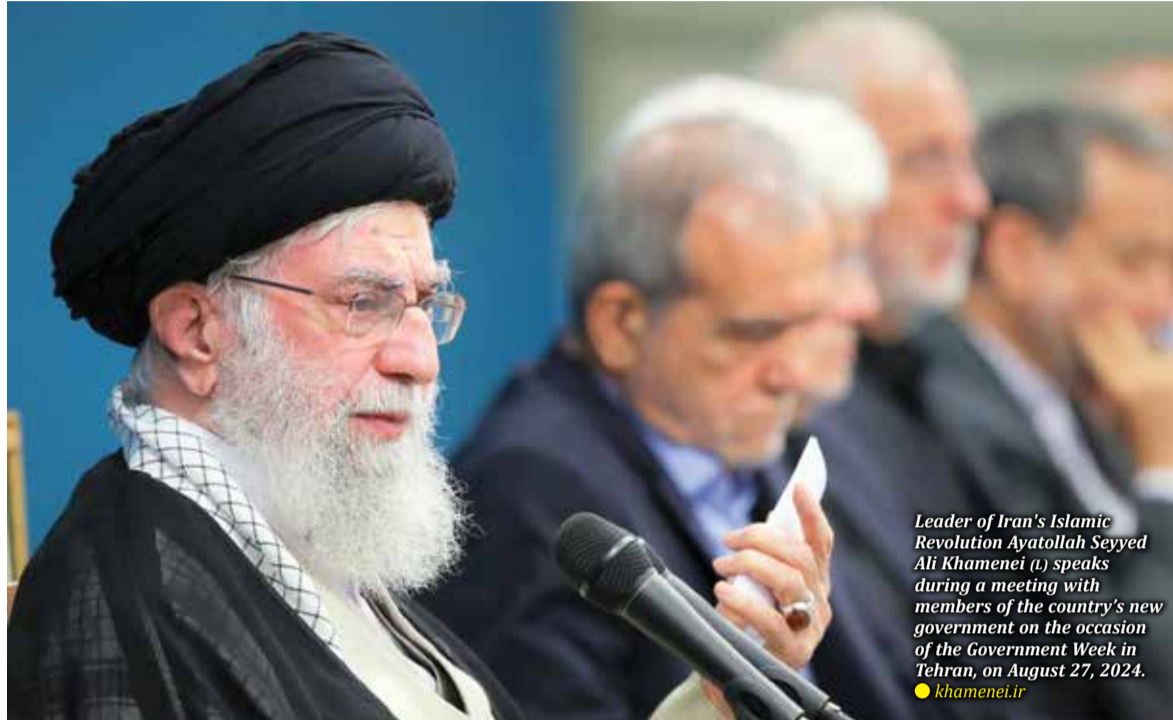


Leader green lights 'engagement', nixes trust in enemy



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (r) speaks during a meeting with members of the country's new government on the occasion of the Government Week in Tehran, on August 27, 2024. khamenei.ir

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Tuesday gave the go-ahead for "engagement" with the United States in his first meeting with the administration of President Masoud Pezeshkian. "There is no barrier to engage with the enemy," Ayatollah Khamenei told

Pezeshkian and his cabinet in Tehran. "But you should not pin hopes on the enemy and trust it," the Leader added. Iran has long been at loggerheads with the US over a series of issues including Tehran's nuclear program. But tensions began to mount after the US in 2018 walked

out of an international deal between Iran and world powers that eased sanctions in return for curbs on Iran's nuclear work. Then-US president Donald Trump reimposed and reinforced sanctions on the Islamic Republic under its so-called "maximum pressure" campaign.

Talks to revive the tattered nuclear deal, known as the JCPOIA, during the tenure of US President Joe Biden failed. Iran's new Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a key member of Iran's negotiating team, said over the weekend that he would not hesitate "even and hour" to get the sanctions lifted

through talks or "any honorable means." Araghchi was a member of Iran's negotiating team that concluded the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. During the Tuesday meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei also referred to the country's capacities, saying that Iran is today known in the world for its science, regional power and strategic depth. Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted Iran's natural resources, geographical location and climate diversity as well as its rich human capacities, including the religion and political faith of people, as major assets of the country. "Once Iran was known for its carpets and oil; today Iran is known in the world for science, military progress, regional power, and strategic depth," he said. "This is the opportunity that is at our disposal. The ability to influence the countries of the world and the region is not a small thing. This is a very important matter," Ayatollah Khamenei further noted. Regarding the new cabinet, the Leader noted that Pres-

ident Pezeshkian consulted him about the selection of his ministers. The Leader also asserted that the key to resolving the country's economic problems lies in production and that the issue must be taken seriously. Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the issue of artificial intelligence, saying that using the technology should not be considered a privilege, and that different state departments need to master the deep layers of the technology. He warned of attempts by the world's opportunists and those seeking power to establish an artificial intelligence agency to prevent countries' progress in this field. Additionally in his remarks, the Leader underlined the need for "rule of law" in the cyberspace which he said is currently "uncontrolled." "My point is that cyberspace should be law-centered in the country, then it will be an opportunity," he asserted. "If we could have rule of law in cyberspace, this space will turn into an opportunity for the country, otherwise it may be a threat," he concluded.

Iran condemns terrorist attacks in Pakistan, Burkina Faso



International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman in separate statements on Tuesday condemned deadly terrorist attacks in Pakistan and Burkina Faso. Nasser Kanaani said the attacks in Pakistan, which led to the death of police officers and civilians, are vehemently rebuked by Tehran. At least 73 people were killed in Pakistan's province of Balochistan when terrorists attacked police stations, railway lines and highways and security forces launched retaliatory operations, officials said on Monday. Pakistan's military said 14 soldiers and police and 21 terrorists were killed in fighting after the largest of the attacks, which targeted buses and trucks on a major highway. Balochistan's chief minister said 38 civilians were also killed. Local officials said 23 of them were killed in the roadside attack after armed men checked passengers' IDs before shooting many of them and torching vehicles. The so-called terrorist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility. Kanaani offered condolences to the bereaved and expressed sympathy with the Pakistani government and nation. "The Islamic Republic opposes and condemns terrorism of any kind and stands by the government and people of neighboring and brotherly country Pakistan in the fighting against this evil phenomenon." The Iranian official also condemned a terrorist attack in Burkina Faso, during which around 200 people were killed and 140 injured in the Burkina town of Barsalogo, the latest in a long line of deadly attacks by an al-Qaeda-linked armed group. Kanaani offered condolences to the government and people of Burkina Faso over the deadly terrorist attack.

Zarif returns as presidential aide after resignation

National Desk

Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's former foreign minister, on Tuesday announced he was returning to his post as the presidential aide in strategic affairs after submitting his resignation this month over grievances about President Masoud Pezeshkian's line-up for the government. Zarif said in a post on X that after consultations with Pezeshkian, he will continue to fulfill his duties as the president's aide in strategic affairs. Zarif's announcement came after he attended a meeting between Pezesh-



kian's newly formed government and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Tuesday. Iran's Parliament last week approved all 19 proposed ministers by the president - the first time in decades that the legislature has endorsed all ministers proposed by a president.

"Today and for first time in over 20 years, all ministerial nominees in #Iran have been approved by the #Majles; our Parliament," Zarif said in a post on X after the parliament's approval of the ministers. Zarif served as Iran's foreign minister from 2013 until 2021 under the government of former president Hassan Rouhani.

Israeli minister's synagogue plan faces huge flak

Global condemnations poured in after the remarks by far-right Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir about his plan to build a synagogue at the al-Asqa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of Al-Quds. The United Nations roundly denounced the remarks, with spokesman Stephane Dujarric saying, "These types of statements are highly counterproductive, to say the least. They risk inflaming a situation which is already bone dry," Press TV reported. The UN joined Qatar, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in publicly denouncing Ben-Gvir. Earlier, the far-right Israeli minister claimed that Jews



REUTERS

have the right to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying that he would build a synagogue at the site. "If I could do what I wanted, a synagogue would also be established on the Temple Mount," the extremist Israeli minister, who has a long record of making inflammatory statements,

told Israel's Army Radio on Monday morning. Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned in the strongest terms the statements made by Ben Gvir regarding plans to establish a Jewish synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran, West bent ...

The critical question, however, is whether Iran and the West are truly geared up for engagement or serious about dialing down tensions. In my view, the answer is a resounding yes. The Americans embarked on a strategy of maximum pressure against Tehran in 2017, imposing sanctions without a clear objective or endgame. Were they aiming for regime change or pushing Iran to the negotiating table? Neither has materialized. But since October 7, they realized turning the screws on Iran would

only create blowback. This comes as Israel is in a tight spot and flirting with a full-blown war. American troops stationed in the region aren't having an easy time either. Essentially, ramping up pressure on Iran and unstoking tensions in the area have escalated costs and diminished economic gains for the US. US President Joe Biden had previously asserted that were it not for the October 7 attack, the process of normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel would have concluded, and the Arab-Europe Corridor,

intended to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative, would have been initiated. Last year, William Burns, the CIA director, emphasized in an extensive article the imperative of reaching an understanding with Tehran to effectively manage and mitigate tensions in West Asia. Thus, there exists a palpable resolve on the part of the West, specifically the United States, to pursue a different tack. Iran's government, for its part, seeks sanctions relief, recognizing the necessity of engagement with Europe and the United States

to rebuild its infrastructure and rehabilitate its economy. However, this trajectory is susceptible to disruptive variables that could throw a spanner in the works. Remember when Biden took office, and everyone thought Iran's nuclear deal, JCPOA, would be back on? Then came Israel's nuclear allegations against Iran, the assassination of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, and the Ukraine war, and everything went south. That's where the art of diplomacy comes in—managing those peripheral variables.