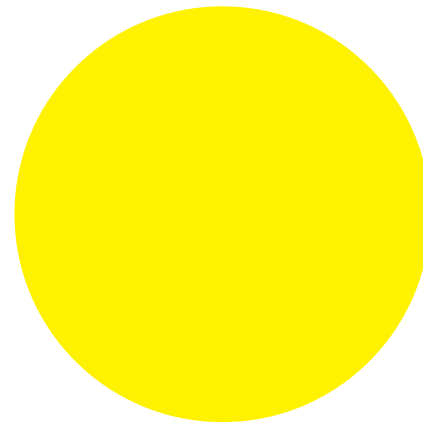


Iran, Azerbaijan open joint dam on border river

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National Desk

A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi made a “hard landing” on Sunday as it was crossing a mountainous area through a heavy fog.

The president and his entourage were flying back from a visit to a border area in the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan.

The incident happened in the mountainous protected forest area of Dizmar near the town of Varzaghan.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi told state TV that 40 search teams had been dispatched to the region but poor weather made it difficult for them to reach the crash site.

Traveling with Raisi were Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the governor general of East Azarbaijan, and other officials and bodyguards.

His convoy included three helicopters. The other two have “reached their destination safely,” according to Tasnim News Agency.

Raisi, 63, was visiting the province where he inaugurated a dam together with his Azeri counterpart, Ilham Aliiev, on the border between the two countries.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei expressed concern about the incident and urged people to pray for the wellbeing of president and other people onboard the aircraft. The Leader also assured the nation that there would be “no disruption” in the management of the country in the wake of the incident.

People gathered in Shia holy shrines in Mashhad, Qom and Shiraz to pray for those onboard the copter.

Mohsen Mansouri, a presidential executive deputy, told Iranian TV that they had made contact with two people onboard the helicopter.

Iraqi government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said in a statement the country’s Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani had “ordered the Interior Ministry, the Iraqi Red Crescent, and other relevant authorities to offer Iran the available resources to aid in the search for the Iranian president’s aircraft.”

Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan offered to help Iran with the search operation.

The European Union activated its Copernicus satellite system to offer emergency mapping services to help Iranian officials gain better visibility of the area where the crash is believed to have occurred, according to the bloc’s chief for crisis management, Janez Lenarcic. He said the EU had done so after a request for assistance by Iran. Several Iranian officials have lost their lives in air mishaps in past decades.

Back in 2006, then-commander of the ground forces of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and 12 other people died after a small jet crashed in the northwestern city of Urmia.

Rahman Dadman, Iran’s transport minister under former president Mohammad Khatami, also died in a plane crash in northern Iran in May 2001. The plane was carrying 10 crew and 19 passengers, including six lawmakers.



Iran Prays for President After Chopper Crash-landed

