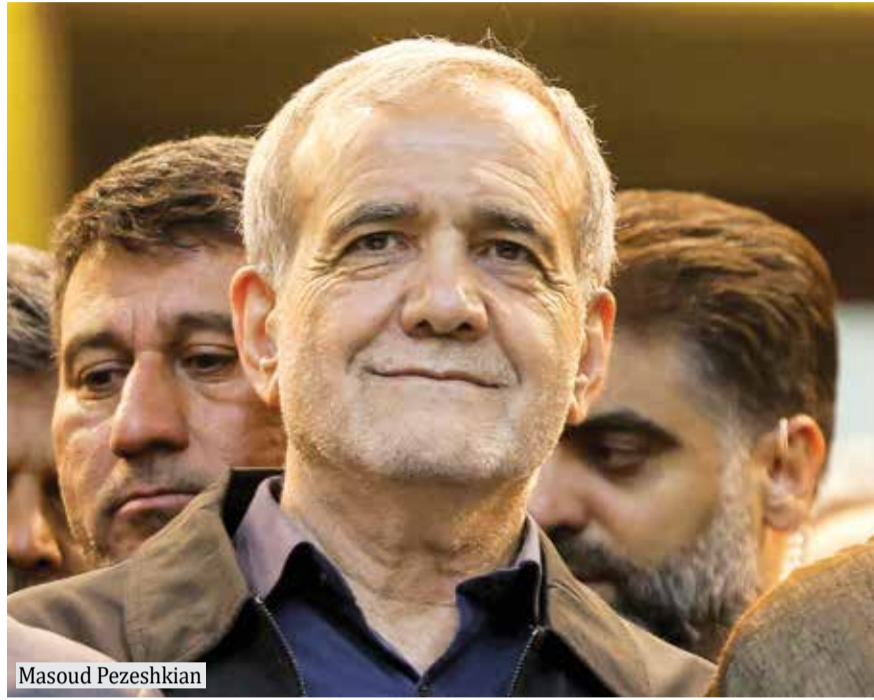


Iran's president-elect to be sworn in on July 30



Masoud Pezeshkian

International Desk

Iran's Reformist President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian will take the oath of office in Parliament on July 30, a member of the legislature's presiding board, Mojtaba Yousefi, said on Wednesday.

The ceremony will be held after the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has endorsed Pezeshkian's presidential mandate in a separate ceremony. A number of heads of state, foreign ministers, parliament

speakers and representatives of different countries have been invited to the swearing-in ceremony. Pezeshkian won the runoff vote against Conservative Saeed Jalili on Friday. The 69-year-old Reformist garnered around 54 percent of

the 30 million votes cast. The election was called early after the death of president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May.

Raisi's first Vice-President and the current interim president Mohammad Mokhber has called on the ministers to fully cooperate with the president-elect until he takes office.

Since his election as Iran's 14th president, many messages of congratulation have been sent by the world's leaders. Meanwhile, many leaders have called him to facilitate his victory and to express their readiness to continue their relations with Iran under the new government. Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yván Gil said in a bilingual post on his X social media account on Tuesday that Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro had in a phone conversation congratulated Pezeshkian on his election victory.

Pezeshkian and Maduro affirmed their countries' resolve to enhance their strategic partnership as they underscore close ties be-

tween Tehran and Caracas. "Both presidents expressed their desire to continue cooperation in order to promote long-term strategic relations and pledged to hold a high-level meeting in the near future in a bid to proceed with joint cooperation and development plans," Gil said in his post.

Pezeshkian also held a phone conversation with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Iran's president-elect told the Syrian president that his administration will spare no opportunity to further strengthen the strategic relationship with Damascus. Pezeshkian said the Iran-Syria relations are built on a solid foundation, and that the development of cooperation is a strategic policy of the Islamic Republic.

"Our entire effort is to continue this strategy with strength and to further solidify the relationship between the two sides."

Assad congratulated Pezeshkian on his win in the presidential election and wished him success in undertaking this significant national re-

sponsibility.

Pezeshkian also held separate phone calls with the leaders of Iran's northern neighbors, namely Armenia and Azerbaijan – the two countries that recently reached an agreement to settle their territorial disputes which have caused several wars between the two countries.

Iran's president-elect and Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan agreed to hold talks in the near future. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev congratulated Pezeshkian on his victory in the elections and wished him a successful tenure.

During a phone conversation with Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Pezeshkian said that his government will focus its efforts on the implementation of the agreements reached between the two countries during a visit by Iran's late president Raisi to Sri Lanka. Back in April, Raisi took part in the opening ceremony of a mega multi-purpose project built by Iranian contractors in Sri Lanka.

France's leftist coalition demands right to form gov't

The leftist coalition that won the most seats in France's National Assembly in surprise results demanded the immediate right to form a government, even though no grouping won a majority of seats.

Sunday's vote raised the risk of paralysis for the European Union's second-largest economy. The legislature is split between the New Popular Front leftist coalition, President Emmanuel Macron's centrist allies and the far-right National Rally, AP reported. Macron on Monday asked his prime minister, Gabriel Attal, to continue handling day-to-day affairs, despite Attal's offer of resignation, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics. Macron left Wednesday for a NATO summit in Washington.

The leftist coalition's three main parties — the hard-left France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens — began negotiations to find a candidate for prime minister. The coalition in a statement called on Macron to "immediately turn to the New Popular Front" and allow it to form a government.

Israel forcing thousands out of Gaza City ahead of heavy offensive

The Israeli army dropped thousands of leaflets over Gaza City on Wednesday urging all residents to flee a heavy offensive a day after at least 29 people were killed and 53 injured in an attack on a school housing displaced civilians in Khan Yunis.

The leaflets, addressed to "everyone in Gaza City", set out designated escape routes to the south and warned that the urban area, previously home to more than half a million people, would "remain a dangerous combat zone", AFP reported.

The warning follows three partial evacuation orders and came as Israeli troops, backed by tanks and aircraft, have fought Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters in the heaviest combat operations the city has seen in months.

Elsewhere across Gaza, deadly strikes have hit four schools used as shelters in four days, sparking international outrage.

The latest fighting in Gaza has newly

displaced 350,000 civilians, said UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini, who spoke before the latest leaflet drop and said "there is absolutely no safe space in Gaza".

One woman carrying her scant belongings through the bombed-out wasteland, Nimr al-Jamal, told AFP on Tuesday that "this is the 12th time" her family has had to flee.

"How many times can we endure this? A thousand times? Where will we end up?" The Israeli army said it was reviewing an attack on Tuesday in which hospital sources said at least 29 people were killed in a school used as a shelter in the southern Khan Yunis area.

'Unacceptable' tactics

Germany said the strike was "unacceptable" and called for a rapid investigation into the incident.

France also on Wednesday condemned the air strikes on schools, declaring such tactics "unacceptable".



AFP

Gaza's government said a "majority" of the dead were women and children. The Israeli military claimed that the strike had killed a Hamas member who had taken part in the October 7 attack and that it was "looking into the reports that civilians were harmed, adjacent to the Al Awda school", which it acknowledged was "near the location of the strike".

Iraq court sentences a widow of Daesh leader to death

An Iraqi court has sentenced a widow of late Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to death for her role in the terrorist group and for detaining Yazidi women, the judiciary announced.

The court in west Baghdad handed down the sentence to the woman, who is in custody, under Iraq's anti-terrorism law, according to a statement on Wednesday from Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council.

She was accused of collaborating with Daesh and using her home in Mosul to hold kidnapped Yazidi women who were later taken captive by Daesh terrorists in Sinjar in northern Iraq, Al Jazeera reported.

The court did not name the accused woman, but a judicial official cited by the AFP

news agency identified her as Asma Mohamed.

She was sentenced to "death by hanging", a court official told the Reuters news agency, adding that the ruling must be ratified by an Iraqi appeals court to become final and applicable.

The charges against Al-Baghdadi's wife come nearly five years after United States special forces killed the Daesh leader, who had built a self-declared "caliphate" across vast swaths of Iraq and Syria.

Yazidis suffered persecution during Al-Baghdadi's lightning advance through northern Iraq in 2014. Daesh terrorists systematically killed thousands of their men and forced Yazidi women into sexual slavery. More than 10 years on,

members of the minority group are still struggling to recover from Daesh's onslaught with more than 200,000 of them displaced, according to a report by Refugees International and Voice of Ezidis. Few have received reparations or compensation. Since Daesh was driven out of all the territory it controlled in Iraq in 2017, Iraqi courts have handed down hundreds of death sentences and life prison terms to those convicted of membership in "a terrorist group". They include more than 500 foreign men and women found guilty of joining Daesh.

In February, Iraq announced it had secured the repatriation of some members of Al-Baghdadi's family, who had been detained in Turkey.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



No time for ...

In his closing remarks in the final televised debate,

Pezeshkian emphasized that he was not a member of any party and became the deputy minister of health in Khatami's government owing to his professional qualifications. "I am neither illiterate nor affiliated with any party, nor did I separate myself from the people. I was from within the people and for the people," he said, stressing that his rivals "falsely" accuse him of being part of a certain government.

Pezeshkian said he plans to enhance national welfare by curbing wasteful spending and enforcing strict adherence to the rule of law to combat corruption effectively.

The politician underscored the need to reform Iran's international relations as a crucial step towards achieving economic growth and stressed the importance of fostering unity and bridging the gap between the nation and the government.

Expressing confidence in the solvability of the country's issues, he emphasized

the importance of consensus-building and unity in tackling economic woes, positioning his government as one that listens to the voices of the people and prioritizes cooperation over discord.

After the debates wrapped up, most political commentators and economic analysts in unison with the public maintained that what they had gathered from Pezeshkian's statements was that his administration would not be a third government of any former president but a first one of his own.

In a nutshell, with the new Iranian chief executive's inauguration being less than 20 days away, just as the whole nation form various social strata braved financial, economic and societal calamities, and took to the polls to cast their ballots in the hope of "change", so those presidential hopefuls once vying to serve the country should now be acting as "helpful" to pave the way for the enhancement of national unity, prosperity and welfare, what Iran and Iranians rightly deserve.