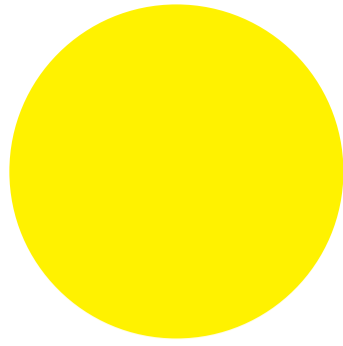




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Pezeshkian's uphill battle for Iran's future after turnout relief

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OPINION

Masoud Pezeshkian became Iran's 9th president in a runoff election that saw nearly half of Iran's 61.4 million eligible voters casting their ballot. The 70-year-old former health minister who ran on a platform of social, political and economic reforms, garnered some 16.4 million of votes while his conservative contender Saeed Jalili bagged around 13.5 million – more than 9% shy of the winner on Friday.

The 50% turnout, which almost matched with that of the 2021 presidential election, brought palpable relief for the authorities a week after only 40% eligible voters showed up at the polls nationwide in the first round to set a record low in the history of the Islamic Republic.

The Islamic Establishment and the president-elect owe greatly to the people who came out to uphold Iran's long-standing honor. Pezeshkian now has to carry a tremendous burden to safeguard this national asset during his four-year tenure by fulfilling his campaign promises such as economic prosperity, social freedoms and easing and lifting bans on the Internet.

The veteran Reformist has no way but to bolster Iran's sanctions-hit economy in order to improve people's livelihood as the first and foremost priority. This could be the cornerstone of his plans while in office to help maintain his support base for the next presidential election and thus general voter turnout. It sounds like 'Mission Impossible' to lure a nation buffeted by economic hardships, including runaway inflation, double-digit unemployment and exorbitant housing rents to turn out strongly for an election. To achieve such goals, the president-elect will beyond a shadow of a doubt need to bring to the fold other branches of power, seasoned political parties and likewise powerful and influential persons and entities within the Islamic Republic. Fighting and infighting will do harm to not only his government but the whole Islamic system in a broader picture as this may precipitate failure of his reform plans and as a result demoralize a great deal of voters during the next presidential polls.

National unity is sine qua non for success in Pezeshkian's fledgling government.

Pezeshkian Declared President

President-elect showered by worldwide congrats

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