential strategic decisions of the Islamic Republic fol-

lowing the 1979 Revolution can be categorized into three pivotal moments. First, the acceptance of Resolution 598 on August 8, 1988, which liberated both Iran and Iraq from the ravages of a devastating war. Second, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, which extricated Iran from Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, removing its designation as a nation posing a threat to global peace and security, and terminating six United Nations Security Council resolutions. Third, the present moment that we are at a juncture for the third strategic decision. Tehran faces one of its most intricate predicaments, needing to make decisions based on the following eight key factors. The assassination of Haniyeh is a matter of global Islamic concern, condemned by not only Iran and Palestine but also the entirety of the Muslim world, who call

for punishment of those responsible. Therefore, Iran must consider the broader implication of its response within the Muslim world. The response needs to be sufficiently decisive, substantial, and strong to be an appropriate reaction to the assassination of Haniyeh and numerous other Iranian military commanders and leaders from Hezbollah and Hamas who have been targeted by Israel over the last three months. The deterrent power of the response must be high enough to dissuade Israel from continuing such assassinations and prevent any erosion of Iran's national sovereignty. Simultaneously, the action should not lead to the primary goal of Netanyahu, which is military confrontation between the US and Iran. Iran's action must not result in a large-scale regional military conflict, where one side consists of NATO and Israel, and the other includes Iran and the resistance front in countries like Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. In such a scenario, neither Russia nor China

and US-aligned Arab nations would become involved, leading to losses for both sides and further instability in the region. Moreover, Iran's actions must not cripple Pezeshkian's government. He is expected to introduce his cabinet to Parliament in the coming days. It is evident that a war would hinder the success of a new cabinet whose primary mission and priority is improving Iran's economic situation and foreign relations. With the victory of Pezeshkian, there is a renewed hope for improving the economic situation and enhancing Iran's foreign relations. Naturally, Netanyahu's intention behind the assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran was to eliminate that opportunity entirely. Iran's actions should not affect the electoral dynamics in the US over the next two to three months. It is clear that Netanyahu has a unique and special relationship with Trump, which is why he was able to persuade him to withdraw from the JCPOA, designate the Islamic Revo-

lutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization, and recognize the occupied al-Quds as Israel's capital. It is also no secret that the most severe friction between Obama and Netanyahu occurred over the JCPOA, and even around 100 Democratic members of Congress boycotted Netanyahu's recent speech before the Capitol. One of Netanyahu's goals in assassinating Haniyeh in Tehran is to create a new crisis in the Middle East that could shift the electoral landscape in favor of Trump. Therefore, Iran's actions should not have an impact on the internal political dynamics of the US. Lastly, Iran's actions should not change the negative global opinion against Israel or the current international isolation of Israel, particularly in light of the International Court of Justice's ruling. The court has deemed Israel's actions in Gaza as genocidal and has called for Israel to evacuate the occupied Palestinian territories and to cease the massacre of innocent Palestinian people.

Tender invitation Invitation to public tender for: White Mineral Oil-Food Grade // 2,100,000 KG Tabriz petrochemical company intends to procure its plant required quantity of White Mineral Oil-Food Grade from reputable & reliable producer and supplier of said product. Interested suppliers should submit their request to below email in order to get tender documents until 7 days after the second print (until August 10, 2024). Email: M.zekri@tpco.ir Phone No.: +98-41-34282571

Tender	No	Quantity
White Mineral Oil - Food Grade	PVS-0340103	2,100,000 KG

Public Relation of Tabriz Petrochemical Company (Public Stock)
First turn published: August 07, 2024 Second turn published: August 12, 2024

Firuzkuh Road: A gateway to natural and historical wonders



Herandeh village

● [pinorest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)



Shourmast Lake

● [pinorest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)



Veresk Bridge

● [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Vashi Gorge

Vashi Gorge, known in Persian as Tang-e Vashi, is a pristine and scenic natural attraction located near the village of Jelizjand along the Firuzkuh Road. Nestled in the mountains surrounding Firuzkuh, this gorge leads to the stunning Sawashi Waterfall. To reach the waterfall, you'll need to walk a distance through the river. To access Sawashi Waterfall, you pass through two distinct gorges: the first is Vashi, and the second is Sa. Between these gorges lies a lush and picturesque plain, creating a perfect setting for camping and resting in nature. This area remains completely untouched and lacks any amenities.

One of the remarkable features of Vashi Gorge is the variety of aromatic and medicinal plants that grow along its path. Visitors are also drawn to a historical inscription featuring relief work from the Qajar dynasty. To reach the entrance of Vashi Gorge, take the secondary road leading to the gorge after passing Lasem Spring on the left side of the Firuzkuh Road, heading south to north. This side

road is about 18 kilometers long and takes you through the village of Jalejand to the entrance of Vashi Gorge.

Herandeh village

Herandeh is one of the most beautiful summer villages along the Firuzkuh Road, situated approximately 15 kilometers southwest of the city of Firuzkuh. Its lush nature, pristine landscapes, and the rushing rivers of Namroud and Qazqanchay attract many tourists to the area.

One of the most notable attractions in Herandeh is the Burnik Cave, ranked as the fourth longest cave in Iran. Structurally resembling the Ali Sadr Cave, Burnik Cave is estimated to be around 3,500 meters in length. Other interesting sites in the village include Imamzadeh Yahya and the ancient Shir Dareh Hill.

Herandeh village is less than a kilometer from the Firuzkuh Road, with its entrance located on the eastern side, just after Amin Abad village. The walking path from Herandeh to Khomedeh village is considered one of the best trekking routes in the Firuzkuh area, offering excellent spots for

Iranica Desk

The Firuzkuh Road is a primary route for accessing the Caspian Sea in northern Iran, renowned for its abundance of historical and natural attractions. Stretching through the scenic landscapes of Mazandaran and Tehran provinces, this road, also known as the Savadkuh Road, leads travelers from the city of Bomshen in Tehran Province to Qaemshahr in Mazandaran Province. As one of the oldest roads in Tehran Province, it offers a rich tapestry of sights and experiences. Below, you'll discover some of the remarkable natural and historical wonders along this captivating route.

camping in nature nearby. During your visit, you will have the opportunity to stay in local rural houses, providing an authentic experience of the region.

Shourmast Lake

Shourmast Lake is the only natural lake in Savadkuh, located seven kilometers southwest of Pol Sefid. Access to the lake is via a side road that leads off the Firuzkuh Road.

The lake's depth varies between five and 15 meters, with about one-third being shallow and covered in moss and algae. Shourmast Lake is fed by underground springs. Unfortunately, due to climatic changes and global warming, the water flow from these springs has significantly decreased in recent years, resulting in the absence of rivers flowing from the lake, a phenomenon that was common in the past.

Shourmast Lake offers moderate facilities for tourists, with recreational activities including fishing, boating, and cycling around the lake. However, swimming is prohibited. Camping and overnight stays are also available for visitors in the area surrounding the lake. The side road to Shourmast Lake, located in the Pol Sefid area, is situated on the western side of the Firuzkuh Road and is approximately six kilometers long.

Veresk waterfall and bridge

The Veresk waterfall and bridge are stunning natural and historical attractions located approximately 30 kilometers northeast of the city of Firuzkuh. Tourists traveling along the Firuzkuh Road will pass by the Veresk Bridge, which offers a view of this remarkable structure; however, accessing the bridge and waterfall requires a short walk.

Constructed in 1936 by Austrian engineers during the construction of Iran's National Railway, the Veresk Bridge was originally named Abbasabad Bridge. Nearly a century old, it serves as a significant historical landmark.

The Veresk Waterfall, also known as Cheshmeh Ali Waterfall, is situated roughly 500 meters from the Veresk Bridge. This waterfall has a height of 20 meters when water levels are high and originates from Qadamgah Mountain. To visit, travelers should take a turn off the Firuzkuh Road towards the village of Veresk after the Gadouk Pass, heading south to north. The walk from the village to the waterfall takes about half an hour and passes under the Veresk Bridge. The area surrounding the waterfall and bridge is pristine and lacks facilities.

Mishineh Marg Gorge

Mishineh Marg Gorge is one of the most beautiful natural attractions in Firuzkuh, located on the border between Tehran and Mazandaran provinces. Access to the gorge is via the Firuzkuh Road, lying



Vashi Gorge

● [neshan.ir](https://www.neshan.ir)



Mishineh Marg Gorge

● [delgarm.com](https://www.delgarm.com)



Solehbon Village

● [hamshahrionline.ir](https://www.hamshahrionline.ir)

in an area called Lask and traversed by the Farahroud River. It is also known as Lask Gorge or Farahroud Gorge.

This stunning gorge is a popular nature tourism route in Iran, requiring good physical fitness and appropriate clothing and equipment. Visitors must navigate the cold river waters, which are filled with pebbles.

Nearby attractions include Mishineh Marg Peak and Lazur Lake, which draw numerous nature enthusiasts eager to explore the area. While the gorge is pristine and lacks facilities, experienced travelers can set up camp, but should bring all necessary equipment. Access to Mishineh Marg Gorge is via a side road from Lazur village, located on the western side of the Firuzkuh Road, just after the village of Herandeh.

Solehbon village

Solehbon village is a charming rural area

with pleasant weather, located along the Firuzkuh Road in the Arjmand region. Situated next to Namroud Dam Lake, one of Solehbon's most famous natural attractions, the village is nestled between two mountains and is characterized as a cold region.

The flowing rivers and abundant springs in the area contribute to the fertility of the village's surrounding landscapes. These features make it an ideal destination for nature tourism and camping, offering pristine and scenic views along the Firuzkuh Road.

Access to Solehbon village is via a side road from the Arjmand Road (Lasam to Firuzkuh), reached after the U-turn near Namroud Gas Station. The village provides relatively good facilities for tourists, including rental houses and eco-lodges, suitable for accommodations. Another notable attraction in the area is the ancient Solehbon Hill.

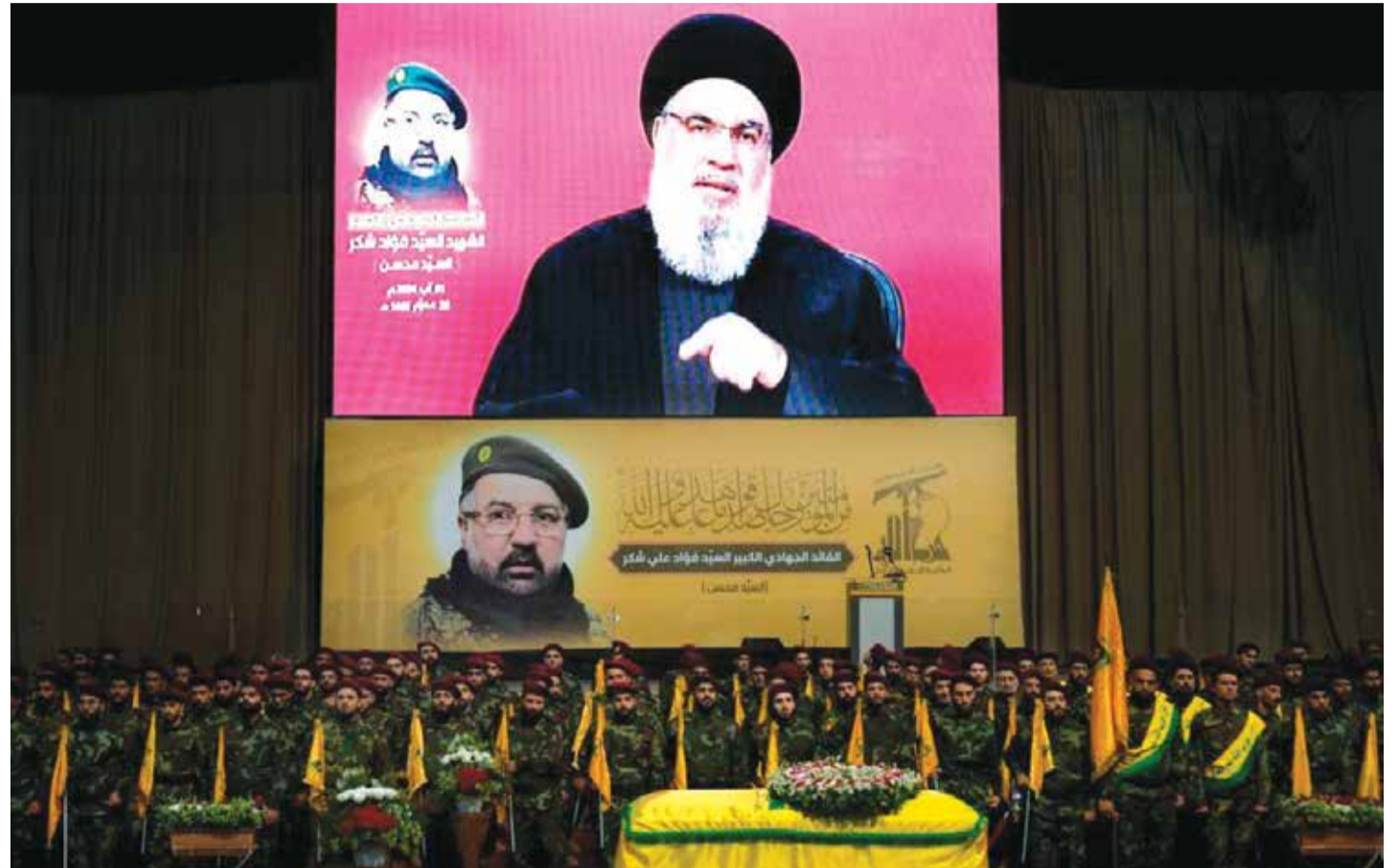
Hezbollah's information war against Israel

By Rany Ballout
Political risk and due diligence analyst

PERSPECTIVE

Israel's attacks on Hezbollah and reportedly Hamas on Tuesday and Wednesday mark a significant escalation in the Gaza war and bring Israel and Iran's "Axis of Resistance" closer to all-out war than at any time since the October 7 Hamas attack. An Israeli air strike on Tuesday killed Fuad Shukur, a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut, in response to an attack (reportedly by Hezbollah, although the resistance group denied it) on an Israeli-controlled Golan Heights on Saturday that killed 12 children and teenagers. On Wednesday, a detonation, reportedly by Israel, killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. The world is now watching how Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran will respond to such attacks. Iran has reportedly vowed a direct retaliation to Haniyeh's assassination. On Thursday, Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah indicated that Hezbollah is probing "a studied response" in the next few days to the killing of Shukur and what he characterized as Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

Understanding the information warfare and narratives of "purported" deterrence conducted by Hezbollah against Israel and the United States in the leading up to Israel's recent attacks is critical since it may help provide insight into the nature of Hezbollah's response to Israel's attack. Such information warfare was in response to Israel's persistent warning of a major military operation against the resistance group. In particular, the scale of Hezbollah's response, given its geostrategic proximity to Israel — and especially if it is coordinated with a direct attack by Iran — would determine if the low-level conflict will slide into a full-scale war.



At the funeral of Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur, Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah delivers a televised speech broadcast live from the Lebanese capital Beirut on August 1, 2024.

The release of drone footage that flew over the city of Haifa and Golan Heights has been framed as mounting proof of Hezbollah's penetration of Israel's intelligence capabilities and as part of Hezbollah's messaging to the Israeli military that Hezbollah possesses a bank of strategic targets that the group will strike firsthand should Israel launch an operation into Lebanon. Some analysts went on to compare Hezbollah's purported drone capabilities to Israel's air force power in the event of a major war.

Since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war, Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire along the Lebanon-Israel border. The conflict has increasingly taken an escalatory path in recent weeks. In response to the continuous elimination of many of its senior commanders by targeted Israeli strikes, Hezbollah has been more lately racking up rocket and drone attacks into northern Israel, mainly targeting what it describes as Israeli military sites, including key intelligence systems and reconnaissance centers. More aggravatingly, Hezbollah released in June and July a series of drone footage that showed what it described as detailed aerial views of Israeli military and civilian targets, including bases, infrastructure, and border areas in northern Israel. Only a few hours after the release of the first footage, Israel's military approved plans for an all-out offensive into Lebanon. The tit-for-tat between Israel and Hezbollah took a turn for the worse when a rocket attack

in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights killed 12 children and teenagers. In the lead-up to the recent attacks on Hezbollah and Hamas in Beirut and Tehran, Hezbollah's information operation, consisting of various arguments, claimed that the group is succeeding in establishing deterrence against Israel by achieving escalation dominance. Clearly, the primary goal of this rhetoric was to deter Israel from carrying out a military offensive into Lebanon. But it was also aimed at the Lebanese public, which is increasingly growing fearful of the prospect of a full-scale war with Israel that may bring devastation to Lebanon, to convince them that Hezbollah's initial decision to join the Gaza war, as well as its continuous escalatory attacks against Israel are pre-emptive in nature and are succeeding at preventing Israel from launching a major war against Lebanon. Pro-Hezbollah commentary and media reports continued

to proliferate in recent weeks, communicating the narrative that Hezbollah has gained the upper hand in establishing escalation dominance over Israel. One key argument of such claimed deterrence is the narrative surrounding the pace of the conflict between the resis-

tance group and Israel since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war. According to some commentators, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel has consisted of three phases, with Hezbollah at each juncture controlling the pace of the combat. The first phase encompassed

Israel, with its main ally, the United States, seeking to de-escalate the conflict primarily to protect Israel. Another layer of this narrative is rhetoric surrounding Hezbollah's drone attacks against Israel, framed as escalatory in nature and seeking to establish



Hezbollah soldiers showcase an unarmed drone (front), likely to be a Houthi-made Rased or Rased 1, as well as multiple-barrel rocket launchers (back), during a training exercise in southern Lebanon on May 21, 2023.



Lebanese former president Michel Aoun (R) meets with US Senior Advisor for Energy Security Amos Hochstein (2nd-L) at the presidential palace in Baabda, Lebanon, on June 14, 2022.

the cross-border clashes, which were confined to an area of seven kilometers. The second phase, framed as the deterrence stage, occurred following the assassination of Hamas senior leader Saleh al-Arouri by an Israeli drone strike in Beirut in January when Hezbollah started targeting what it describes as strategic locations. The third phase came after the killing of Hezbollah senior commander Taleb Abdallah by an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon in June, with Hezbollah intensifying its rocket attacks and expanding the scope of the combat to 35 kilometers to reach deeper into Israel. Such a narrative portrays a deterred

a purported equivalence between Hezbollah's drone arsenal and Israel's aircraft. Claims as such describe Hezbollah's drone warfare as consisting of several escalatory phases, for instance, starting with launching four drones in February to reach over a hundred drones in June. Further commentary cited US special envoy Amos Hochstein's June visit to Lebanon, claiming that he requested Hezbollah to bring Hezbollah's drone attacks back to a few a month in an effort to curb the intensity of the conflict. Perhaps a peak narrative example of the purported effectiveness of Hezbollah's drone warfare is pro-Hezbollah

media commentary, reports, and social media comments surrounding the above-mentioned drone videos that flew over the Israeli city of Haifa and the Golan Heights. The first part, a nine-minute video dubbed "Hudhud," claims to film residential areas in Haifa, the Haifa port, a naval base, and aerial defense systems like the Iron Dome and David's Sling. The second part, also nine minutes, claims to show aerial views of Israeli military and intelligence bases in the Golan Heights. The third part, more than eight minutes, is said to show an Israeli airbase in the north.

The release of such footage has been framed by pro-Hezbollah commentators as mounting proof of Hezbollah's penetration of Israel's intelligence capabilities and as part of Hezbollah's messaging to the Israeli military that Hezbollah possesses a bank of strategic targets that the group will strike firsthand should Israel launch an operation into Lebanon. Some analysts went on to compare Hezbollah's purported drone capabilities to Israel's air force power in the event of a major war. Another commentator even framed such footage as demonstrating Hezbollah's spying superiority over Israel, arguing that Hezbollah has shown capabilities of gathering intelligence on critical strategic targets. At the same time, Israel has only succeeded to date in targeting Hezbollah's personnel and commanders. Overall, most commentators, apparently as part of coordinated messaging, purported that the public release of the drone footage aims to deter Israel while showing that Hezbollah is ready for combat.



A drone carries a flag of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement above Aaramta bordering Israel on May 21, 2023, ahead of the anniversary of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000.

ANWAR AMRO/AFP

On the whole, commentary about the drone footage appears to borrow and endorse arguments (and word selection) made by Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah in his speech in June following the release of Hudhud footage. Nasrallah described the drone footage as a "comprehensive and real bank of targets" inside Israel, the targeting of which would destabilize the foundations of Israel. On a broader level, this speech and additional following speeches by Nasrallah have since been portrayed by various pro-Hezbollah commentaries and reporting, primarily by the Al-Mayadeen news outlet, as strategically designed to deter Israel from launching a major operation into Lebanon. Mainly, the rationale behind such "strategic deterrence" characterization was that the more Hezbollah intensifies its rhetoric of war, the more it serves its strategic deterrence purposes. Further rhetoric portraying a deterred Israel with the main argument that this is due to Hezbollah's newly shown missile and drone capabilities has been presented by Nasrallah himself in a recent speech almost three weeks ago commemorating the death of the senior Hezbollah commander Muhammad Nimah Nasser. Nasrallah put forward two claims in this regard. First, he claimed that Hezbollah's readiness for war had been evidenced by its unrestrained response to the killing of its commanders by Israeli strikes, revealing more of its missile and drone capabilities and each time targeting a broader range of sensitive targets. He further contended that after coming upon Hezbollah's newly divulged fighting capabilities, statements by Israeli military officials show a reduced objective of war against Lebanon. Instead, they now refer to limited opera-

tions in Southern Lebanon, like pushing Radwan forces beyond the Litani River, falling short of previous intentions.

In more combative speeches more than two weeks ago commemorating Ashura, Nasrallah even broadened the argument and went far to describe a declining Israel. For what appears to be the first such characterization since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, he made references to religious scriptures, including Jewish texts, to argue Israel is on the brink of collapse — notably, such characterizations by Nasrallah mirror and reiterate ones made by Hamas' military spokesman, Abu Obaida. Nasrallah portrayed an Israel largely plagued by soldiers' deaths and injuries and large shortages of weapons and munition, claiming as evidence statements made by Israeli officials and media reports. In further elaborating on the Axis' military achievements, he stressed the asymmetric nature of the Axis' warfare along with Shia doctrine and its emphasis on martyrdom.

Broadly, Iran's Axis of Resistance was also engaged in information warfare aimed at deterring Israel from launching a military offensive into Lebanon. As reported by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), an anonymous commander from the Islamic Resistance in Iraq confirmed to Western media that military advisers had been sent to Lebanon to help Hezbollah. Iranian-backed officials also indicated that thousands of fighters from across the Middle East are ready to join the conflict. Former IRGC commander Mohsen Rezaei warned on July 28 that a war between Israel and Hezbollah

would be more dangerous for Israel than its conflict with Hamas. Commentary by Lebanese analysts cites (unspecified) reports that thousands of fighters from the Houthis, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and the Iran-backed Afghani and Pakistani Shia resistance groups, the Fatemiyoun and Zainebiyoun Brigades, have already joined or are ready to join Hezbollah in southern Lebanon in an eventual war with Israel. Not surprisingly, Iranian media has readily picked up the saga of the Hudhud drone and amplified its messaging to serve its psychological warfare machine.

On a political level, the above-described information war has also been occurring against the backdrop of continuous Israel-Hamas cease-fire talks in Qatar, which appear now to be at risk. Reports indicate that Hezbollah and Hamas continue to discuss and coordinate around Israel-Hamas cease-fire talks and battlefield developments in Gaza. In almost all his speeches that coincided with ongoing Israel-Hamas cease-fire talks, Nasrallah explicitly made references to the Gaza negotiations while reiterating conditioning the end of Hezbollah's attacks against Israel on a permanent cease-fire in Gaza. As mentioned above, Nasrallah said in his speech Thursday that Hezbollah will deliver a powerful strike against Israel in the next few days, aside from the routine cross-border attacks that resumed the day after his speech. Hezbollah's most valid option is to launch an attack against the Israeli military its series of drone footage has claimed to show. Such an attack will most likely throw the region into a full-blown war.

The full article first appeared on *The National Interest*.

West offers huge incentives to Lebanon, but why?

By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's
correspondent in
Pakistan

PERSPECTIVE

According to Emirati media, two senior Lebanese officials claimed that some Western countries, including the United States, France, and Germany, communicated with the Lebanese government this week in Beirut and indirectly sent a message to Hezbollah. They proposed that if Hezbollah responds in a limited and pre-notified manner to avenge the killing of its key commander Fuad Shukur, the frozen Lebanese assets in the US and Europe would be made available to the Beirut government. Additionally, Western countries offered to prosecute Lebanese politicians and senior civil and military bureaucrats who illegally sent funds to Western countries. Western envoys also promised financial guarantees to fund projects linking Lebanon with electricity and gas from Jordan and Egypt. Lebanon has been facing an economic crisis since 2019, resulting in a financial loss of over \$70 billion and a 95% devaluation of its national currency.



The photo shows a billboard with portraits of slain leaders, Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas (L), Iranian Quds Force chief Qasem Soleimani (C), and Hezbollah senior commander Fuad Shukur, on the road to Beirut airport on August 3, 2024.

IBRAHIM AMRO/AFP

The Beirut government has announced legal action against senior officials involved in financial embezzlement, but these influential individuals have sought refuge in Western countries. Although European banks have frozen the funds at Beirut's request, they have refrained from handing over the frozen assets or prosecuting the criminals.

The package of incentives offered by Western envoys also includes resolving the deadlock over the election of a new president. Since the mandate of Michel Aoun expired in October 2022, Lebanon has been without an elected president. The US and Western allies have been hindering consensus on the election of a president due to a divided parliament, resulting in twelve failed attempts so far. Hezbollah's supporters in parliament back Suleiman Frangieh, while their opponents support former minister Jihad Azour. Hezbollah has stated that internal conflicts and issues cannot be linked to a war with Israel.

Then, there's the promise of linking the energy-strapped Lebanon to the Egypt-Jordan pipeline project, which has been stalled for two years due to a lack of financial resources. In June 2022, Lebanon signed an agreement to import 650 million cubic meters of gas from Egypt and Syria, and a similar agreement with Jordan to supply electricity through Syria. This project was supposed to receive World Bank funding, but it was delayed due to US sanctions. Now, the US has assured the Lebanese government that if Hezbollah shows a cautious response to avenge Fuad Shukur's killing, the sanctions on this project would be relaxed. However, the question arises as to why Western countries are making such attractive offers to limit Hezbollah's response.

Western intelligence agencies have informed their governments that Hezbollah is planning to carry out multiple serious attacks inside Israel in response to the killings of Fuad Shukur and Hamas politburo chief Ismail Haniyeh. Hezbollah's targets include Israeli naval installations

and some strategic facilities that could cause significant destruction in Israel. Iran has also subtly confirmed Western intelligence reports. The Iranian mission at the United Nations stated on Saturday that Hezbollah is expected to carry out deep strikes within Israel, not just in the north. Since the Israeli aggression on Gaza, Hezbollah has been targeting military positions in Israeli-occupied areas in the north regularly. Still, Hezbollah plans to choose deeper targets inside Israel to respond strongly to its war crimes.

in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen, Washington has deployed additional fighter jets to the Middle East to defend Israel. An American military official told Arab media on condition of anonymity that US forces in the Middle East are increasing combat readiness and taking necessary measures to counter any threat from Iran or resistance movements. According to The Washington Post, the US has deployed 12 naval warships in various regions of the Middle East, with more than 4,000 Marines and sailors on



UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy (front-R) and UK Defence Secretary John Healey (front-L) talk with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri in Lebanon on April 1, 2024.

X

The fear and panic of the Israeli public are palpable at all international airports in Israel, as settlers are seeking ways to flee. However, not all Israelis were able to leave as the flights were delayed or canceled due to suspicious "malfunctions" and overload. A Western diplomat in Tel Aviv leaked to the media that Western countries have prepared emergency plans to evacuate Israeli citizens. The US embassy in Beirut issued an advisory on Saturday for American citizens to leave Lebanon on the first available flight. This indicates the severity of the threat Israel faces from Iran and regional resistance movements.

To reduce the threat from Yemen, the US military attacked several Yemeni missile launchers on Saturday evening. In response to declared vows of retaliation by Iran and resistance movements

three ships. Through Qatar, Iran has made it clear that if the US attempts to retaliate, American bases in the region will be targeted. Israel's domestic security agency, Shin Bet, has restricted the movement of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and cabinet ministers and prohibited them from visiting insecure locations. By killing Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and Fuad Shukur in Lebanon, Israel has not only endangered its security but also created a global crisis. Russia and China will not remain indifferent to this situation. Reports suggest that Russia has swiftly started providing Iran with high-tech technology and strengthening its air defense systems with missiles. Both countries have warned the US to refrain from overstepping boundaries in ensuring Israel's security.

Kiani to face Alizadeh in anticipated Olympic opener



A gold winner in last year's World Championships, Kiani will be aiming to become the second Iranian girl to win an Olympic medal in the 128-year history of the Games – a feat only accomplished by her last-16 opponent in Paris, who won a bronze when competing under the Iranian flag in Rio 2016.

However, Kiani looks to be in high spirits ahead of a second Olympic participation. "I had a bitter experience three years ago, but I'm still grateful God gave me another opportunity to take part in this sporting extravaganza," Kiani told Mehr News Agency on Saturday, adding: "I've been working so hard to be in my best form for the Games and I'm confident August 8 will be the sweetest day of my life. Now is the time to add the Olympic triumph to my medal cabinet."

The top two of the wight class in Tokyo, American gold medalist Anastasiya Zolotic and Minina, will not be present in Paris but Turkey's Hatice Kübra İlgün and Lo Chia-ling of the Chinese Taipei will be looking to improve on their bronze medals.

There will also be a number of high-profile contenders in the mix, including Team GB's two-time Olympic champion Jade Jones, Canadian Skylar Park, 2022 world champion Luo Zongshi of China, and South Korean Kim Yu-jin.

Seeking seventh

Kiani will be joined by three fellow-Iranians in chasing a seventh taekwondo medal for the country in the Olympic history.

Teenage sensation Mobina Ne'matzadeh will be in action today, taking on Lesotho's Michelle Tau – a winner of double bronzes in the African Championships – in the women's -49kg event.

A victory will see the Iranian – bronze medalist in last year's Asian Games – meet Spain's Adriana Cerezo Iglesias – runner-up in Tokyo – or María Sara Grippoli of Uruguay in the last eight.

In the men's draw, Mehran Barkhordari – world bronze winner in 2022 – will face Uzbekistan's Jasurbek Jaysunov in the -80kg contests on Friday, with the winner heading into a probable last-eight battle against Italian two-time world champion Simone Alessio, who will meet Ismael Coulibaly of Mali or Kazakhstan's Batyrkhan Toleugali in his opening bout. Iran's taekwondo campaign in Paris will come to end with the men's +80kg event on Saturday, when Arian Salimi steps onto the mat at Grand Palais against three-time world medal winner Nikita Rafalovich of Uzbekistan, with the winner meeting prominent Mexican Carlos Sansores or Paivou Johnouario Gomis of Guinea-Bissau for a last-four spot.

Sports Desk

Iran's Nahid Kiani will begin her quest for taekwondo glory at the Paris Olympics with a much-anticipated clash against Bulgarian representative Kimia Alizadeh in the women's -57kg contests on Thursday. A gold winner in last year's World Championships, Kiani will be aiming to become the second Iranian girl to win an Olympic medal in the 128-year history of the Games – a feat only accomplished by her last-16 opponent in Paris, who won a bronze

when competing under the Iranian flag in Rio 2016.

The two also squared off in the first round at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, with Alizadeh – participating as a member of the Refugee Olympic Team – claiming an 18-9 victory before she was knocked out by Russian Tatiana Minina in the semifinals.

The winner of Thursday's bout will go head-to-head with either Faith Dillon of the United States or Tunisian Chaima Toumi in the quarterfinals.

In an interview with Varzesh3 in January, Kiani opened up about her mental struggles after the setback against Alizadeh in the previous meeting. "The bout was a one-off in the Olympic history and overcoming the unpleasant circumstances in the aftermath of the defeat was one of the hardest things I ever had to do in my life," Kiani said. "I was devastated by the fact that a part of my compatriots cheered my opponent's victory, which is why I had to seek professional help from a therapist."



Iranian Nahid Kiani (R) is seen in action against Kimia Alizadeh, representing the IOC the Refugee Olympic Team, at the Tokyo Olympics.
● GETTY IMAGES



Paris Olympics:

Duplantis breaks pole vault world record on way to gold

BBC – Sweden's Armand Duplantis set a new world record of 6.25m after winning gold in the men's pole vault. The 24-year-old, who had secured successive Olympic titles by clearing six metres, set an Olympic record of 6.10m with his next attempt.

And he improved his world best of 6.24m, that he set in April, by one centimetre at his third and final attempt, to the delight of the crowd in the Stade de France.

The two-time world champion has now broken the record on nine occasions. Duplantis, the first athlete to retain the pole vault title since American Bob Richards in 1952 and 1956, raced to his friends and family after breaking the world record.

"I haven't processed how fantastic that moment was," said Duplantis. "It's one of those things that you don't really feel is real. It's such an out of body experience."

"The biggest dream since a kid was to break the world record at the Olympics, and I've been able to do that in front of the most ridiculous crowd I've ever competed in front of."

American Sam Kendricks cleared 5.95m to take silver, while Greece's Emmanouil Karalis secured bronze on

countback with a best of 5.90m.

Elsewhere in the athletics event, Great Britain's Keely Hodgkinson dominated the 800m final to win gold and end her wait for a global title.

The 22-year-old had finished second at successive World Championships after claiming a stunning silver on her Olympic debut in Tokyo as a teenager in 2021.

Crossing the line in one minute 56.72 seconds, Hodgkinson could not hide her emotion as the magnitude of her achievement struck.

Ethiopia's Tsige Duguma (1:57.15) won silver while world champion Moraa (1:57.42) had to settle for third.

Gymnastics

US superstar Simone Biles said it was "just the right thing to do" after she and team-mate Jordan Chiles bowed down to Olympic gold medallist Rebeca Andrade after the floor final in Paris.

Biles had been hoping to win a fourth gold at these Games but a couple of mistakes meant she had to settle for silver behind the Brazilian.

However, the 27-year-old, who is the world's most decorated gymnast, was far from disappointed and instead joined Chiles in showing admiration to Andrade in one of the iconic images of

these Games.

The trio also made history as the first all-black podium in men or women's gymnastics at the Olympics.

"She's such an excitement to watch and then all the fans in the crowd were always cheering for her, so it was just the right thing to do," said Biles.

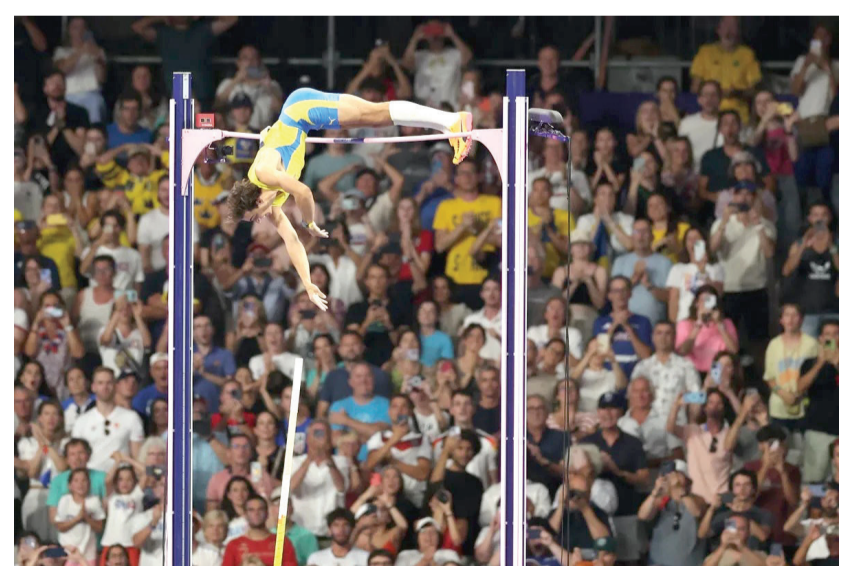
"It was an all-black podium so that was super-exciting for us, but then Jordan was like 'should we bow to her?' and I was like 'absolutely!'"

Football

Jean-Philippe Mateta scored twice as France fought back to beat 10-man Egypt 3-1 after extra time and reach the final of the men's football competition.

The result means Thierry Henry's side are guaranteed a first medal in the tournament in 40 years when they play Spain at the Parc des Princes on Friday. Mateta, 27, swept in a late equaliser from Michael Olise's pass to level the scores after Mahmoud Saber had powered in an opener for Egypt from close range in Lyon.

Crystal Palace forward Mateta headed the hosts in front nine minutes into extra time, after Omar Fayed had been dismissed for a second yellow card. Olise rounded off the scoring for



France, with Egypt now set to face Morocco in Nantes on Thursday in the bronze-medal match.

In the other semi-final, 2020 silver medallists Spain came from behind to beat Morocco 2-1 comeback, courtesy of goals by Barcelona's Fermin Lopez and substitute Juanlu Sanchez against tournament top scorer Soufiane Rahimi's penalty in the first half.

Swedish Armand Duplantis clears the pole vault world record height of 6.25m at the Paris Olympics in Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France, on August 5, 2024.

● GETTY IMAGES

Pezeshkian slams interference in Venezuelan election



Supporters of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro shout slogans during a rally in Caracas on July 31, 2024. **JUAN BARRETO/AFP**

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned foreign interference in Venezuela's internal affairs following the victory of Nicolas Maduro in the South American country's presidential election. The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Venezuelan counterpart

Maduro on Monday night. The Iranian president, meanwhile, congratulated Maduro on his victory in Venezuela's presidential election that extended his incumbency in the position. Pezeshkian expressed solidarity on the part of Tehran with the Venezuelan nation, condemning whatever instance of foreign interference in the country's internal affairs. The Iranian president also reassured Maduro of Iran's readiness for expansion of all-out cooperation with the Latin American country. Pezeshkian laid particular emphasis on the Islamic Republic's preparedness for enhancement of economic and commercial

exchanges and cooperation with Venezuela, and provision of technical and engineering services to the country. Maduro, for his part, emphasized his country's readiness for further expansion of cooperation with the Islamic Republic, asserting, "A leap forward in the [bilateral] cooperation would constitute a path towards attainment of progress, welfare, and prosperity for both countries." The Venezuelan president also pointed to the post-election riots that took place in his country following his victory, calling the unrest the result

of a Zionist plot hatched in cooperation with the United States and some other Western states with the aim of wreaking destruction on independent countries. "We will resist and confront such plots once again, and will undoubtedly emerge victorious," Maduro said. Venezuela's National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner of the July 29 election with 51 percent of the vote against opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez's 44 percent. The United States and its allies have, however, held off recognizing the results, and supported the violent protesters.

Iran-Russia bids to promote multipolarity will boost global security: *President*

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said collaboration between Iran and Russia in promoting a multipolar world will undoubtedly enhance global security and peace. "We believe that the era of unilateralism by certain powers, including the United States, is over," the president told visiting Secretary of Russia's Security Council Sergei Shoigu. "The alignment of positions and collaboration between Iran and Russia in promoting a multipolar world will un-

doubtedly enhance global security and peace." Pezeshkian described Russia as a "strategic partner" of Iran, stressing that the expansion of relations with Moscow is a top foreign policy priority of his government. He noted that Russia has been a steadfast ally during Iran's challenging times and underscored the need to expedite the implementation of agreements reached between the two countries. The visit by Shoigu comes

amid heightened tensions in the region after Israel assassinated Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, in Tehran on Wednesday, pushing the region to the brink. Tehran has vowed that the brazen act of aggression on its soil will not go unanswered. The Iranian president said on Monday that the assassination of Haniyeh was a blatant violation of international laws and regulations. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is in no way seeking

to expand the scope of war and crisis in the region, but certainly this regime will receive a response for its crimes and audacity," he said. Shoigu, for his part, congratulated Pezeshkian once again on his election as president of Iran and described the Islamic Republic as a key strategic ally of Russia in the region. Expressing satisfaction with Russia and Iran's joint efforts to create a "multipolar world" and ensure regional security, he em-



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and Secretary of Russia's Security Council Sergei Shoigu meet in Tehran on August 5, 2024. **president.ir**

phasized that relations between the two allies are growing across all sectors. Before meeting with

Pezeshkian, Shoigu sat down with Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad

Baqeri and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian.

Bangladesh president dissolves parliament after PM flees country

Bangladesh's president dissolved parliament on Tuesday, clearing the way for an interim government and new elections, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled following a violent crackdown on a student-led protests. President Mohammed Shahabuddin's office also announced that the leader

of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Begum Khaleda Zia, a former prime minister who had feuded with Hasina for decades, had been freed from house arrest. The student movement arose out of demonstrations against public sector job quotas for families of veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 independence war, seen by critics as a means to reserve jobs for allies

of the ruling party. About 300 people were killed and thousands injured in violence that ripped through the country since July. Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Nasser Kanaani in a statement expressed hope for a quick restoration of stability in the country. He also expressed sympathy with the families of the victims who lost their lives during the protests.

No arrests yet made for Hamas chief's assassination: *Iran*

Iran has yet to make any arrests linked to the Israeli assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, the Iranian Judiciary said Tuesday. The leader of the Palestinian resistance movement was killed on July 31 during a visit for the swearing-in ceremony of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. The "necessary investiga-

tions" have begun and the results will be announced "as soon as the probe is completed," said Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir. "Until today, no arrests have been made in connection with this case," he said, adding that the investigations involved Iranian military officials. Iran's Revolution Guards Corps said Haniyeh was killed using a "short-range projectile" launched from

outside his accommodation in Tehran. Iran and Hamas have blamed Israel and vowed to retaliate. Israel has declined to comment. On Saturday, the New York Times claimed that Iran had arrested more than two dozen people in connection with Haniyeh's assassination. Jahangir dismissed the claims about any arrests as "rumors" and "false."

Notice of tender for export sale No. Z/1403/13
GolGohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 70,000 metric tons of Pellet (%Fe:65) on basis of F.O.B at Rajaee Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 09:00 A.M. on 20. Aug.2024 to Golgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road). Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 09:00 A.M. on 20.Aug.2024 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Fe%	65.00	Min
FeO%	1.0	Ave
P%	0.05	Max
S%	0.01	Max
SiO2%	3.5	Max
Al2O3%	0.7	Max
CaO%	0.9	Max
MgO%	2.5	Max
CCS (kg/p)	Ave 250	
8-16 mm%	Min 90	
-6 mm%	Ave 5	
A.I%	Max 4	
T.I%	Min 95	
Prosity%	19-24	
Reducibility%	Min 90	

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

Notice of tender for export sale No. Z/1403/14
GolGohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 140,000 metric tons of Iron Ore Concentrate (%Fe:66.5) on basis of F.O.B at Rajaee Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 09:00 A.M. on 20. Aug.2024 to olgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road). Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 09:00 A.M. on 20.Aug.2024 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Fe%	66.50	Ave.
FeO%	24	Min
	28	Max
P%	0.05	Max
S%	1	Max
SiO2%	3.0	Max
Al2O3%	0.7	Max
CaO%	0.9	Max
MgO%	3.0	Max
Moisture%	3	Max
Size Ave.	98%<3 mm	
	80%<0.45 mm	

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

President urges unity, coordination for progress

Sunni MPs optimistic about Pezeshkian's 'inclusive governance'

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of unity and coordination among all sectors in achieving effective governance and advancing the country's agenda. In a meeting with Sunni representatives in the Parliament, Pezeshkian, acknowledged the administrative inefficiencies and emphasized the need for qualified individuals in governance, president.ir reported. The Sunni representatives expressed their optimism in the president's discourse, highlighting the importance of utilizing specialists regardless of beliefs, ethnicities, and sects. They also emphasized the need for considering the opinions of locals and involving them in the country's administration, particularly in border exchanges and infrastructure development. Pezeshkian acknowledged the diverse range of opinions across the country and affirmed his



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) meets with Sunni representatives in the Parliament in Tehran on August 6, 2024. president.ir

commitment to consultation and utilizing the expertise of specialists and elites in various fields. He assured that his Cabinet selections would prioritize those who advocate for unity and the utilization of the country's full potential. The President also attributed the lack of realization of national documents to the absence of cohesion within the executive body and the neglect of political disputes. He expressed his determination to appoint qualified individuals with relevant expertise to address the country's challenges and advance its progress. Promoting dialogue and understanding among different ethnicities in Iran was also emphasized as a crucial aspect of the country's progress.

Iran's cinema sees 31% growth in audience



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cinema witnessed a remarkable surge in ticket sales and audience numbers during the first 139 days of the Iranian year, with box office revenues reaching nearly \$1.15 billion until August 5, compared to last year's figure. Despite expectations that unusually hot weather and the month of Muharram holidays would slow down cinema attendance, Iran's film industry thrived. Until August 5, a total of 12.2 million tickets had been sold, generating nearly \$1.15 billion in box office revenue, IRNA wrote. Comparatively, during the same period last year, there were only 9,255 ticket sales, amounting to \$66.5 million in box office earnings. This year's figures represent a significant improvement, with a 31% increase in audience numbers and a remarkable 73% jump in box office sales.

With five films attracting over 1 million viewers each until August 5 and a promising lineup for the remaining months of the year, expectations are high that this trend will continue. IRNA's prediction from late last year, forecasting over 30 million viewers and box office revenues exceeding \$3.2 billion, is now well within reach. Looking ahead to the fall season, with a strong slate of comedy, social drama, and children's films set for release, the Iranian film industry is poised for further success. While it remains to be seen if a single film will break the 300 billion rial (\$49.2 million) mark, several films are expected to surpass the 200 billion rial (\$3.28 million) threshold, and many others are anticipated to cross the 100 billion rial (\$1.64 million) mark, further boosting audience numbers and box office sales.

How does new Iranian government plan to respond to assassination of Haniyeh?



By Hoda Yousefi
Middle East affairs expert

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

The newly elected Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist, had pledged during his election campaign to foster international engagement and pursue de-escalation efforts. Nevertheless, on his inaugural day in office, he was confronted with a situation that poses a delicate balance between his de-escalation policy and the imperative to safeguard Iran's honor and sovereignty. Following the recent inauguration of the new Iranian President, Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's political bureau was tragically assassinated at his residence in northern Tehran. It is important to note that Haniyeh, a distinguished guest of the Islamic Republic and holder of a diplomatic passport, was under the protection of Tehran's authorities. This unfortunate act constitutes a grave violation of Iran's territorial integrity and the diplomatic immunity that was duly granted to Haniyeh. While no specific statement

has been made by Israel regarding the responsibility for this assassination, the method and intention behind the killing, along with Netanyahu's remarks about Israel having struck at Iranian proxy forces, including Hamas and Hezbollah, suggest the possibility of Israeli involvement in the assassination of Haniyeh and Fouad Shukur, a senior Hezbollah military leader. As the head of Hamas political bureau, Haniyeh is recognized as a diplomatic figure under international law rather than a military one. However, Israel may consider him a legitimate military target due to his effective control over militants engaged with Israel. In response to such an event, Iran's actions can be perceived as an act of self-defense, which would be in accordance with international law. It is Iran's intention to establish a form of deterrence against Israel through self-defense. Following the incident, Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of Iran, stated, "Haniyeh was an esteemed guest in our country, and we consider it our responsibility to seek justice in light of his tragic passing." This statement elucidates Iran's general approach to addressing Hani-

yeh's assassination, while the specific course of action and its intricacies are yet to be finalized. Moreover, historically, Iran has refrained from direct confrontation with Israel, opting instead to utilize proxy forces. The current Iranian government is anticipated to employ indirect tactics that align with domestic public sentiment, seek retribution for Haniyeh, and avoid escalating tensions with Israel. In essence, Iran is focused on restoring balance and steering clear of full-scale conflict. The current Iranian government is dedicated to reassessing its relations with the West and ending international isolation. An escalation of conflict would directly contradict these efforts. On the contrary, heightening tensions may jeopardize Iran's efforts to avert the activation of the "snapback" mechanism. Iran has until October 2025 to provide evidence of its compliance with the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Failure to do so will result in the activation of the snapback mechanism, leading to the reinstatement of all sanctions imposed during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency, which were

suspended under the JCPOA during Hassan Rouhani's tenure. Iran is currently presented with a challenging dilemma. In alignment with the new government's policies, Iran must navigate a course of action that avoids direct conflict with Tel Aviv, while also preserving opportunities for engagement with Europe and the US. Furthermore, it is imperative to prevent the activation of the snapback mechanism, all the while maintaining the hope of ending international isolation. The other approach, which is considered more pragmatic by realist experts, involves a series of steps. It begins with a strong and influential response to Israel and could potentially lead to endeavors aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons. This strategy is based on the belief that, with the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reimposition of many sanctions, Iran is already facing substantial costs. Therefore, it might be deemed rational for Iran to consider seeking nuclear weapons to bolster its deterrence and negotiation abilities. However, it appears improbable that such an outcome will materialize under the current Iranian leadership.