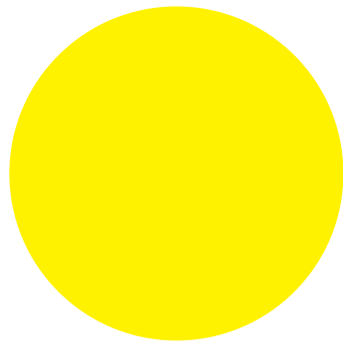


Iranian veteran actor Saeed Raad dies at 79



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IranDailyWeb

Top Democrats endorse Harris after Biden's exit from election race

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Can Harris take on Trump as Biden cops out?

By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

US President Joe Biden has finally fallen to the ground before entering the race for the upcoming presidential term. With only a few months left of his tenure, Biden will be unable to make any major political decisions and will focus only on day-to-day matters, as the value of a defeated horse diminishes. Therefore, it can be said that in the coming months, the world will clearly see the perspective of the newly-elected administration in the American policies. Biden's tenure has not been good for the world or Americans themselves. During Biden's presidency, his hypocritical mentality and power-hungriness were evident, and he was incapable of making independent decisions. Two notable wars during his tenure were the Ukraine war and Israel's aggression on Gaza, both of which inflicted pain on humanity. The responsibility for these wars falls on Joe Biden and his administration. Biden pushed Russia-Europe relations to the point of no return due to his stubbornness, which devastated Europe's progress. The energy crisis in Europe crippled its economy, as Russia was a major supplier of gas and oil to Europe before the Ukraine war.

Economic impact on Europe

1. Energy crisis:

- Approximately 40% of the European Union's gas needs were met by Russian gas. Germany, Italy, France, and the Netherlands were dependent on Russian gas, and about 30% of the EU's oil needs were met by Russian oil.

- The reduction in trade relations with Russia caused supply chain disruptions, shortages of essential goods, and increased costs.

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Export of military hardware, services tripled in three years

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said the country's export of military products and services has been tripled over the past 33 months. In most performance indicators, Ashtiani said, the country witnessed an "enormous increase" in the 33-month period, Press TV reported. The minister made the remarks in an address to a cabinet session on Sunday as he elaborated on the defense achievements of the late president Ebrahim Raisi's administration over the past three years.

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Agriculture output rose 19% in Q1 calendar year: Minister



● IRNA

Iran has made a major breakthrough by increasing its agriculture output by nearly a fifth in a year, said the country's agriculture minister, amid growing efforts to cut back on imports of basic goods and to increase the added value in the Iranian agriculture sector.

Mohammad Ali Nikbakht said on Sunday that Iran's agriculture output had increased by just over 19% in the calendar year to March 20 to reach a total of 131 million metric tons (mt), Press TV reported.

Nikbakht said Iran's wheat purchases from domestic farmers had reached 10.3 million mt in the past calendar year, up from nearly 4 million mt in the year to March 2023, adding that the major increase in domestic wheat supplies had allowed the government to cut annual imports from 7 million mt to 1.8 million mt over the same period.

The minister said wheat imports into Iran will further fall this calendar year with increased domestic supplies, adding that domestic wheat purchases would definitely exceed 11.5 million mt this year.

Nikbakht said Iran's exports of agrifood had also increased to reach more than \$1 billion in the past calendar year, adding that the added value in the agriculture sector had reached 0.6% in the June quarter, up from minus 4.6% in the similar quarter in 2023.

He said Iran had turned into a net exporter of certain farming products, including poultry, adding that the country had exported 8,000 mt of chicken and 50,000 mt of eggs in the seven months to late July.

Facing US sanctions that restrict its access to foreign trade, Iran has introduced policies to encourage increased activity in its manufacturing and agriculture sectors in recent years.

Experts say the measures have clearly paid off as Iran has been able to generate more hard currency from exports while boosting employment rates for its youth population.



Saudis keen on economic coop. with Iran: Deputy FM

Economic Desk

Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy says Saudi Arabia is keen on economic cooperation with Iran, stressing that a joint economic commission between the two countries will soon be held.

During a press conference on Monday, Mehdi Safari referred to his visit to Saudi Arabia in April, adding that he has invited the Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid a-Falih to visit Iran to explore the country's modern technologies, ISNA reported.

He also stated that the joint economic commission between Tehran and Riyadh will be held within the next two to three months.

Safari said, based on his meetings with Saudi officials during his visit, that Saudi Arabia is keen to collaborate with Iran in the economic and commercial sectors.

He described the recent trip to Saudi Arabia concerning economic issues as a breakthrough. The official also expressed hope that, as per the planned arrangements, there will be meetings and consultations at the level of the two countries' leaders, where discussions will focus on



Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy, Mehdi Safari, addresses a weekly press conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran on July 22, 2024.
● NEGIN HEMMATZADEH/ISNA

expanding cooperation in various fields, including economic field.

Safari traveled to Riyadh in April to participate in the World Economic Forum Special Meeting with the theme of "Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy

for Development".

Also, on the sidelines of an exhibition showcasing the foreign policy achievements of the late President Ebrahim Raisi's administration on Monday, he said that the foreign exchange revenues generated by Iran's knowl-

edge-based companies have increased eight-fold.

Referring to the knowledge-based companies, "The day we started, the income was \$300 million, and today it has reached \$2.5 billion."

Safari said that in order to stabi-

lize the market, "We established 'technology homes' in 12 countries, which work as exhibitions for our knowledge-based products in different countries."

The figure is expected to reach 30 by the end of the year, he added.

Afghanistan welcomes Kandahar-Chabahar rail link

Economic Desk

The Taliban-ruling government in Afghanistan has lauded the railway link between Kandahar and Iran's Chabahar, with the head of its Chamber of Industries and Mines stating that the rail connection between the two cities brings hopeful prospects for Afghans.

According to Afghanistan National Television, Shirbaz Kamizadah emphasized the importance of investing in the country's railway sector, stating that the rail connection between Kandahar

Chabahar in the southeast of Iran brings promising news for Afghans, IRNA reported.

The route connecting Kandahar to Chabahar is a notable development for all Afghans, urging everyone to invest in and support it to help Afghanistan overcome its current challenges.

Also, CEO of Afghanistan Rail Development Consortium Mostafa Rezaei underscored the connection between Kandahar and the Iranian port city as a top priority for Afghanistan.

He said that approximately 5,000 kilometers of new railway tracks have been constructed in Afghanistan over the past three years, adding that the Chabahar to Milek railway line is set to become operational by the first half of 2025.

The official also stated that the Kandahar to Milek and Milek to Chabahar railway lines within Afghan territory could facilitate a significant portion of Afghanistan's exports to destinations beyond Iran.

As per the report from the Taliban-ruling government's Ministry of Transport, approximately 230 kilometers of railway lines are currently active throughout Afghanistan, enabling significant daily exports to other countries along these railway routes.

According to IRNA, Spokesman for the Taliban's Ministry of Commerce and Industry Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada has also emphasized the importance of expanding Afghanistan's exports and imports via the route from Chabahar.

Export of military hardware, services tripled in three years

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said the country's export of military products and services has been tripled over the past 33 months. In most performance indicators, Ashtiani said, the country witnessed an "enormous increase" in the 33-month period, Press TV reported.

The minister made the remarks in an address to a cabinet session on Sunday as he elaborated on the defense achievements of the late president Ebrahim Raisi's administration over the past three years.

He added that Iran's production of weapons and defense equipment and systems as well as rendering services to the Armed Forces have been increased by 2.5 times. The defense chief noted that the successful launch of Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier, simultaneous with putting three satellites into orbit, the launch of "Zoljanah" research satellite carrier, the launch of "Saman" orbital transmission system with a sub-orbital space probe, the design and manufacturing of Khorramshahr 4 and

Abu Mahdi missiles and achieving pinpoint accuracy in missile products with are among the country's defense and military achievements.

He said the manufacturing of Khordad 15 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, the successful test of the domestically-manufactured Merasad and Arman defense systems, the design and manufacturing of Mohajer 10 strategic drone, the successful flight test of Simorgh transport aircraft for the first time, the successful flight test of Yasin training jet air-



● TASNIM

craft and completion and launch of Dana destroyer are among other Iran's defense accomplishments. Ashtiani added that the development of detection and identification systems and hitting low-altitude targets and cruise missiles were among other measures carried out by Iran's Defense Ministry.

Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient. Iranian officials have repeatedly underlined that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its mil-

itary capabilities which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran's defense capabilities.

Preservation of Hyrcanian forests is vital



● snaptrip.com

Iranica Desk

The Hyrcanian forests boast a unique ancient history, shaped by millennia of human settlement that has had a profound impact on its vegetation cover. With increased awareness and the implementation of proper management practices, the preservation of these forests is vital.

Friba Babaei, the head of the Hyrcanian World Heritage Site at the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Gilan Province, highlighted in a note that this natural wonder,

which has evolved over several million years, was officially recognized as the second natural heritage site in Iran by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on July 10, 2019. This significant designation took place during the 43rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan, chtn.ir wrote. Azerbaijan's Hirkan Forest has been included in the United Nations' list of Natural World Heritage sites as an extension of Iran's Hyrcanian Forests. This decision was made during the 45th session of the World Her-

itage Committee held in Saudi Arabia. With this endorsement, the unique and diverse landscape of the Hyrcanian Forests, renowned for their distinct features, is now fully represented and protected.

This valuable heritage, with its globally distinctive natural features, also boasts a unique ancient history. Situated between the Alborz Mountains to the south and the Caspian Sea to the north, the Hyrcanian region enjoyed a warm and humid climate during the last Ice Age, with only its highest peaks experiencing glaciation. The region's stable climate, extensive temperate forests, rich diversity of flora and fauna, and abundant water sources have rendered it an alluring destination and a secure sanctuary for human settlement. Consequently, this area stands as a significant hub for early human dispersal.

According to numerous archaeologists, coastal areas have always held significant importance for human communities. This significance heightened after the extinction of large



● snaptrip.com

animals, with rising sea levels approximately 7,000 years ago shifting the focus of hunter-gatherer societies towards coastal regions. Despite this trend, many ancient sites have been unearthed at considerable distances from the coastline due to various factors. These factors encompass notable fluctuations in the Caspian Sea's water levels, the presence of marshy lands unsuitable for habitation during the Stone Age epoch, and dense forests that limited light penetration at the forest floor.

component of the Achaemenid Empire during the Persian Empire's reign. Records of Hyrcania's conquest are absent, yet insights gleaned from the Bisotoun Inscription affirm its inclusion within Persian territories until 522 BCE.

The soldiers from Hyrcania were integral to a significant military force under King Xerxes in 480 BCE during the conflict with the Greeks. At that juncture, a contingent of Hyrcanian soldiers safeguarded the passes of the Cai'cus and Hermus valleys

in Asia Minor. In the era of the Persian Empire, a defensive barrier was erected to shield Hyrcania from the Central Asian nomadic tribes. Presently, the remains of this barrier, referred to as the "Alexander Wall," endure in the region north of the Gorgan River, superseding the defensive fortifications of the Achaemenid era.

Following the conquest by Alexander the Great, Hyrcania became part of the newly established Seleucid Empire. References to the Hyrcanians surface during the Battle of Gaugamela in October 1, 331 BCE, and in August of 329 BCE, following the demise of the last Iranian king, Darius III, numerous Iranian nobles sought refuge in Hyrcania and yielded to Alexander there.

In the context of the Parthian dominion, Hyrcania occupied a strategic position within the empire, bridging their territories and the steppe regions considered their homeland. Parthian rulers selected a city in Hyrcania for their summer residence.

The enduring legacy of settlement within the Hyrcanian region left a lasting imprint on its vegetation cover. Nonetheless,

vast expanses of these forests remained untouched until the early nineteenth century. Subsequently, a surge in deforestation and industrial activities ensued, leading to the shrinking of this precious natural expanse to just over one million hectares today.

Numerous threats continue to imperil the Hyrcanian forests, underscoring the necessity for heightened awareness and efficacious implementation of preservation and management approaches to curb further degradation.

Pahlavi inscriptions at the ancient site of Haraskan decoded



Iranica Desk

The original identity and translation of the Pahlavi inscriptions at the ancient site of Haraskan in Isfahan Province have been unveiled, according to Mohammad Javad Abdoli, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Aran and Bidgol.

Abdoli explained that the restoration and cleaning of historical plaster artifacts for display in Vigol's newly established museum have uncovered the mystery of an ancient city that had been buried under sand for approximately 600 years, revealing its ancient name, as reported by chtn.ir. He elaborated that, based

on the Pahlavi inscription found on the plaster seats discovered in the fire temple at this site, which was studied and interpreted by a linguist from the University of Tehran, the city's name during the Sassanid era was Faraskan, which later evolved into Haraskan during the early Islamic period.

Abdoli also mentioned that, due to concerns about a road passing through the boundary of the Vigol ancient site, the cultural heritage site, in collaboration with the province's Cultural Heritage Organization, obtained permission from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts to conduct exploratory operations in the

area adjacent to the road. This investigation aims to determine the presence or absence of artifacts along the road's path, which will inform a final decision regarding the road's construction once the results are announced.

Vigol is a 120-hectare area located east of Bidgol, known for housing a fire temple with a history spanning several millennia. Although the ancient fire temple was discovered recently, ongoing research and archaeological studies have revealed a rich tapestry of life that has existed for thousands of years in the Aran and Bidgol regions. This fire temple has functioned continuously from pre-Islamic times through

various subsequent eras. Its historical significance dates back to the Sassanid Empire and extends into the early Islamic centuries, coinciding with the decline of the Seljuk period.

Architecturally, the fire temple features a cruciform design reminiscent of the "four-ivan" structures common in the Sassanid period, complete with four entrance doors. The central part of the building houses remnants of a fire pit, adorned with stucco decorations.

In summary, the Vigol fire temple is a remarkable example of ancient architecture and continuous cultural significance, capturing the essence of the region's long history.



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

With the election fever dying down in Iran after the official announcement of Masoud Pezeshkian as the winner of its presidential elections, it seems there is little daylight between the approaches and policies of Pezeshkian and those of the late president Raisi's government on foreign policy and international relations. The portrayal of a deep divide in this area has been a product of some media and political campaigns to polarize the country's atmosphere.

Of course, the final candidates for heading the Islamic Republic's 14th government initially laid out differing views and interpretations of issues across various domains. However, a look at the president-elect's statements and positions over the past few days indicates that the foreign policies of Pezeshkian's government will, in many ways, including the prioritization of strengthening relations with neighbors, line up and dovetail with those of its predecessor.

Additionally, in a message lauding Secretary-General of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Iranian president-elect stressed that his government would continue to strongly back the resistance. He also named China and Russia as allies and friends in challenging times and pledged to follow through on the agreements made with these countries during president Raisi's tenure.

It is, however, worth noting that the president-elect has also floated novel approaches to foreign policy and engagement with Western nations to tackle some of the country's challenges, particularly regarding sanctions and economic matters. The success of these initiatives hinges on the commencement of a new round of talks with Western countries.

In light of these developments, Iran Daily interviewed Mohammed Vahidi, a former Iranian lawmaker and an expert on political matters, to gain his insights on these topics.

Former MP echoes Pezeshkian's stress on law-abidance

Same foreign policy, 'new approach, opportunities'



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (2nd-L) shakes hands with Masoud Pezeshkian, who would later pick up Pezeshkian's mantle, in Tabriz, northwestern Iran, on June 2, 2022.
● president.ir

IRAN DAILY: President-elect Pezeshkian speaks of the necessity to ramp up interaction with the world to boost economic growth and tackle the country's issues, with specific mentions of Europe and Western nations. What are your thoughts on this matter?

VAHIDI: One of the critical equations for various Iranian governments in their dealings with the international system is the mode of interaction the country should adopt on the global stage. In my view, any government that can strike a balance between maintaining values, upholding dignity, and fostering relationships grounded in mutual interests will reap benefits for the nation.

This aligns with the perspective of the leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution on the matter. On numerous occasions, the leader has asserted that even though we have had issues with one or two countries post-Revolution due to their negative outlook on the broader movement of the Iranian people against oppression, it doesn't preclude us from en-

gaging with other nations. History bears out that a shift in the practices of certain countries can pave the way for improved relations. A case in point is South Africa; once the apartheid regime was dismantled, our relations with that country strengthened.

However, the impetus for developing our relationships with other nations should stem from safeguarding national interests and addressing the country's challenges. In the recent presidential elections, the votes reflected a popular demand for enhanced interaction with the world. Admittedly, our people witnessed economic growth under president Raisi's government, but if the new government can make headway in international interactions, particularly concerning economic, monetary, and banking issues, we could attain even higher levels of economic prosperity. Many countries are keen to forge economic ties with us, but certain obstacles have impeded this.

How much of a departure is the new government's ap-

proach to foreign policy?

In my view, despite the discourse that emerged during the election campaign, and the fact that some individuals pursued polarization, my assessment is that the outlook favoring the development of interactions was also present in the previous government. However, new opportunities have since opened up for the country.

On the one hand, Pezeshkian, through his message to Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in support of the resistance and his conversation with Vladimir Putin affirming Iran's unwavering commitment to agreements, signaled that we remain steadfast in our previous positions in these areas. At the same time, Pezeshkian has extended a hand of friendship and interaction to other nations, conveying to countries like the United States that they shouldn't assume Iran is dependent on the West for its development and problem-solving. Iran is pursuing enhanced interactions with a diverse range of countries and won't make concessions to the West. The message to the West

and America is clear: until they come to terms with respecting the national interests of Iran on the world stage, they shouldn't hold any expectations from us.

The president-elect has underscored the imperative of lifting sanctions to address some of the nation's issues. Do you believe there's still a possibility of reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or will the Iranian government explore alternative avenues to resolve the nuclear issue?

A point that all the candidates, including Pezeshkian, emphasized during the debates was adherence to the law. The law has stipulated the path of negotiations, as outlined in the Strategic Action Plan approved by the Islamic Parliament, which was crafted in coordination with the Supreme National Security Council. This law envisions strategies to safeguard the country's national interests, including in the realm of nuclear energy achievements, by making the country self-reliant and creating new opportunities to

benefit from nuclear energy in peaceful sectors. The leader has emphasized that compliance with the law is a principle for anyone engaging in negotiations, meaning they must operate within the boundaries of the law. Consequently, if the future government would like to design a framework for negotiations, it ought to build upon previous agreements and adhere to the law.

On the other hand, it's common knowledge that the other side walked away from the agreements, while Iran remained committed to its obligations. Thus, the outcome of future negotiations hinges on two factors: the other party acknowledging their non-fulfillment of duty and our negotiating team's steadfast adherence to legal matters.

It appears that an agreement rooted in the approved Strategic Action Plan, upholding the nation's rights in the field of nuclear energy, and culminating in the lifting of sanctions could be advantageous for the country. Simultaneously, securing the necessary guarantees for the agreement's implementation is essential.

Pezeshkian has extended a hand of friendship and interaction to other nations, conveying to countries like the United States that they shouldn't assume Iran is dependent on the West for its development and problem-solving. The message to the West and America is clear: until they come to terms with respecting the national interests of Iran on the world stage, they shouldn't hold any expectations from us.

What are the prerequisites for advancing our approaches and policies on the international stage?

Coordination and cooperation between field and diplomacy can prove effective in this arena — a strategy that the late foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian employed in the previous government, showcasing successful handling of such matters. He deftly harnessed the potential of diplomacy, facilitating Iran's accession to treaties like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS, among others. Simultaneously, during this period, our ties with neighboring countries strengthened. Regardless, when the Zionist regime au-

daciously attacked the Iranian consulate in Damascus, we delivered a decisive response on the ground, thereby defending Iran's national interests and projecting strength in the diplomatic sphere.

The new Iranian government must tread carefully to avoid providing pretexts for other countries to sever ties while it pursues negotiations on the international stage and maintains the close and amicable relationships we've cultivated with friendly and neighboring nations.

Another issue that Pezeshkian intends to address to tackle economic challenges on the global stage is**the matter of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). In your opinion, to what extent has this issue impacted the country's economic landscape?**

It's inaccurate to claim that Iran's non-adherence to the FATF standards hasn't inflicted any harm on the country's economic front, including monetary, financial, and banking issues. Our compliance could yield positive economic outcomes, but the conditions under which we accept the FATF are crucial. The previous government accepted some requirements, but the process didn't reach a conclusion, and we lacked the endorsement of institutions like the Expe-

diency Council, the executive branch, and the legislative branch.

Now, the discussion revolves around whether it's still possible for us to accept the FATF as it is a prerequisite for working within the international trade system. If we come on board, we'll resolve certain problems in the export and production sectors, paving the way for Iran's integration into global financial markets and attracting more foreign investors and tourists. Simultaneously, we should also contemplate the possibility that if accepting the FATF proves unattainable, we can explore alternative solutions to address our challenges in this domain.



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (R) and President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian take part in mourning rituals for Imam Hussein (PBUH) beside a framed picture of the late president Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on July 13, 2024.

● khamenei.ir

Iran, Azerbaijan's rapprochement gaining momentum



By Emil Avdaliani
Director of Middle East Studies at Geocase

PERSPECTIVE

On July 15, Azerbaijan announced it was resuming consular services at a newly relocated embassy in Iran, after having suspended them in early 2023. The decision culminated in a rapprochement between the neighboring countries after a series of developments led to an almost total breakdown of diplomatic relations. The proximate cause of that breakdown was an assault on the Azerbaijani Embassy at its previous location in Tehran in January 2023, when a lone attacker killed one person and wounded several others. But a range of more significant factors lay behind Baku's decision to suspend its diplomatic operations in Iran. Bilateral relations had already grown tense after Azerbaijan defeated Armenia in the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, leaving it in position to push for the so-called Zangezur Corridor — a passage through Armenian territory along the Iranian border that Baku has long sought to connect Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan exclave. The corridor would effectively block Iran's land route to Armenia, on which it depends as a link to Georgia and the Black Sea.

Tehran's concerns were heightened by its fear of Turkey's growing influence in the South Caucasus. Long an ally of Azerbaijan, Ankara has further expanded its strategic partnership with Baku in recent years, offering critical support in the 2020 war. In the war's aftermath, Turkey has also supported Baku's ambitions for the Zangezur Corridor, while seeing Azerbaijan as a bridge for projecting its own influence across the Caspian Sea into the Central Asian region. That has left Iran facing the prospects of a veritable Turkic corridor from Turkey to Turkmenistan, another Turkish-speaking country bordering the Islamic Republic to the north.

In recent months, however, both Tehran and Baku have signaled their desire for a thaw. In fact, the death of former Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in northern Iran in May occurred when he was returning from a visit to the Azerbaijani border, where alongside Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev he inaugurated a dam jointly developed with Baku. The hydropower facility, located on the Aras River that serves as the border in the area, will produce electricity for both countries.

But efforts toward improving bilateral ties began before that. The inauguration attended by the two presidents had been announced in March when the two countries' foreign ministers met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Also in March, Iran's ambassador to Azerbaijan declared that the two sides were intent on opening a "new chapter" in bilateral relations.

The accident that killed Raisi as well as former Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian slightly postponed further efforts toward rapprochement because of the ensuing disruption in Tehran. But that did not stop the momentum behind the thaw. Now with the new government of Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian set to take office, the improvement of ties seems to be in full swing again.

Geopolitical drivers

Broader geopolitical developments have created favorable conditions for the rapprochement. To begin with, Eurasian connectivity depends on at least working relations between the



Iranian late president Ebrahim Raisi (L) and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev inaugurate the Qiz Qalasi Dam, constructed on the Aras River on the joint borders of the two countries, in Jabrayil, Azerbaijan, on May 19, 2024, hours before Raisi's helicopter fatally crashed.

● president.ir

two sides. The International North-South Transport Corridor, or INSTC, which runs from Russia's ports in the Baltic and Caspian seas to Iran and India, uses Azerbaijan as the primary transit route among its three branches. Indeed, the recent expansion of the corridor in 2022 and 2023 following Russia's all-out assault on Ukraine has significantly enhanced Iran's bilateral trade with Russia, which grew 48 percent in the first four months of 2024 compared with the same period in 2023.

Tehran and Baku have also made progress on the joint development of the Rasht-Astara railway connection, the only missing link in efforts to connect the two countries' railway systems.

The rapprochement also fits into Iran's overall foreign policy goal of easing tensions in relations with its regional neighbors in recent years. Its normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia in 2023 and ongoing efforts toward reconciliation with other Persian Gulf

states are other examples.

Another factor is Azerbaijan's victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, culminating in its armed seizure of the territory in September 2023. Iran was often seen by Baku as being more sympathetic to Armenia, if not directly supporting it. With the fall of the ethnic Armenian enclave and ongoing peace negotiations between Baku and Yerevan, the Islamic Republic has accepted the new reality to its north: a stronger Azerbaijan with which Tehran needs to find common ground for longer-term cooperation.

Moreover, Iran is presently more focused on the tense situation in the Middle East, where it has to dedicate greater diplomatic and economic resources to its network of armed groups, from the Houthis in Yemen to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Easing tensions with Baku frees up bandwidth for those efforts. But Iran is not alone in its desire for a rapprochement. Azerbaijan also has much to benefit from better ties with

Tehran. Baku is focused on negotiations with Armenia and has recently seen its relations with Western countries, such as France, deteriorate. That has left it more open to cooperation with Iran.

Finally, the two sides also find their interests converging in terms of limiting outside influence in the South Caucasus. Both fully support the so-called 3+3 initiative involving Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia alongside Russia, Iran, and Turkey, in an effort to keep Western actors at bay in the region.

Potential obstacles to progress

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan and Iran's bilateral relations have historically been uneasy, with mutual distrust always playing a role. And despite the accelerating rapprochement, potential roadblocks ahead remain, including issues such as Iran's close ties with Armenia, the Islamic Republic's purported support for religious groups in Azerbaijan, and problems regarding border control.



A train crosses a road bridge built between Iran and Azerbaijan over Astarachay.

● MEHR

Moreover, Iran also fears that Azerbaijan might still, despite statements from Baku to the contrary, pressure Armenia — including with the threat or use of force — to establish the Zangezur Corridor. In fact, Iran remains unhappy with the present power balance in the South Caucasus, as an overly weakened Armenia reduces its own power projection capabilities.

Iran will also remain vigilant about Azerbaijan's continuing security cooperation with Israel. Tehran has long voiced its discontent over their partnership and as recently as last year openly accused Baku of letting Israel use its territory for intelligence-gathering. However, though Azerbaijan has been careful not to emphasize its ties with Israel against the backdrop of the war in Gaza and the popular anger it has caused across the Islamic world, Baku is unlikely to disavow the valuable security and energy cooperation those ties provide.

That said, the rapprochement between Iran and Azerbaijan will likely continue, especially if Pezeshkian seeks to improve Iran's relations with the West and regional countries, as he has promised to do. Indeed, Aliyev has already invited Pezeshkian to Baku, and Azerbaijan's foreign minister recently expressed Baku's hope that relations with the Islamic Republic will improve under its new president. In all likelihood, they will.

The article first appeared on World Politics Review.

Olympic organizers aim for 'balance' of security, celebration



● REUTERS

Paris 2024 organizers said a 'balance' between security and celebration is needed at the Games.

Tony Estanguet, President of Olympics organizing committee said that's a balance to be found between a perfect security, which is absolutely the priority. And there is no discussion, Reuters reported.

"There has never been any discussion to put at risk a security model. So, the base is how we can guarantee the security for the spectators and for the athletes. And that's why there is an unprecedented system of security in our country, and in Paris particularly, to make sure that security will be there."

But of course, yeah, there will be around people from police, even from military, even from private security. And they are there to welcome the people and make sure that it will be completely safe. It's part of the objective to guarantee security and to propose a fantastic celebration of the games, he said.

"We never diminish and reduce the ambition in terms of celebration, at start with the opening ceremony. But to have this kind of unique celebration, you need also to have a security plan very, very strong security plan. And that's the case."

For the first time, a Games opening ceremony will not take place in a stadium. Dozens of boats will carry thousands of athletes and performers on a nearly 4-mile floating parade on the Seine.

More than 300,000 people are expected to line both banks of the river to watch the ceremony - along with 45,000 police, including members of France's elite special intervention forces trained in counterterrorism.

Snipers will be deployed on the top of buildings along the route. An anti-drone system will be in place.

French officials have said there are no specific terrorism threats for the ceremony that will launch the Games in Paris, which run until Aug. 11.

However, should specific concerns arise, there are backup plans, that would either see the ceremony restricted to the Trocadero square near the Eiffel tower, or switched to the Stade de France stadium.

President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that France was ready to host the Paris Olympics as he visited the Athletes' Village. "We are ready and we will be ready throughout the Games," Macron said, four days before the Olympics open.

Coach Inzaghi impressed by Taremi in Inter's training

Iran's international forward Mehdi Taremi has been working with Simone Inzaghi for a week, as the Inter coach seems to be happy with his new signing.

The fact that the other senior strikers from last season have not been part of the training thus far means that the Iranian player has had the chance to work one-on-one with Inzaghi, reported Tasnim News Agency. The Italian coach has been apparently very impressed by what he

has seen from Taremi during the past week.

The Gazzetta reported that there are echoes of former Lazio and Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose in what Taremi has demonstrated in preseason. Inzaghi had worked with Klose right at the tail end of the German forward's career at the Biancocelesti in 2016. Similarly, the Gazzetta reported, there are echoes of Edin Dzeko's game in Taremi. The Bosnian had spent two seasons as a key player for Inter under Inzaghi.



● TASNIM



● IRNA

Iran U20 volleyball sweep Australia in friendly

Iran's volleyball team defeated Australia in three straight sets (25-15, 25-14, 25-21) during a friendly match ahead of the 2024 Asian Boys' U-20 Volleyball Championship. In previous friendly matches, Iran defeated the Indonesia U20 volleyball team in two warm-up matches, wrote Mehr News Agency. The Iranian team is preparing for the 2024 Asian Boys' U20

Volleyball Championship. Iran has been placed in Group B along with China, Chinese Taipei, and Qatar. The 2024 Asian Boys' U20 Volleyball Championship will take place from July 23 to 30 in Surabaya, Indonesia. Iran U20 volleyball team also on Friday defeated Indonesia in a friendly match in a straight set (25-12, 25-20, 25-17). Iran's volleyball players, who

have traveled to Surabaya, Indonesia, to participate in the Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship, have held their training session under the supervision of the team's head coach Gholamreza Momeni-Moghadam. The 22nd Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship will be held from July 23-30 with the participation of 16 teams.

Japan beat Iran in Asian Junior Handball Championship

Iran was defeated against Japan 31-29 in the 18th edition of Asian Men Junior Handball Championship in Group 2 on Sunday night.

Iran is scheduled to play Kuwait on Wednesday for the 5th/6th place, reported Tasnim New Agency. The 18th Asian Men's Junior (U-21) Handball Championship will run until July 27 in Amman, Jordan. The championship serves as a qualifying event for the 25th IHF Men's Junior (U-21) Handball World

Championship in Poland, slated for June and July 2025. The top four teams in the

ongoing competition will secure qualification spots for the World Championship.



● TASNIM

Syrian forward Yasin Dali to join Chadormalu

Alaa-Aldin Yasin Dali has traveled to Iran to finalize his deal with Chadormalu football club.

Dali currently plays for Iraqi football club Naft Missan, Tasnim News Agency wrote on Monday. The 27-year-old forward has played 24 times for Syria's national team and scored four goals. Chadormalu won promotion to the 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) in June.



● TASNIM

Nadal defeated in first tour final in two years

Rafael Nadal lost his first final in two years as the Spaniard went down 6-3, 6-2 to Portugal's Nuno Borges at the clay-court Bastad Open.

The Spanish tennis great had shown signs of a return to form in Scandinavia as he made an impressive run to the final, just one week before tennis at the Olympic Games gets underway on the clay in Paris, AFP reported. But Nadal, rather than celebrating his 64th title on the surface and first since Roland Garros 2022, was dominated by Borges as he struggled to find fluency

with his serve and ground strokes.

"I don't know what to say. I think I was wishing for this moment for a while already," said Borges in his post-match interview.

"It's crazy, in tennis it doesn't happen when you expect it sometimes. I know we all wanted Rafa to win, a part of me wished that too, but something even bigger inside of me really pushed through today... I'm just really happy overall. I really don't know what to say, I'm very emotional." Borges was the first to

make headway in the match when he broke the Spaniard's serve to go 3-1 up, with Nadal saving break points before over-

cooking a forehand down the line.

But the 14-time French Open winner struck back immediately on the Borg-



● AFP

es serve, earning two break-back points before the Portuguese dumped a forehand into the net from inside the service box. But neither player could quite grab the ascendancy in the first set as Borges quickly ran up a 0-40 lead in the next service game, converting his second break point with a perfectly executed drop shot. Nadal was struggling to find his first serve but managed to hold just his second service game of the opening set to force Borges to serve one more time. The world number 51 kept his nerve to do just that.

The 38-year-old showed signs of his old self-serving at deuce in the first game of the second set with a booming forehand winner down the line, before he eventually held but that was one of the few highlights for Nadal on the day. Borges then struck at 2-2 as he broke Nadal's serve for the first time in the second set and fourth time overall to edge ahead. The 27-year-old followed it up by winning the next three games, sealing a maiden career title in his first-ever match-up against the former world number one with an ace.



Top Democrats endorse Harris after Biden's exit from election race

US Vice President Kamala Harris and President Joe Biden arrive to deliver remarks during National Small Business Week, in the White House in Washington, DC, on May 1, 2023.
● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP

International Desk

A majority of Democrats in Congress and nearly half of the country's Democratic governors announced their support for Vice President Kamala Harris to lead the Democratic ticket in the

hours after President Joe Biden stepped out of the race on Sunday. Most Democrats were quick to issue statements commending Biden for his years of service after he announced he was dropping his re-election bid. Many of-

ferred their support for Harris to be the party's nominee, though several key leaders did not immediately back her. After weeks of fighting among Democrats on whether Biden, 81, should stay in the race, a rush of support coalescing behind Har-

ris, if she is to be the nominee, is crucial with just over 100 days before the November election.

Doubts about Harris success

But there are plenty of doubts inside the Democratic Party about

whether Harris can beat Donald Trump, the Republican nominee and former president. Some Democrats have suggested the party should hold a mini-primary before the August convention. Biden himself endorsed Harris on Sunday, in a separate statement following his letter saying that he is stepping down. He was quickly followed by the powerful Congressional Black Caucus, several key donors, various lawmakers and super PACs including Priorities USA and Unite the Country. Former president Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton, who served as secretary of State under president Barack Obama, also endorsed Harris in a statement. Still, others, including former house speaker Nancy Pelosi and Obama, under whom Biden served as vice president for eight years, thanked Biden for his patriotism but have yet to throw their support behind Harris or any other candidate. "We will be navigating uncharted waters in the days ahead," Obama said in a statement. "But I have extraordinary confidence that the leaders of our party will be able to create a process from which an outstanding nominee emerges." Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who praised Biden's

decision to step aside, also was silent on who should be the Democrats' nominee. Trump's vicious attack on Biden and his legacy led the Republican party's reaction to the president's decision to withdraw from the 2024 race. "Crooked Joe Biden was not fit to run for president, and is certainly not fit to serve – and never was!" Trump said in a post to Truth Social, repeating his favored insult for the man who beat him in the 2020 election, and rehashing a familiar litany of unsubstantiated grievances. "He only attained the position of president by lies, fake news, and not leaving his basement. All those around him, including his doctor and the media, knew that he wasn't capable of being president, and he wasn't. "And now look what he's done to our country, with millions of people coming across our border, totally unchecked and unvetted, many from prisons, mental institutions, and record numbers of terrorists. We will suffer greatly because of his presidency, but we will remedy the damage he has done very quickly." Trump said he thinks Harris will be easier to defeat in November's election than Biden. "Harris will be easier to beat than Joe Biden would have been," Trump told CNN.

Foreign leaders accept invite to attend Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony

International Desk

An Iranian lawmaker said five presidents and 10 parliament speakers have so far accepted invitation to attend President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony which is scheduled to be held on July 30. Mojtaba Yousefi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's presiding board, said on Monday that names of more foreign officials will certainly be added to the list of the

guests in the coming days and before the ceremony. He said that the ceremony will be held in the Parliament after the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has endorsed Pezeshkian's presidential mandate in a separate 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 Iran's northwest on May 19.

Sudan, Iran trade ambassadors after eight-year hiatus

Sudan's de facto leader, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, received an Iranian ambassador and sent his own to Tehran, the government said, cementing a rapprochement after an eight-year rupture. Sudan and Iran agreed last October to resume diplomatic relations. The Sudanese government announced in a statement that Burhan had received Tehran's new ambassador Hassan Shah Hosseini in Port Sudan.

The Red Sea city has become Sudan's de facto seat of government since Khartoum became wracked by fighting. This is "the beginning of a new phase in the course of bilateral relations between the two countries," foreign ministry undersecretary Hussein al-Amin said as Burhan sent off Sudan's new ambassador to Iran, Abdelaziz Hassan Saleh. Sudan broke off relations with Iran in 2016 in a show of solidar-

ity with Saudi Arabia, after the kingdom's embassy in Tehran was attacked following the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia cleric. Several Saudi allies in the region also cut ties with Iran at the time. In March 2023, however, Riyadh and Tehran announced the restoration of their relations following an agreement brokered by China. Iran has since moved to cement or restore relations with neighboring Arab countries.

Iran hosts search, rescue drill with Caspian states

International Desk

Iran's Navy hosted a naval rescue and relief exercise in the Caspian Sea with the participation of all five littoral states in order to increase coordination on maritime security. Captain Abbas Hassani, spokesperson of the drill dubbed the relief, rescue and maritime security of the Caspian Sea 2024, (Casarex 24),

said the airborne division of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, Iranian Sina-class fast attack craft Paykan, Derafsh and Separ, as well as two Augusta-Bell AB-212 helicopters took part in the naval exercise. Hassani added that a flotilla of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, named Martyr Baseer, also participated in the maritime drill. Russian SB45 vessel, which

had entered the Iranian territorial waters the previous day, was also in attendance. The spokesman noted that representatives from other Caspian Sea littoral states, including the Republic of Azerbaijan, are monitoring various stages of the drill as observers. During the drill, Iranian and Russian maritime and airborne units extinguished a fire on board of a commercial vessel,

rescued the injured crew members, and repaired the damage caused to the ship. Iran has staged joint naval exercises with other countries, including Oman and Pakistan, as well. Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great progress in developing and manufacturing a broad range of military equipment.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



'Independent' Europe needed to mend Iran ties: FM spox

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said if Europe acts independently in its relations with Iran, both sides will witness the improvement of relations. During his weekly press conference on Monday, Kanaani said that the poor relations between Tehran and the European countries is the result of their miscalculation or pursuit of the wrong policies adopted by the United States toward Iran.

Kanaani noted that Tehran considers Europe as an important part of its foreign relations, adding that, "Based on its dynamic diplomacy, common interests and mutual respect, Iran is ready to develop relations with all countries that are interested in improving ties with Iran." Responding to a question about the recent developments in the US presidential election and its impact on relations between the two countries, he said any potential improvement in

relations with the US hinges on Washington's change of "hostile" policies irrespective of who becomes president. "As we have previously said, the comings and goings of governments and individuals do not matter to us," the spokesman said. "The thing is the US government has always taken a hostile approach and a hostile policy on Iran over the past years, and what can change the atmosphere of relations is the change of the hostile behavior of the



United States towards the Iranian nation." US President Joe Biden abandoned his bid for re-election on Sunday as he caved to relentless pressure from his closest allies to drop out of the race amid concerns that he was too old and frail to defeat former president Donald Trump.

Int'l Physics Olympiad in Isfahan

200 students compete in global science event

The 54th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) kicked off in Iran's historic city of Isfahan on Monday, bringing together nearly 200 high school students from 17 countries. The nine-day event, hosted by Isfahan University of Technology, marks the second time Isfahan has welcomed the IPhO, the first being in 2007, IRNA wrote. "Iran is a suitable choice to host the International Physics Olympiad," said Professor Rajdeep Singh Rawat, the president of the International Physics Olympiad. "Despite a decrease in the number of participating countries compared to the previous edition, Iran's readiness to host the event remains unchanged." A total of 198 students are par-

ticipating in the scientific competition, accompanied by 150 chaperones and team leaders. The competing teams represent Iran, Russia, China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Romania, Turkey, Mexico, Georgia, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Colombia, Belarus, Kuwait, and Vietnam. Oman and Morocco are also in attendance as observers, seeking to familiarize themselves with the international competition. The IPhO, first held in Poland in 1967, has grown in size and popularity over the years. The event hit a brief hiatus between 1967 and 1982 due to increasing participation numbers, but since then, it has been held annually without fail, except in

2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Iran joined the IPhO 36 years ago and has since seen its students claim numerous medals. This year, five Iranian students are among the competitors, aiming to continue their country's scientific legacy. The Olympiad provides a platform for young scientists to showcase their talents and connect with peers from diverse backgrounds. It also fosters collaboration among university faculty members and promotes the exchange of ideas and cultural understanding. The competition is expected to conclude with a closing ceremony on Sunday, where medals and awards will be presented to the top performers.



● ISNA



Iranian veteran actor Saeed Raad dies at 79

Arts & Culture Desk

Saeed Raad, a celebrated Iranian actor and icon, passed away on Monday at the age of 79 after a long illness. His impressive career spanned many memorable roles, solidifying his place as one of Iran's most beloved and accomplished actors. Mohammad Khazaei, President of Iran's Cinema Organization, paid tribute to Raad's impressive body of work, highlighting his versatile performances in films

such as 'Che,' 'The Eagles,' 'Duel,' and 'Journey of the Stone.' The head and deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) also offered their condolences. "I offer my condolences on the passing of the capable and beloved artist Saeed Raad," said Peyman Jebeli, IRIB's head. "Throughout his eventful artistic life, he created enduring roles in cinema and television, including his recent role as Colonel Bahadori in the TV se-

ries 'Motherland.' His fans will always remember his brilliant performances." Mohsen Bormahani, IRIB's deputy head, also expressed sadness at the news: "The passing of veteran artist Raad, who created enduring characters in historical TV series, has saddened me greatly. Raad was not just an actor, but a master and a morally committed artist. His personal life and professional conduct can serve as a classroom for aspiring artists. Iranian television and its

audience have greatly benefited from his talent. His performance in the TV series 'In the Eye of the Wind' was so powerful that it made his character believable to viewers. His brilliance in the series 'Motherland' and other television works attests to his ability to take on significant and serious roles." Raad's funeral is scheduled for Wednesday in Tehran, with Iran's cinema community mourning his loss and honoring his rich legacy.

Can Harris take ...

- Energy prices in Europe rose due to obstacles in the supply of Russian gas and oil, increasing expenses for industries and households, and creating economic pressure.

2. Economic challenges:

- European governments faced a reduction in funds for public welfare and well-being.
- France encountered law and order issues. Many public welfare projects in several EU countries had to be abandoned due to the pointless Ukraine war.

Industrial and economic decline

1. Industrial production:

- After World War II and the economic crisis of the 1990s, there was a significant decline in the EU's overall industrial production.
- Industries dependent on Russia's raw materials reached the brink of collapse.

2. GDP growth:

- Efforts to establish new supply chains through alternative routes were made but met with limited success.
- The overall GDP of the EU has been recording a slowdown for the past two

consecutive years, with Germany and Italy being notable examples.

Financial policies and unemployment

1. Inflation and interest rates:

- The European Central Bank had to increase interest rates to control inflation, which led to a financial crisis for industries.
- Industrialists laid off workers to reduce costs, resulting in record-high unemployment across Europe over the past two years.

2. Product quality:

- The negative impact on product quality will be evident to consumers worldwide in the coming years.

US perspective and policies

1. Energy independence:

- The US did not face energy problems as it was not dependent on Russian sources.
- Europe bore the brunt of the Ukraine war, while President Biden did not attempt to resolve the crisis through negotiations but instead fueled the war by providing weapons to the Ukrainian government and financial resources for military expenses, ultimately burdening American taxpayers.
2. Gaza conflict:

- In October last year, during Biden's presidency, Israel launched an assault on Gaza. Following a retaliatory operation by Hamas inside Israel, Biden, relying on false Israeli information, issued provocative statements that encouraged Israel's aggressive actions.
- Israel's forces carried out severe airstrikes on Gaza, targeting hospitals and killing newborn babies while Biden and his administration only watched.
- Biden's presidency marked some of the darkest events, with no American president since 1948 having policies toward Palestinians based on justice and human values.

Biden's black marks

1. Impact on Pakistan:

- Biden's administration ousted Imran Khan's government in Pakistan due to stubbornness and arrogance, severely damaging Pakistan's economy, affecting approximately 200 million people.

2. Kamala Devi Harris' nomination:

- Biden has nominated his Indian-origin Vice President Kamala Devi Harris for the next presidential elections. However, the Democrats have yet to decide on her candidacy. It is apparent that Donald Trump will easily face and defeat Kamala.

Iran launches AI-powered course for Persian language

Arts & Culture Desk

The Saadi Foundation launched a summer school program that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to teach the Persian language. Foundation president, Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, addressed the first class, expressing his gratitude to the colleagues at the Education and Research Deputy for organizing the course, ISNA wrote. He said, "The focus on AI and the commencement of this course signifies that a new horizon has opened at the Saadi Foundation, and that modern communication technologies for Persian language teaching have been embraced." Haddad Adel also expressed his delight at the enthusiastic response to the course, seeing it as a sign of trust in the Saadi

Foundation.

He further added that Iran is seriously considering AI, as evidenced by the recent approval of the establishment of the National AI Organization.

The educational course has attracted participants from various Iranian cities, all keen on learning about Persian language and literature, and AI.

The course covers a range of topics, including AI fundamentals, educational query engineering with AI, AI-powered production of audio-visual content, language teaching software utilizing AI, and the creation and editing of educational videos with AI. Additionally, it covers AI-based testing and assessment, learning activity design, and the production of multimedia content and presentation files.

