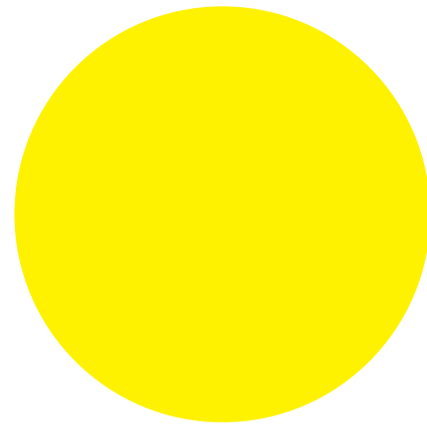


Leader:
Iranians show
loyalty at
president's
funeral



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**Israel's rising
seclusion**

Rafah invasion stokes regime's further isolation

**Raisi respected
by peers**

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

Over 60 high-level foreign delegations participated in the commemoration ceremony for the martyrdom of the president and foreign minister of Iran in Tehran. More than 10 delegations were at the level of heads of state, around 20 at the ministerial level, and the rest included various dignitaries such as parliamentary leaders and special envoys. International relations experts Hassan Beheshtipour and Mohammadreza Dehshiri believe that the attendance of leaders from various countries in the ceremony to honor Iran's late president and foreign minister demonstrated the success of expanding relations with neighboring countries and Tehran's 'Look to the East' policy.

By Hassan Beheshtipour
Foreign affairs expert

Despite the martyrdom of Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, his administration has not left the office. I believe the late president's path goes on, at least until the next presidential election. His most significant focus in foreign policy was the adoption of the 'Look to the East' policy. Foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian explained this as prioritizing establishing relations with Asian countries. This does not mean neglecting ties with African or Latin American countries, but rather prioritizing more engagement with Asia.

The second point was the expansion of relations with neighboring countries, with the most notable achievement being the achieved détente with Saudi Arabia under Raisi's presidency. The ties with the Kingdom were severed as a result of some imprudent actions in the past. Nevertheless, tensions with neighboring countries were resolved or at least significantly reduced.

Another success was improving relations with Afghanistan and the Taliban government. The goal was to maintain good relations with the neighboring country, given the extensive cultural ties, historical commonalities, and shared interests. Tensions with Pakistan, Turkey, and Iraq were eased as well.

The news of the unfortunate death of the president and the foreign minister of Iran surely met with widespread global reaction. This would have been the case for any official who lives in a geopolitically significant country, not just president Raisi.

When three countries in the United Nations Security Council request a moment of silence, it is also a recognition of Iran's status. This is not to say that I downplay the role played by the late president, but rather to emphasize that it is Iran's geopolitical importance that commands such attention. For a president of a country without significant regional or global standing, the situation would naturally be different.

President Ebrahim Raisi was honest and popular among Iranians. As the country's Leader mentioned, Raisi was a tireless fighter who didn't shy away from the public and spared no effort in serving the community. His relentless efforts to achieve the ideals of the Revolution, promote national interests, and serve his people were most noteworthy.

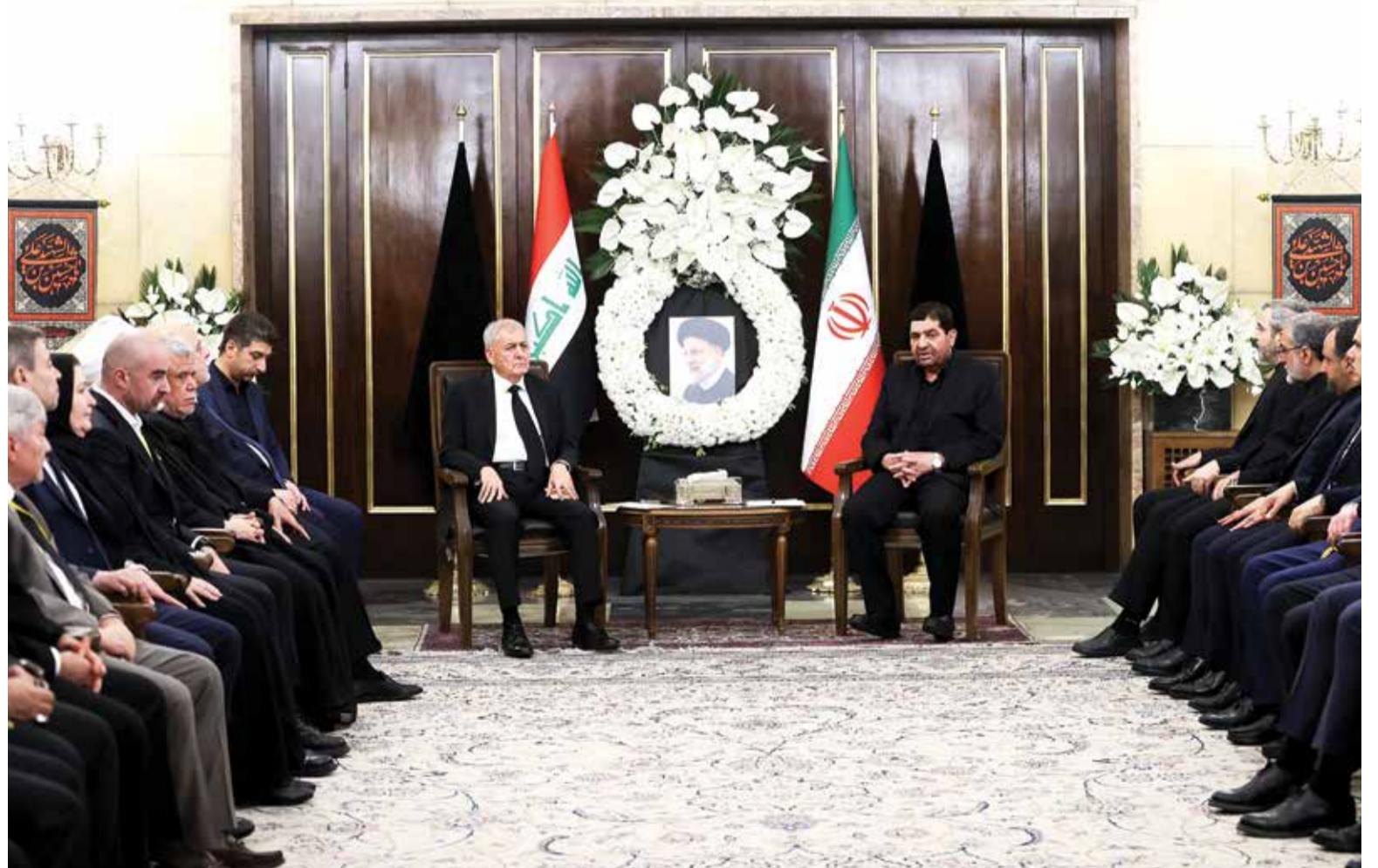
By Mohammadreza Dehshiri
Head of Iran's School of International Relations

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Raisi's good neighbor policy outstandingly successful: Caretaker president

"One of the most outstanding achievements of Ayatollah Raisi was the promotion of Iran's relations with neighboring and allied Muslim countries," Mokhber told Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid who visited Tehran to pay tribute to late president Raisi.

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**WSA: Iran's four-month
crude steel production
up 7.2%**

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NEWS IN BRIEF

IMIDRO saves nearly \$840m by indigenizing mining machinery

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) and its subsidiaries indigenized the technology for the production of \$838 million worth of mining equipment and machinery during the year to March 19.

According to Hassan Younesian, who is an advisor to the IMIDRO head, the said figure is 20 percent (\$144 million) more than the targeted figure for the previous Iranian year, IRNA reported. Large companies active in mining and mineral industries including Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), Khuzestan Steel Company (KSC), Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, Golgozar Mining and Industrial Company, South Aluminum Corporation, Hormozgan Steel Company, Khorasan Steel Company, and Iran Alumina, have contributed to the domestic production of the mentioned equipment and machinery. In November 2023, Mohammad Mousavi, the deputy minister for heavy machinery and equipment industries said manufacturing of road construction and mining machinery in Iran has increased by 100 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20, 2023).

Iron ore output tops 2.6m tons

Iran's major mining companies produced 38 percent more iron ore in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (ended April 19) compared to the figure of the same month in the previous year.

According to the data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the country's 14 major mining companies produced 2.643 million tons of iron ore in the first month of the current year, IRNA wrote. The companies' iron ore output stood at 1.918 million tons in the first month of the previous year.

In total, the country's major mining companies produced 7.467 million tons of minerals in the mentioned month, while the figure was 5.33 million tons in the previous year's same month. Large mining companies also produced more than 4.602 million tons of iron ore concentrate in the first month of the current Iranian year, which was about one percent less than the figure for the same period last year.

WSA: Iran's four-month crude steel production up 7.2%

Iranian steelmakers churned out 10.3 million tons of crude steel in the first four months of 2024, according to statistics released by the World Steel Association (WSA), indicating that the country stands at tenth place among steel producing countries.

The country's steel ingot production for April 2024 was estimated at 2.7 million tons registering a 12.3-percent shrinkage compared to the figure for April 2023.

World crude steel production for the 63 countries reporting to the association was 155.7 million tons in April 2024, a five percent drop compared to April 2023.

China produced 85.9 million tons in last month, down 7.2 percent over April 2023, while India produced 12.1 million tons of steel ingots last month, up 3.6 percent compared to the figure for last year, as Japan produced 7.1 million tons, down 2.5 percent compared to the same month last year.

The United States produced 6.7 million tons of crude steel in April, down 2.8 percent. Russia is estimated to have produced 6.2 million tons, down 5.7 percent. South Korea produced 5.1



million tons, down 10.4 percent. The World Steel Association is one of the largest and most dy-

namic industry associations in the world, with members in every major steel-producing coun-

try. The WSA represents steel producers, national and regional steel industry associations, and

steel research institutes. Members represent around 85 percent of global steel production.



Envoy: Iran receives over 300 mcm of water from Afghanistan

Iran has received over 300 million cubic meters of its share of water from the Hirmand River after months of talks with the Taliban administration in Afghanistan, announced the Iranian special envoy to the eastern neighboring country. Hassan Kazemi Qomi said that after extensive talks,

the Taliban took a three-pronged initiative, one of which wasted the water by leading it to Gozareh depression, but the other two took off the ground and supplied Iran with water, IFP News wrote. He clarified that as a result of repairing the valves of the Kamal Khan Dam and

dredging the water transfer route to Sistan and Balouchestan, over 300 million cubic meters of Iran's share of water was supplied. The Taliban had been refusing to allow Iran's share of water from Hirmand, known as Helmand in Afghanistan, to stream into

Iran, blaming drought and technical issues for the low supply of water. Tehran says Afghanistan must adhere to the terms of the internationally-binding 1973 Hirmand river water treaty under which Iran should receive 820 million cubic meters of water annually.

Tehran, Jakarta sign PTA to lift bilateral trade: TPOI

The director general of the East Asia-Pacific Office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) announced that the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was signed between Iran and Indonesia to enhance trade-economic ties.

Kaveh Daliri said Indonesia is a lucrative market for the Iranian products, IBENA reported. Increasing the trade exchanges and joint cooperation between the two countries is the main ob-

jective behind signing the agreement, he said, adding that countries facilitate the process of entering each other's markets by considering the tariff discounts.

The two countries intend to set up a joint committee for the operationalization of the preferential trade agreement which is tasked with monitoring and updating the lists and discounts that Iran and Indonesia consider for each other. Indonesia has the highest

number of Muslim population in the world, so that this southeast Asian country is a good and profitable market for the Iranian products, Daliri underlined.

Once the preferential trade agreement is signed, the volume of the trade exchanges between the two countries will considerably increase, the director general emphasized. Raw materials for edibles, oil-based materials, medical equipment with high added value, electronic parts are of the export products that the two sides have considered discounts, the TPOI official added.

On May 17, the Iranian Parliament gave go-ahead to PTA with Indonesia. The lawmakers passed a bill on the preferential trade agreement between Iran and Indonesia after discussing a report from the Parliament's Economic Commission in that regard.



Iran's railway linking East, West Asia: Deputy minister

The head of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) said Iran's railway is regarded as a linking bridge between East and West Asia and also acts as a crossing point between the two important continents of Asia and Europe.

Speaking at the 15th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, and 9th Meeting of Railway Committee of the Transit Transport Coordination Council, attended by the senior railway officials of Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Azerbaijan, Miad Salehi expounded the position of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international rail sector, IRNA reported.

Considering that Iran has the shortest route connecting the countries of Central Asia with international waters and Europe and has a high

security and safety route, most of the international rail corridors of the ECO region pass through Iran's rail route including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Almaty-Istanbul-Tehran transport corridor, Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul corridor, Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) transport corridor, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran corridor, he noted.

The deputy roads min-

ister said facilitating border transit operations and strengthening the logistics centers and border terminals are the main programs of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran to increase the capacity of transit and international transportation.

Iran is pursuing to make rail transport competitive with the sea route, launch this train on both sides, and export Iranian products and goods to China by train, Salehi added.



Mina-kari, brilliant art of fire, earth and furnaces



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Iranica Desk

Enamel-working (*mina-kari* in Persian) is the art of painting and decorating metals like gold, silver, and copper (as well as glass and ceramics, known as vitreous enamel or porcelain enamel) with opaque or transparent colorful materials. It can be seen as an experimental and intricate art form involving complex interactions. The final product is a decorated object that, when heated, fuses metal oxides and salts, earning it the title of a brilliant art of fire, earth, and furnaces. Primarily practiced on copper,

enamel-work can also be done on gold and silver objects. Gold, unlike other metals, does not oxidize when the enamel is melted, allowing for detailed and precise patterns. In contrast, copper and silver enamels may not achieve the same level of quality. Enamel colors are typically divided into three groups: herbal colors, mineral colors, and metal colors.

The exact origins of enamel in Iran are difficult to determine, but some suggest a history dating back approximately 5,000 years. During excavations in Nahavand, Hamedan Province, experts unearthed a

pair of gold earrings that showcased a goldsmithing style dating back to the 7th to 8th centuries BCE, featuring enamel glass glaze on metal. Enamelled gold bracelets from the Achaemenid period in Iran are also notable artifacts. These bracelets are currently housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Another Persian example of this art is a bronze bowl displayed at the Los Angeles Museum of Art, dating back to 550 to 330 BCE. The bronze bowl boasts a 15-centimeter diameter and a 3.2-centimeter depth.

"In Armenia, experts discovered Sassanid plates, which are among the exceptional examples of this art form. These plates are currently housed in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Other noble Sassanid mina-kari pieces can be found in the Armitage Museum in St. Petersburg, as well as in museums across England and France.

The narratives highlight the Seljuks' era as the pinnacle of Persian mina-kari art. It was a time when the production of brass and enamel dishes became widespread, attracting

numerous enthusiasts. The art gained such popularity that it crossed borders and found its way to neighboring countries. The "Alb Arsalan Tray" stands out as a valuable mina-kari piece from this period, enamelled on silver. This tray is currently exhibited at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and is attributed to Hassan Al-Kashani, a distinguished master of this craft. His name is elegantly engraved in the Kufic script on the dish.

In the Safavid period, miniature designs depicting banquets at the court, hunting, and horseback riding gained

popularity. Mina-kari on silver also became a sought-after art form. Islamic and Khatai motifs held a significant position in Iranian art during this era. Moreover, red emerged as the dominant color of choice during this period.

Today, Isfahan stands as a major hub for creating enameled objects in Iran. Skilled craftsmen in the city produce enamels in the painting enamel style, continuing the tradition of this intricate and vibrant art form.

Some researches indicate that this art form originated in Iran before spreading to various regions worldwide.

Explore the timeless charm and rich heritage of Hamadan Bazaar

Iranica Desk

The city of Hamadan, the capital of Hamedan Province, is situated near the Alvand Mountain, experiencing a cold, mountainous climate characterized by snowy winters and short, mild summers. Historical records from a respected Greek historian indicate that this region was referred to as Ekbatan and Hegmataneh in the past.

The historical Hamedan Bazaar stands as a testament to Iran's rich heritage, boasting remarkable architectural features at the heart of Hamedan city. A stroll through this an-

cient marketplace is a journey through time, with most structures hailing from the illustrious Qajar era, characterized by vaulted ceilings and enduring Islamic design elements.

Beyond its architectural allure, the Hamedan Bazaar's charm is further enhanced by its labyrinthine alleys and partially preserved caravanserais. Historically, Hamedan's strategic position as a crossroads for trade and pilgrimage routes to Iraq gave rise to a network of alleys and caravanserais within the city. Presently, Hamedan is home to 22 active and semi-active caravanserais such as Golshan, Mirza Kazem,

Rouhani, and Sharifiyeh.

These caravanserais, each with its distinct offerings, once served as vibrant hubs of commerce, fostering competition and choice among traders. The preservation of these historical gems not only links communities to their past but also underscores the importance of safeguarding these invaluable relics for future generations. Throughout history, the preservation of architectural marvels has not only piqued interest but also yielded substantial economic benefits. In this context, Hamedan, with its wealth of historical structures, stands poised to leverage its heritage

as a means of economic growth while ensuring meticulous preservation to showcase the city's cultural richness.

The traditional bazaar of Hamedan spans approximately 30 hectares and is built in the Qajar architectural style. It consists of 36 sections, alleys, and 26 caravanserais. The traditional bazaar of Hamedan, spanning approximately 30 hectares and constructed in the Qajar architectural style, comprises 36 sections, alleys, and 26 caravanserais. These caravanserais, once bustling centers with numerous rooms and shops, played a pivotal role in facilitating trade and

accommodation for travelers and merchants. Notably, efforts are underway to restore and maintain key caravanserais like Mirza Kazem and Golshan, recognizing their significance for both locals and tourists.

Despite the gradual decline in the importance of several historical buildings over time, efforts are being made to revitalize these cultural treasures. The Sharifiyeh Caravanserai, nestled among the ancient alleys of Hamedan, exudes a sense of vibrancy. Its layout, featuring wooden columns, arches, and vaults, presents an opportunity to establish a

market showcasing Hamedan's artisanal crafts, thereby transforming it into a cultural hub for visitors and residents alike.

In the past, Hamadan was often referred to as Iran's warehouse by merchants due to its strategic location. The city is also renowned for its expertise in tanning animal skins and crafting leather goods. Besides the Hamadan Bazaar, visitors can explore other captivating sites nearby such as the Alavian Dome, Hegmataneh Hill - a symbol of Hamadan's history, St. Stephanos Gregorian Church, as well as the tombs of Avicenna and Baba Taher.



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'Foremost issue'

Role of Iran's late president, foreign minister in Palestine



By Robert Inlakesh
Journalist, writer

PERSPECTIVE

Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian will be replaced following their shock helicopter crash deaths in the Varzeghan region.

While Iranians poured to the streets in their millions across the country to mourn the passing of the two, along with other senior officials, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a moment of silence, their records on the question of Palestine are of great importance to highlight.

Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi (1960–2024)

Born in the Iranian city of Mashhad, a key religious location in the country and home to the Imam Reza shrine, Ebrahim Raisi was educated from around the age of 15 at the renowned Qom religious seminary and went on to study under several important Islamic scholars of the time.

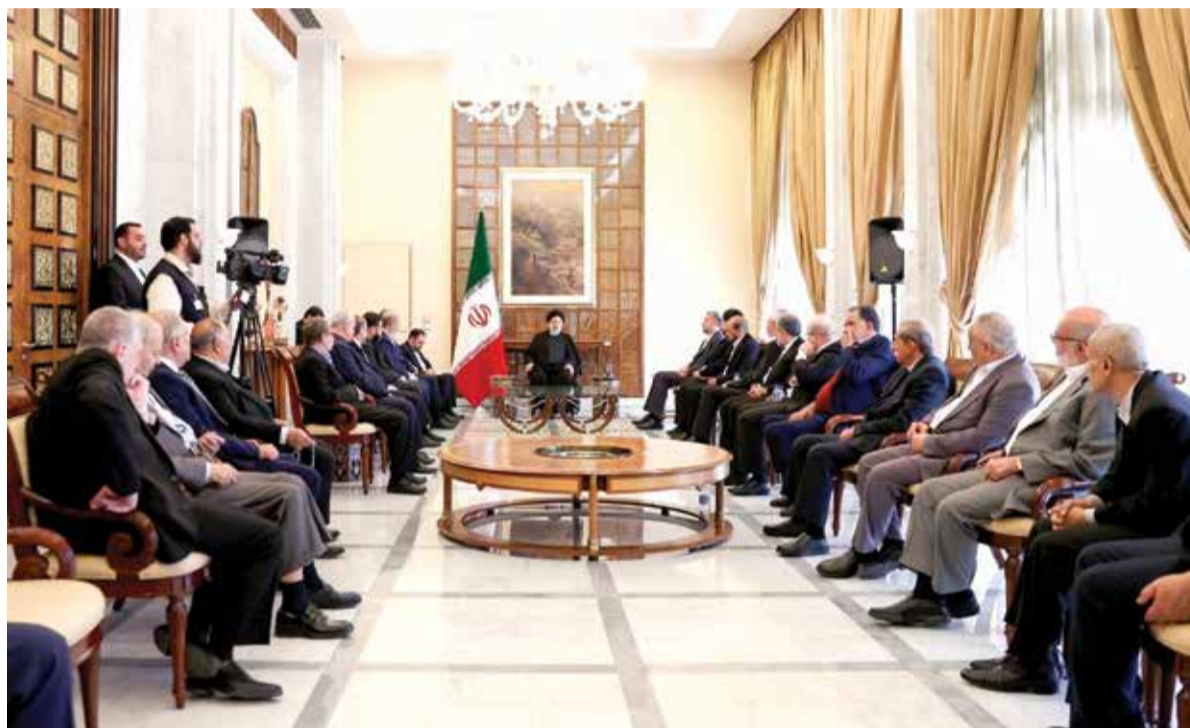
A child of a clerical family, Raisi would join the protests that culminated in the birth of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 when the Iranian people overthrew the UK-US-installed dictator, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

What is often not pointed out is the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the popular revolt that overthrew the tyrannical Iranian monarch, not only in terms of the references made to Palestine within the revolutionary movement itself but also in terms of the Palestine Liberation Organization's training of groups of revolutionaries.

Receiving his doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence and Law at the Shahid Mottahari University, Ebrahim Raisi would quickly be promoted, aged 25, to be the deputy prosecutor of Tehran. Inside Iran, while there were a range of opposition parties and individual voices against him, he was seen in much of the country as a man of the people who would travel frequently to the poorest areas of the nation. For this reason, many speculated that he would potentially be in line to replace Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

When elected to power in 2021, Ebrahim Raisi ran as a religiously conservative candidate and won on a platform of economic reform. In Western media he was labeled a "hardliner" or "conservative", which had to do mostly with two key aspects of his orientation as a politician, his foreign policy approach and his religious approach. The term conservative in Iran is only befitting to the religio-social aspect, however, as those described with the term often pursue socialist economic policies and have little to do with conservatives in the West.

On the foreign policy front, Ebrahim Raisi was focused on an "Eastern pivot", leaving behind attempts to align Iran with the West. This meant building on Tehran's ties with Moscow and Beijing and joining the BRICS economic alliance and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (C) meets with Palestinian resistance leaders, commanders, and intellectuals in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on May 4, 2023, while foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is sitting to Raisi's immediate left.
● mfa.ir



A truck carrying the coffin of the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi during a funeral in downtown Tehran, Iran, on May 22, 2024.
● MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/NURPHOTO

The other key aspect of Iran's new foreign policy was adopting a more resolute stance towards the issue of regional resistance to Israel and US hegemony.

Iran, under Raisi, would focus on developing a stronger deterrence equation when it came to their "shadow war" with the Israelis. Tehran also advocated more frequently on behalf of the Palestinian people, developed its relationship with Hamas further, and sought to combat the US-planned Saudi-Israeli normalization deal that became a primary foreign policy goal until October 7.

After October 7, Ebrahim Raisi was the most resolutely pro-Palestinian voice at the Arab-Islamic summit that was triggered by the war in Gaza, calling on all nations involved to sanction Israel for their crimes against the Palestinian people and spoke in support of the armed struggle against the oc-

cupation.

It was also under president Raisi's rule that the Islamic Republic launched its first-ever direct attack against Israel from Iranian territory, which came in retaliation for Israel having bombed the consular segment of Iran's embassy in Damascus, Syria. Throughout the war on Gaza, Iran has been one of the most vocal states against Israel's genocide and has advanced its confrontational approach to Israel, whereby it coordinates with its allies Hezbollah, the PMU, and Ansarullah to aid the Palestinian resistance in Gaza.

During president Raisi's last speech, delivered in Azerbaijan, he turned his attention to the issue of Palestine and highlighted its uniting force between the people of Iran and Azerbaijan, declaring that "the Palestinian cause stands as the foremost issue of the Islamic world."

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (1964–2024)

Born in the city of Damghan, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian began his career by receiving a PhD in International Relations from The University of Tehran. He went on to build significant relationships throughout West Asia and would first take on government roles when Ali Larijani was the speaker of the Iranian Parliament. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian then became the Secretary-General of the Permanent Secretariat of the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada, before becoming Managing Director of the 'Palestine Strategic Dialogue Quarterly', where he would serve as the lead editor.

He was also known for his close relationship with former leading Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's

elite Quds Force. This relationship is said to have stemmed from Amir-Abdollahian's role at the Foreign Ministry as an Iraq expert, following the toppling of Saddam Hussein by the US military. When General Qassem Soleimani was designated the head of the Quds Force, it was said they would meet to discuss key regional issues.

General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in Baghdad by a US drone strike in 2020, is credited with having helped the Palestinian resistance develop strategies in order to effectively fight the Israeli military, the most prominent of which is said to be his role in the construction of the elaborate system of tunnels under the Gaza Strip.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian was also a professor at the Iranian Foreign Ministry's School of International Relations and had occupied the position of deputy foreign minister, during the government of former president Hassan Rouhani. He reportedly had a falling out with the serving foreign minister at the time, Javad Zarif, due to disagreement on the direction of Iran's foreign policy.

When Amir-Abdollahian became Iranian foreign minister in 2021, with the election of the Raisi government, he was presented throughout Western media as a "hardliner" on foreign policy issues.

A stern advocate of the Palestinian cause, he was viewed as posing a special threat to Israel and US regional ambitions, as he was known to be dedicated to the idea of what Iran calls its "Axis of Resistance". He had been involved in various meetings with the likes of Hezbollah Secretary-General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah and had long known leaders within the Palestinian resistance too.

Contributing to president Ebrahim Raisi's approach, which was sternly in favor of ditching the West and building ties throughout the Global South, in addition to Russia and China, he is credited with playing a pivotal role in the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

When the war in Gaza began, Amir-Abdollahian indicated that there is a chance Iran could be drawn into the conflict if Israel launched a ground invasion of the besieged coastal enclave. Then, on October 14, he met with the political leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, in Doha.

In November, he also set up a meeting between Hamas politburo member Khalil Al-Hayya, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Secretary-General Ziad al-Nakhleh in Lebanon. He traveled to Lebanon a number of times during the war to coordinate with the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance factions.

Hamas described both Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian by stating that "these leaders supported the legitimate struggle of our people against the Zionist entity, provided valued support to the Palestinian resistance, and made tireless efforts in solidarity and support in all forums and fields for our people in the steadfast Gaza Strip during the Battle of Al-Aqsa Flood".

The full article first appeared on *The Palestine Chronicle*.

Leaders at Raisi's funeral highlight Iran's work to repair Arab ties

By Golnar Motevalli & Dana Khraiche
Bloomberg staff

OPINION

The list of foreign dignitaries who attended Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi's funeral on Wednesday underscored how Tehran's efforts to blunt US sanctions and mend ties with its neighbors have paid off.

Few other occasions could have brought the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain into close quarters with the leaders of US-designated "terrorist groups" Hamas and Hezbollah. Alongside them were representatives from Yemen's Houthi resistance group and Afghanistan's Taliban, as well as a former aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The emir of Qatar, which hosts the biggest US military base in the Middle East, was also there. The guest list showed just how hard Iran has worked to repair ties with major Arab countries even if they remain vital US allies that have normalized ties with Israel or are considering to do so. Raisi's ceremony even included a Tunisian president's first visit to Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and rare appearances by the foreign ministers of Jordan and Egypt.

Hezbollah, based in Lebanon and whose fighters are exchanging fire with Israel almost every day, is Iran's strongest backed group. Hezbollah's Deputy Chief Sheikh Naim Qasem stood behind Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as the latter led the funeral prayers. He was the only Arab to have such a prominent presence there.



Indian Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar (center-back) and his delegation pay tributes to Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage, who passed away in a helicopter crash on May 19, in Tehran, Iran, on May 22, 2024.

Hamas was represented by its political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who's based in Qatar. Before Raisi's election in 2021, Iran's government was run by a moderate president who wanted to improve ties with the West and reduce its dependence on Chinese investment. That changed under Raisi and tensions between the Islamic Republic and the US and Israel have worsened, especially since the war in Gaza erupted in October.

Iran has worked hard to neutralize a raft of US sanctions tightened under both Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Many countries in the region have been willing to continue doing business with Iran or keeping diplomatic ties open even if doing so contradicts Washington's wishes.

Iran's power

Many are wary of Iran given its powerful military

and the reach of its backed groups. The Houthis, funded and trained by Iran, have attacked Saudi Arabia and the UAE with drones and missiles in recent years, at times targeting oil facilities. That's a key reason both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have sought to ease relations with Tehran. The Saudis and Iranians restored diplomatic ties last year through a deal China helped broker.

Video from Tuesday's ceremony in Tehran showed tens of thousands of people gathered to mourn Raisi, who was killed along with Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and others in a helicopter crash on May 19.

Hamas released photos of Haniyeh smiling and waving as he walked through crowds, even as its fighters continued to battle Israeli forces in Gaza. Accounts varied about the number of countries represented at Raisi's funeral, though officials from Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, and many other countries were there. Russia and China, two countries that have boosted ties with Iran amid the US isolation, sent low-level officials.

Such funerals are often delicate political and diplomatic dances. Countries sometimes look to signal their empathy for the country's people while avoiding any action suggesting they back the leaders' decisions.

The US wrestled with just such a dilemma over Raisi's death. The US State Department issued a statement expressing its "official condolences" over the death, a message that was directed at regular Iranians and not the regime itself.

The US government has had almost no direct contact with Iran since former president Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear accord in 2018. No US official attended the ceremony on Tuesday.

The full article first appeared on Bloomberg.

Russia transmits love beams to post-Raisi Iran



By Samuel Ramani
Founder of Pangea
Geopolitical Risk

OPINION

The May 19 death of Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash represented a damaging blow for the country's hardliners, following the assassination of several senior military leaders in recent months. For Russia, it meant the loss of a leading international ally.

The Kremlin is acutely aware of its dependence on Iranian expertise as perhaps the world's most successful sanctions evader, as an unquestioning transporter of Russian goods through its warm water ports, and as a supplier of military supplies. Any change in approach would likely have an outsized influence on Russia's war against Ukraine. It is important that, at a minimum, Tehran feels Russia's love in moments of crisis.

So, the deaths of Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in hills near the border with Azerbaijan were greeted with despondence and public lamentation from the Kremlin. Russian President Vladimir Putin sent condolences to Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and lionized Raisi as a true friend. Memorials to the Iranians appeared in Kazan, the capital of the Muslim-majority region of Tatarstan.

These outward displays of grief were paired with predictions of enduring cooperation. State Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Leonid Slutsky argued that Russia-Iran cooperation was "on the rise" and predicted collaboration on major infrastructure projects. Former Russian ambassador to Iran Levan Dzhagaryan emphasized that Tehran's foreign policy orientation is determined by Iran's leader.

Is the Kremlin's outward confidence in Russia-Iran cooperation justified?

Mostly yes. Raisi's death removes one of the most fervent champions of Russia-Iran cooperation from the arena. His close relationships with Russian officials predate his ascension to the presidency in 2021. During the 2017 Iranian presidential election



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (R) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in the Kremlin in December 2023.

SERGEI BOBYLEV/TASS

campaign, which saw Raisi emerge as then-president Hassan Rouhani's hardline rival, Raisi met Tatarstan's President Rustam Minnikhanov, a leading Putin surrogate in the Islamic world. The meeting fueled speculation that he was Russia's preferred candidate.

Raisi's steadfast emphasis on Iran's partnerships with the so-called Global South and anti-Western foreign policy outlook made him a reliable partner for Moscow. His appointment of Amir-Abdollahian as foreign minister was also welcomed in the Kremlin. Amir-Abdollahian engaged with Russian officials in Syria-related negotiations from 2012-17 and effusively praised Putin's leadership in a January 2020 interview.

Despite the abrupt loss of these carefully honed personal relationships, Iran's acting President Mohammad Mokhber is another Russia-friendly figure. In his capacity as Iran's first vice president, Mokhber accompanied two senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) officials to Moscow in October 2022 and allegedly pledged surface-to-surface missile transfers to Russia as well as drones.

Mokhber has also actively promoted Russia-Iran energy sector cooperation in the Caspian Sea and the North-South Transport Corridor, a railway link connecting Russia with India via Iran. Sina Bank, a US-sanctioned entity that Mokhber oversaw during the first decade of the 2000s, is a facilitator of Russia-Iran financial sector cooperation and has announced plans to open an office in Astrakhan, a Russian city just to the north of the Caspian Sea. Russia's proactive response to the helicopter crash will be welcomed in Tehran. Russia dispatched planes to help find Raisi's crashed aircraft and Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu also offered assistance in the investigation into Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian's deaths. Putin's meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali after the plane crash was a break in diplomatic protocol that highlighted the importance that Russia places on its relationship with Iran.

The manner of Raisi's death underlined the common problems the two countries face. Many have pointed to the parlous situation of civil aircraft in both countries as US and European sanctions make

replacement parts hard to source. Russian officials have echoed Iran's former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's attribution of the crash to foreign sanctions. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the US of undermining aviation safety by blocking Iran's imports of aviation parts.

While it's clear Russia-Iran relations benefit both parties, Russian concerns persist about what might follow Raisi's death. Military analyst Alexey Zhivov wrote in the ultranationalist outlet Tsargrad that: "Azerbaijan is a latent ally of Israel. If it turns out that Raisi [was killed], all this will end in a Transcaucasian war."

Former Russian ambassador to Saudi Arabia Andrei Baklanov warned that Raisi's death could threaten the recent de-escalation between Iran and Israel, although Iranian officials have not joined some Russian analysts in promoting conspiracies about US or Israeli involvement.

The future power balance inside Iran is of greater concern to the Kremlin. Amongst Russian experts and commentators, there is a division of opinion on Mokhber's viability as Raisi's successor.

Iran expert Mais Kurbanov contends that he is highly respected by the Iranian people and will win between 70-80% of the vote in the June presidential elections. Vladimir Sazhin, a leading Iran expert at Moscow's Institute of Oriental Studies, is more circumspect, predicting an intense power struggle between "conservatives and radicals". Mokhber's lack of religious credentials could place him at odds with fellow hardliners.

While the Russia-Iran diplomatic partnership has strengthened along multiple tracks, the robust relationship between Putin and Ayatollah Khamenei has been integral to its success.

While the deaths of Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian are unlikely to alter the short-term trajectory of Russia-Iran cooperation, the Kremlin is keeping a watchful eye on the instability that might follow their deaths.

The swift completion of the trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which will lead to 50-75% tariff reductions, will be Russia's initial priority as it seeks to reinforce the image of a business-as-usual relationship.

The full article first appeared on the Center for European Policy Analysis.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Late drama in Azadi Stadium as momentum shifts in Reds' favor

Sports Desk

The two-horse race for the Persian Gulf Pro League crown took a pivotal twist on Friday as Esteghlal relinquished the top spot to archrival Persepolis with two games to spare.

Uzbek winger Oston Urunov bagged the winner deep into stoppage time as Persepolis pulled off the most sensational of comebacks in the Iranian top-flight history, scoring four in the final 20 minutes to beat 10-man Esteghlal Khuzestan 4-3 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

In the simultaneous match, Esteghlal was held to a frustrating goalless draw at Nassaji Mazandaran as Javad Nekounam's Blues lost their hold on the title fate.

There was little to separate the two sides in a cautious game in Qaemshahr's Vatani Stadium, with the best chance of the contest coming the visiting side's way with two minutes left on the clock, with Brazilian keeper Luan Polli making a heroic save to deny Payman Babaei's well-hit strike from the edge of the box.

The result, coupled with the Reds' dramatic victory, saw Esteghlal, which led the table for the best part of the campaign, drop to second – one point adrift of Persepolis – while it was enough for Saket Elhami's men to take yet another step toward survival as Nassaji is now 13th in the table – four points clear of the relegation zone.

Magnificent fightback

When the halftime whistle was blown at the Azadi Stadium, the



Persepolis manager Osmar Vieira (c) celebrates with his coaching staff during a 4-3 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on May 24, 2024.
● FFIRI

Reds' quest for a seventh league trophy in eight years seemed to be all but over.

Alireza Kazemi's composed finish gave relegation-threatened Esteghlal Khuzestan a surprise lead with four minutes into the game and the home side, desperately looking for an equalizer, was stunned again in the 41st

minute, with Iraqi striker Aso Rostam smashing home into the bottom corner.

Kazemi netted his second of the night with a superb strike right before the interval to put Sirous Pourmousavi's side on course for the biggest upset of the season. Persepolis coach Osmar Vieira made three changes for the

start of the second half but his men still struggled to find a way through before a game-changing incident in the 57th minute saw Brazilian midfielder Sávio Rober to receive his marching orders for a second bookable offense.

The Reds fans, however, had to wait another 20 minutes to see their team get off the mark –

thanks to referee blowing in his whistle for a spot-kick after Vahid Amiri, introduced at halftime, was brought down in the box. Hossein Kan'anizadegan kept his nerve to wrongfoot southern Blues goalkeeper Farzin Garousian from the spot and then set up Danial Esmaeilifar, whose low drive went in through the keep-

er's legs two minutes later. Persepolis striker Issa Alekassir continued his impressive form of late with an 86th-minute equalizer before Urunov's last-gasp strike on the rebound sent the Reds bench and supporters into utter jubilation.

The late heartbreak saw Esteghlal Khuzestan drop into the bottom two, while Foolad Khuzestan made the most of the result in the capital by beating Zob Ahan 1-0 in Ahvaz – courtesy of Mousa Coulibaly's second-half header – to open a three-point lead on its city rival.

Elsewhere, the league's leading marksman Shahriar Moghanlou scored his 16th goal of the campaign with Ramin Rezaeian also on the scoresheet as Sepahan defeated Havadar 2-0 at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium to remain third in the table.

Fourth-place Tractor shared the spoils with Paykan in a goalless encounter in Tehran – a massive point for the latter, who is above Nassaji in the standings on goal difference. Sajjad Shahbazzadeh's second-half goal helped Mes Rafsanjan walk away with a 1-0 win at Malavan, while Iralco defeated Golgozar 3-2 in Sirjan.

Maysam Tohidast scored a double, the second coming in the second minute of added time, as San'at Naft Abadan came from behind twice to play to a 2-2 home draw against Shams Azar, though the final outcome was barely a relief for the host, which is rock bottom in the table with 21 points – four away from the safety zone.

World Para Athletics Championships: Khosravi grabs fourth gold for Iran

Sports Desk

Yasin Khosravi won a fourth gold medal for Iran at the World Para Athletics Championships, coming out on top in the men's shot put F57 final in Kobe, Japan. The world record holder and defending champion took an early lead with his first attempt before his fifth throw of 15.83m – a best tally of the season – rounded off a dominant performance for the Iranian, who also captured the ultimate prize in last year's Asian Para Games.

Three-time world champion and a bronze winner in Tokyo Paralympics, Thiago Paulino dos Santos of

to finish second to China's Sun Pengxiang, who shattered the world record with 48.94m, while Indian Navdeep took the bronze with 42.82m.

Beit Sayyah's medal was the 14th for the Iranian squad at this year's competitions.

Amirhossein Alipour won a first gold for the country, thanks to a sensational campaign in the shot put F11 final, which saw him break the two-decade standing record in the championships.

High-profile Iranian and reigning Paralympic champion Saeid Afrooz flexed muscles ahead of his title defense in Paris later in the summer by grabbing a

javelin throw gold.

Stepping into the event as the defending champion, Afrooz was in a league of his own in the F34 final as all his attempts – topped by the fifth of 40.14m – were enough to secure the gold.

The pinnacle of the Iranian women's campaign came in the 400m T12 final, when Hajar Safarzadeh made history by clocking an Asian record of 57.56 seconds to become the country's first female gold medalist in 11 editions of the World Championships.

Brazil tallied 15.08m to settle for the silver, with Finland's Teijo Koopikka finishing on the third podium with 14.74m.

On Saturday, Iran's Sadeq Beit Sayyah grabbed a second successive world silver in the men's javelin throw F41 event.

Beit Sayyah, also a silver medalist in Tokyo, registered 47.92m

Iran's Yasin Khosravi celebrates after winning the shot put F57 gold at the World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe, Japan, on May 24, 2024.
● paralympic.org

Djokovic worried about French Open title defence



● FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP

REUTERS – World number one Novak Djokovic said he does not consider himself a favourite ahead of his title defence at the French Open, which begins with a first-round match against local hope Pierre-Hugues Herbert today.

Djokovic's barren run ahead of Roland Garros continued as the 24-times Grand Slam winner was beaten 6-4 0-6 6-1 by Tomas Machac on Friday, weeks after losing heavily to Alejandro Tabilo in Rome. The 37-year-old Serb is strugg-

ling to regain his rhythm with many fearing that his erratic form could spell trouble for his bid for a fourth Paris crown.

"Of course I am worried... I haven't been playing good at all this year," Djokovic told reporters after being beaten by Machac on Friday.

Asked about his title defence at Roland Garros, Djokovic said: "(I've had) some (good) matches here and there but it is what it is. You have to accept it. I don't consider myself a favourite there.

"I have a lot to work on. I'm go-

ing to take it match by match and see how far I can go."

During the final moments of the first set, Djokovic requested a medical pause due to a stomach issue. Earlier in May, he was hit on the head by a fan's water bottle while signing autographs.

"I just need to feel better. It's not enjoyment when you are suffering on the court feeling this way," he added.

"You're not able to focus on tennis when you have other stuff happening. I just hope I can be fit and ready and prepared for Roland Garros."

Leader: Iranians show loyalty at president's funeral



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks in a meeting with the families of the victims of the recent helicopter crash in the capital Tehran on May 25, 2024.

leader.ir

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the massive turnout of Iranian people in funeral processions for the late President Ebrahim Raisi is a testament to the nation's loyalty to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a Saturday meeting held in the capital Tehran with the families of

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and six of their companions who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in the northwestern Iranian province of East Azarbaijan last week. Pointing to the enemy's propaganda and claims regarding the estrangement of Iranian people from the Islamic Republic, the Leader

said, "This incident, before the very eyes of the world and in practice, proved the attachment and loyalty of the Iranian nation to the president and those who embodied the mottoes of the Revolution," Press TV reported. Praising President Raisi as a manifestation of the mottoes of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Mr. Raeisi relied on the slo-

gans of the Revolution and the words of the Imam from the very beginning when he ran for the elections, and the whole world knew him as the president of the Revolution." "When people support and honor this man in such a great way, it means supporting the slogans of the Revolution," he stressed. Ayatollah Khamenei noted that working for the people

and serving the public was the most prominent feature of the martyrs of the incident. He touched on the epic funeral processions in the cities of Tabriz, Qom, Tehran, Shahr-e-Rey, Birjand, Mashhad, Maragheh, Zanjan and Najafabad, saying, "This glorious funeral showed that the Iranian nation is alive." Expressing his condolences

to the families of the victims, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "Recounting the services and efforts of Mr. Raisi and Mr. Amir-Abdollahian in the domestic and foreign front is a long and detailed story." Meanwhile, a ceremony honoring the former president and his associates was conducted by the Leader at Imam Khomeini's Hosseiniyeh in Tehran. Millions gathered in various cities across the country to commemorate the martyrdom of the president and his companions as part of ceremonies held following the Leader's declaration of five-day national mourning over the tragic loss. Dozens of world leaders, presidents, ambassadors, and international personalities as well as high-profile figures of the Axis of Resistance have over the past days participated in ceremonies across Iran to pay homage to the martyrs. On Sunday, the helicopter carrying Raisi and his companions crashed as it was on its way to Tabriz, the capital of Iran's East Azarbaijan Province, from a location on the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan where the Iranian president had opened a major dam project.

Raisi's good neighbor policy 'outstandingly' successful: Caretaker president

National Desk

Iran's Acting President Mohammad Mokhber on Saturday hailed late president Ebrahim Raisi's "outstanding" success to cement ties with neighboring nations under his "good neighbor policy". "One of the most outstanding achievements of Ayatollah Raisi was the promotion of Iran's relations with neighboring and allied Muslim countries," Mokhber told Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid who visited Tehran to pay tribute to president Raisi who died on May 19 when his helicopter went down in northwestern Iran killing all eight people onboard including foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. Mokhber said Iran lost two "great persons" in the aerial crash who played a key role in strengthening "the Axis of Resistance" it is fighting against the United States and Israel. Rashid said Raisi's loss was a "great and irreparable tragedy" for Iraq and the entire region. Rashid's visit to Tehran followed a visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani to Tehran to meet with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and attend the funeral procession. In recent days, numerous world leaders, presidents, ambassadors, and international figures, along with prominent members of the Axis of Resistance, have attended various ceremonies in Iran to honor the tragic loss of President Raisi. Meanwhile, during a phone call with Mokhber on Friday, Saudi Crown Prince Bin Salman offered condolences for the death of Raisi and his companions. Bin Salman accepted an invitation from Iran's acting president to visit the country. He emphasized that Saudi Arabia will continue to enhance relations with Iran, a goal that was also pursued by President Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian. "Tehran and Riyadh play a crucial role in the region and the Islamic world, and through strengthening bilateral ties, the two nations can pave the way for a promising future in the region," he said. Also on Saturday, the UN office in Geneva hosted a memorial service for last Sunday's victims. The session was conducted by envoys from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, who paid tribute to the late Iranian president and his entourage. On Friday, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres paid tribute to Raisi and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian by visiting the Islamic Republic's mission in New York.

Rafah invasion stokes Israel's further isolation

International pressure piled on the Israeli regime as the occupying entity forges ahead with a large-scale ground invasion in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah after the Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Tel Aviv to swiftly stop its military aggression against the densely-populated area, where more than one million Palestinians have taken refuge. In its ruling on Friday, the UN's top court stated that the occupying regime must "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physi-

cal destruction in whole or in part." The ruling has deepened Israel's rift with the United States over the offensive, which faces mounting international condemnation. Despite providing Israel with untrammelled support in the fields of intelligence, finance and logistics since the regime started its barbaric aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip last October, the administration of US President Joe Biden has opposed a major offensive in Rafah and is pressuring its ally to avoid a full-scale onslaught in the southern Gaza city. Earlier in the month, the White House announced it was pausing a shipment of some 3,500 bombs, includ-

ing massive 2,000-pound explosives that the Biden administration said were leading to civilian deaths, with the US president warning during a CNN interview that, "If they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah." American officials in pressuring Israel had suggested that a major offensive in Rafah was a red line that would undermine stalled negotiations on a deal to return Israeli captives in Gaza. "When it comes to Rafah, we've made known for a long time our concerns about a full-on military assault of Rafah and the damage that that could do to

civilian population absent a clear and credible plan to protect it," Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Israel, however, has shown no signs that it intends to change course after the ICJ's ruling, with political analysts saying the regime's persistence in launching a full-scale aggression on Rafah would lead to the further isolation of the illegal entity. The top court's ruling came just days after Norway, Ireland and Spain said they would recognize a Palestinian state, and the chief prosecutor of a separate international court sought arrest warrants for Israeli prime minister Benjamin

Netanyahu over the regime's months-long onslaught on Gaza. Netanyahu's office claimed in a statement in defiance of the ruling that the allegations regarding Israel's genocide in Gaza was "false, outrageous and morally repugnant." The Israeli premier also claimed that, "Israel is acting...consistent with its moral values and in compliance with international law." War cabinet minister Benny Gantz, who spoke with Blinken, said Israel had set out on a "just and necessary campaign" following the October 7 attack and added that it would keep going, despite the ruling. "The State of Israel is committed to continue fighting

to return its hostages and promise the security of its citizens - wherever and whenever necessary - including in Rafah," he said in a statement. Israel launched its atrocious onslaught against the Gaza Strip, targeting hospitals, residences, and houses of worship since Palestinian resistance movements launched a surprise attack, dubbed Operation al-Aqsa Storm, against the usurping regime on October 7. At least 35,857 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children, and another 80,293 individuals have sustained injuries. More than 1.7 million people have been internally displaced during the war as well.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Raisi respected by peers ...

Additionally, the participation of various world leaders in his funeral procession proved that the good neighborliness policy of Raisi's administration, spearheaded by the sincere efforts of the martyred foreign minister, had borne fruit. The widespread public participation in his funeral and the love that they showed for him elsewhere also elevated Iran's political standing and credibility among the world's countries.

We should leverage this new atmosphere, which has fostered a sense of solidarity and national unity within our society as well, to enhance the dynamism of our foreign policy. This policy is not tied solely to Raisi or Amir-Abdollahian but rather to the policy of the Islamic Republic. However, the key point is that these individuals implemented this strategy with strength and determination. I hope that the interim president and foreign minister will continue this policy

with the same vigor and determination. Considering the support shown by Iranians for their political leaders, I believe we will have a presidential election with a high turnout. The martyrdom of the esteemed president Raisi and foreign minister Amir-Abdollahian has shown that the country's path is toward further strengthening the bond between the nation and the government. This will, in turn, enhance Iran's international standing and credibility.

Iran to propose group visa for SCO members



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ali-Asghar Shalbfafian, announced proposals to strengthen tourism cooperation among the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Speaking at the SCO tourism ministers' meeting in Kazakhstan, Shalbfafian emphasized the importance of facilitating easier

travel within the region, IRNA wrote. Shalbfafian proposed the introduction of group visas for SCO member countries as a means to increase tourism and ease travel restrictions. He noted that Iran has already waived visas for 64% of SCO countries and that 37% of Iran's incoming tourists are from these nations. He also suggested creating a dedicated tourism sec-

tion on the SCO website to share marketing data and best practices, helping members stay updated on the latest developments. Addressing the audience, Shalbfafian acknowledged the recent loss of Iran's President Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and other officials, thanking SCO members for their condolences. He highlighted Raisi's commitment to enhancing international and regional

cooperation, particularly through tourism. The meeting saw members observe a minute of silence in honor of the late President Raisi and his colleagues. Shalbfafian underscored the vast potential of the SCO region, which encompasses over three billion people, to become a major tourism market. He pointed out that Iran offers a rich cultural heritage, including 27 UNESCO

World Heritage sites and a diverse climate ranging from mountainous regions to hot springs. In addition, Shalbfafian proposed establishing a network of tour operators within the SCO to improve cooperation and manage tourist flows effectively. He also suggested leveraging the historical Silk Road to promote regional unity and sustainable development through joint projects.



Iranian films to be screened in Russia

Five Iranian films are set to be showcased at the 33rd Golden Knight International Film Festival in Russia. The films include 'Hook' directed by Hossein Rigi, 'Captain' directed by Mohammad Hamzeie, 'Leather Jacket Man' directed by Hossein Mirzamohammadi, 'Number 10' directed by Hamid Zargar Nezhad, and 'No Prior Appointment' directed by Behrouz Shoaibi. The festival, supported by the Orthodox Church, has screened about 9,000 films over its 30-year history, focusing on meaningful, ethical, and social films. It has hosted over 8,000 cultural figures from 60 countries. This year's festival runs from May 22 to May 29.



Iranian translator Amraei dies at 36

Iran's young translator and journalist Niloufar Amraei, daughter of Asadollah Amraei died at the age of 36. Abolfazl Bani, director of the "Baharan" institute, confirmed the news to ISNA, stating, "Unfortunately, today, May 25, Niloufar passed away. She had an underlying medical condition and suffered a drop in blood sugar, which led to her death." Niloufar was known for her work in children's literature, with notable books including 'Mrs. Cherry's Kitchen,' 'What Do You Do with an Idea?' 'The Clocks: Activity Book with Drawing, Coloring, and Stickers,' and 'Learning at Home (Numbers).'

Smoking deaths in Iran surpass 50,000 annually: Report

Social Desk

Iran's deputy health minister has proposed a fourfold increase in cigarette taxes to combat the high rates of smoking-related deaths in the country. Hossein Farshidi, Deputy Health Minister, highlighted that over 50,000 deaths each year are attributed to tobacco use, costing billions in healthcare. Speaking at a National No Smoking Week (May 25 to 31) press conference, Farshidi emphasized the detrimental effects of smoking and the need for higher taxes on tobacco products. He pointed out that the appearance of cigarettes has changed over the past decade, with a worrying trend of increased usage among young people, particularly girls. He also criti-

cized media portrayals that glamorize smoking. Farshidi stressed the illegality of e-cigarettes in Iran, stating that they are neither produced nor imported legally and that the ministry is actively work-

ing to curb their distribution. He also mentioned that the tobacco tax revenue from last year was not allocated to the Health Ministry. In response to a question about oxygen hookahs,

Farshidi explained that a pilot project is underway in some provinces to replace traditional hookahs with oxygen versions, which are considered less harmful. Jafar Jandaghi, the head of the Occupational and En-

vironmental Health Center of the Health Ministry, noted the rising trend of smoking among teenagers and called for stronger enforcement of anti-tobacco laws in public places. Behzad Valizadeh, Head of the National Tobacco Control Committee, reported a significant increase in hookah use and daily smoking rates among women. He advocated for higher pricing and stricter regulation of tobacco products to reduce consumption. Valizadeh also highlighted the ministry's efforts to ban online sales of tobacco and to remove tobacco products from the household consumption. He called for increased public awareness and educational initiatives to combat the harmful effects of smoking.



Weight loss, gain drugs harm digestive health, expert warns

Social Desk

More than 30% of Iranians suffer from fatty liver disease, warned the President of the Iranian Association of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. At a press conference marking Digestive Health Week (May 25 - June 1), Farhad Zamani cautioned against the use of weight loss and weight gain drugs, which he said are harmful to the digestive system. Zamani explained that weight gain drugs contain cortisone, while weight loss drugs have amphetamines, both damaging to the gut. Additionally, bodybuilding powders can harm the digestive system and kidneys. He emphasized that fatty liver disease is often linked to other health issues such as diabetes and high blood pressure but can be prevented through lifestyle changes like regular exercise and a healthy diet. Zamani also urged people to avoid unproven traditional remedies for liver and digestive issues, as these can damage the liver and lead to the need for transplants. Overuse of antibiotics, he added, can destroy beneficial organs and damage the gallbladder, advising against self-medication. Irregular sleep patterns and stress also negatively impact the digestive system and can contribute to gastrointestinal cancers.