

Iran's presidential election Nation turns out strong

National Desk

Iranians voted Friday in the country's 14th presidential election to pick a successor for the late president Ebrahim Raisi who lost his life in a helicopter crash on May 19. The contenders approved by the Guardian Council include Conservative parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili. Also running are the sole Reformist, Masoud Pezeshkian, and a fourth candidate, former interior minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi.

Two other Conservatives – Tehran mayor Alireza Zakani and Raisi's former vice president Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi – dropped out on the eve of the election.

Voting was held nationwide at more than 58,640 polling stations, mostly in schools and mosques.

According to the election headquarters, more than 61 million Iranians over the age of 18 were eligible to vote, with about 18 million of them between 18 to 30.

Early projections of the results are expected by Saturday morning and official results by Sunday.

If no candidate wins 50 percent of the vote, a second round will be held on July 5, for only the second time in Iranian electoral history after the 2005 vote went to a runoff.

'Day of joy, happiness'

Calling it "a day of joy and happiness," Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei voted shortly after the polls opened.

Ayatollah Khamenei called on Iranian voters to turn out at polling stations to determine the country's future and make the "best and most useful choice."

"Election day is a day of joy and happiness for us Iranians, especially when the election is for selecting the president as the future of the country will be determined by this choice of the people."

"However, I think there is one important issue besides this, and that is the enthusiastic turnout of the people and the increase in the number of voters. This is a definite need for the Islamic Republic," he told reporters after voting.

Focus on economy

All four candidates have

vowed to revive the economy, beset by sanctions re-imposed since 2018, after the United States ditched Tehran's 2015 nuclear pact with six world powers.

The candidacy of Pezeshkian, until recently a relative unknown, has revived cautious hopes for Iran's reformist wing after years of dominance by the conservative camp.

Pezeshkian, who has aligned himself with figures such as former president Hassan Rouhani under whose administration Tehran struck the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, responded to a journalist's question about how Iran would interact with the West if he was president.

"God willing, we will try to have friendly relations with all countries except Israel," the 69-year-old candidate said after casting his vote in a polling station in Tehran. Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon, has urged efforts to salvage the nuclear agreement and lift crippling sanctions.

"Are we supposed to be eternally hostile to America, or do we aspire to resolve our problems with this country?" he asked.

The Leader recently criticized the politicians who believe in reliance on world



powers, saying they "think all the ways of progress pass through the US; No, it is not like that."

"The one who thinks that it is not possible to take steps without favors of the US, he will not manage [the country] well," he emphasized. Ayatollah Khamenei said that the most qualified candidate is the person who is

capable of tapping into domestic opportunities and capacities, among them the country's young, educated generation.

During campaign debates, Jalili criticized the moderates for having signed the 2015 accord.

Jalili said the deal "did not benefit Iran at all." He led Iran's nuclear program ne-

gotiations between 2007 and 2013.

"I think Jalili is the only candidate who raised the issue of justice, fighting corruption and giving value to the poor ... Most importantly he does not link Iran's foreign policy to the nuclear deal," said Farzan Sadjadi, a 45-year-old artist in the city of Karaj.



Iranians cast their votes at a polling station in Tehran during the presidential election on June 28, 2024.

● REZA MOATTARIAN/
IRAN DAILY

Iranians remember late president, FM

Nasrallah hails Iran's stability after Raisi's loss



● TASNIM

Iran held a ceremony to commemorate the 40th day of the passing away of the late president Ebrahim Raisi and his entourage, including former foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19.

Iranian officials along side a number of foreign officials attended the ceremony held in the capital Tehran on Thursday. Addressing the ceremony via video link from Beirut, Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah described Iran as the "strong fortress of resistance" against oppressors, saying the Islamic establishment serves as a role model.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran emerged proudly and admirably from this tragic incident and presented an advanced and lofty model that is strong in facing all challenges," he said.

Nasrallah said the incident was "very painful and historic" which left Iran faced with

threats.

"However, the rule is that we must turn threats into opportunities, as always emphasized by Eminent Leader of the Revolution" Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, he said. "We have faced similar big and dangerous incidents in recent years. As an example, we can point to the assassination of two dear commanders, Hajj Qassem Soleimani and Hajj Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, that was a huge damage and at the same time a threat," he added.

Lieutenant General Soleimani, head of Iran's Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi, an Iraqi commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, were assassinated in a US airstrike ordered by then-president Donald Trump at Baghdad airport in January 2020.

"But this threat turned into an opportunity. These bloodsheds marked the breakout of the uprising and a new life for the resistance and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all the

resistance movements in the region," Nasrallah said.

"Enemies who were lying in wait and talking about riots happening here and there saw with their own eyes that despite all the difficult conditions it faced due to this incident, Iran was calm, stable, unified and united," he added. The commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also praised the distinguished characteristics of Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian in defense of resistance and the fight against US hegemony.

Describing the late Iranian foreign minister as "indefatigable and plucky," Qa'ani said Amir-Abdollahian opened a new era in defense of resistance and was the "sonorous voice" of the resistance front. The chief of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement Ziad al-Nakhaleh, who also attended the ceremony in Tehran, said Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian played a major role in victories scored by the resistance factions.

Biden excoriates Trump's 'morals of an alley cat'



● AFP

As the clock chimed 21:00 EDT (01:00 GMT) on Thursday, US Democratic President Joe Biden and his presumed Republican rival, Donald Trump, traded a slew of slights and diatribes in their first televised debate on CNN ahead of the November election, which reportedly drew more than 70 million viewers.

Biden appeared as a mumbling debater that failed to land well-crafted lines while Trump, as a prolific purveyor of falsehoods, repeatedly sold lies and half-truths to potential voters by dodging tough questions. With a muffled voice at one point, the octogenarian Democrat, in one gaffe, attacked Trump on his tax cuts and the national debt, confusingly ending his remarks with, "We finally beat Medicare."

The businessman-turned-politician pounced on the blunder and said, "He did beat Medicare. He beat it to death, and he's destroying Medicare." Trump also kept prattling on how the US had failed, how Biden was rated as worst head

of state in the country's history and how the US was dismally viewed on the world stage.

"Joe, our country is being destroyed. As you and I sit up here and waste a lot of time on this debate. This shouldn't be a debate. He is the worst president, he just said about me because I said it. But look, he's the worst president in the history of our country. He's destroyed our country," the 78-year-old said. Biden disagreed and offered a sanguine view of the US on the international arena, claiming that, "We're the most admired country in the world... No one thinks we're weak. No one wants to screw around with us, nobody."

Halfway through the 90-minute slugfest, Biden touched on Trump's convictions and varied court cases but in a laconic fashion, spawning a missed opportunity for Biden to hammer on one of his rival's key liabilities.

Biden hit at Trump for having an affair with an adult film actress while his wife was pregnant, referring to Stormy Dan-

iels and the hush-money trial that concluded in 34 felonies for the former president.

"You have the morals of an alley cat," Biden quipped at Trump, who categorically denied the extramarital relationship.

Trump boasted about ending the war between Russia and Ukraine before he even took office. He claimed that a universal 10 percent tariff on imports would not raise prices for American consumers, an assertion economic experts overwhelmingly disagree with. By and large, registered voters who watched CNN's presidential debate largely think Trump outperformed Biden, with most saying they have no real confidence in Biden's ability to lead the country.

Biden's garbled performance has sparked fears among his own party, as his voice was raspy and he found himself at a loss for words, with Democratic operatives and pundits indicating that discussions were underway about "Biden bowing out before the election" following Thursday's debate.