

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday congratulated Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his victory in the presidential election runoff in Turkey, saying it was a sign of the Turkish people's "valuable trust" in him.

In a message, Raisi expressed confidence that Erdogan's re-term will mark further strengthening of close cooperation between the two countries on the developments of the region and the Islamic world with the aim of bolstering peace and stability and development.

TEHRAN -- Chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow will visit Iran on Tuesday, according to director of Iranian Presidency's Office for public relations.

Mehdi Rahimi said major heads of state and foreign officials will visit Iran in coming weeks and months. In June 2022, Turkmenistan's President Serdar Berdimuhamedow, Gurbanguly's son, had visited Iran.

Viewpoint

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Erdogan Re-Elected for Another Five Years

ISTANBUL (NBC News) — Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, won re-election Sunday after seeing the strongest challenge to his 20-year rule.

Turkish public broadcaster TRT called the presidential election for the incumbent president.

State-run news agency Anadolu's vote count showed Erdoğan leading opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu 52.11% to 47.89% with 98.52% of the vote counted.

Erdogan's triumph in the Turkish Republic's centenary year comes after one of the most hotly contested presidential elections in recent times.

Voters went back to the polls for the runoff election after Erdoğan and Kılıcdaroglu each failed to secure more than 50% of the votes in the first round of voting on May 14.

Although Turkey is a NATO ally and it holds elections, the country of 84 million has kept close ties with Russia under Erdogan.

His AK Party has been in power since 2002. Erdoğan, 69, became prime minister the following year and began serving as president in 2014.

He had trailed in opinion polls that followed a campaign dominated by the fallout from the devastating earthquake this year and the country's economic turmoil. But he led the first round of voting and only narrowly fell short of outright victory.

The steep cost-of-living crisis dominated the agenda, along with a backlash against millions of Syrian refugees as both candidates sought to bolster their nationalist credentials ahead of the runoff.

Kılıcdaroglu has led the secular, center-left Republican People's Party, or CHP, since 2010. He had previously said he intended to repatriate refugees within two years by creating favorable conditions for their return, but he subsequently vowed to send all refugees home once he was elected president.

Erdoğan, meanwhile, courted and won the backing of the nationalist politician Sinan Ogan, the former academic who was backed for president by an anti-migrant party but eliminated after finishing third in the first round of voting.

On the campaign trail, Ogan

said he would consider sending migrants back by force if necessary.

Ahead of the first round, Erdoğan also increased wages and pensions, and subsidized electricity and gas bills in a bid to woo voters, while leading a divisive campaign that saw him accuse the opposition of being "drunkards" who colluded with "terrorists."

Turkey also held legislative elections on May 14, and Erdoğan's alliance of nationalist and Islamic parties won a majority in the 600-seat Parliament. As a result, some analysts suggested this would give him an advantage in the second round because voters were unlikely to want a splintered government.

Kılıcdaroglu, a soft-spoken 74-year-old, built a reputation as a bridge builder and recorded videos in his kitchen in a bid to talk to voters during the campaign.

His six-party Nation Alliance promised to dismantle the executive presidential system narrowly voted in by a 2017 referendum. Erdoğan has since centralized power in a 1,000-room palace on the edge of Ankara, and it is from there that Turkey's economic and security policies and its domestic and international affairs are decided.

Along with returning the country to a parliamentary democracy, Kılıcdaroglu and the alliance had promised to establish the independence of the judiciary and the central bank, institute checks and balances and reverse the democratic backsliding and crack-downs on free speech and dissent under Erdoğan.

The results will have myriad ramifications outside Turkey, which enjoys a strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Despite being a NATO member, the country has maintained close ties with Russia and blocked Sweden's membership in the Western military alliance.

Turkey boasts NATO's second largest armed forces after the U.S., it controls the crucial Bosphorus Strait and it is widely believed to host U.S. nuclear missiles on its soil.

Together with the UN, Turkey brokered a vital deal that has allowed Ukraine to ship grain through the Black Sea to parts of the world struggling with hunger.

Sultan Haitham in Tehran

Iran, Oman Take Ties to New Level



This combination of pictures shows Omani Sultan Haitham's meetings with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on Sunday.

TEHRAN -- Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said arrived in Tehran on Sunday for a two-day visit focusing on economic relations between the two neighbors.

Haitham met Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi after he was warmly welcomed by Vice-President Muhammad Mokhber at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport upon arrival.

Raisi also welcomed the Sultan of Oman and his accompanying delegation during a formal recep-

tion ceremony at the Saadabad cultural complex in northern Tehran.

They held private discussions and oversaw the signing of four cooperation documents in the fields of economy, investment and energy.

"Iran-Oman relations have reached the investment stage from the commercial stage. The common views and approach of the two countries for strength-

ening the regional convergence, along with the capacities and suitable fields for each other, can expand relations between the two countries in the bilateral and regional arenas," Raisi said.

The president listed the capacities of the two countries in industry, trade, communications, defense and security affairs, road and rail lines, maritime transport and transit, financial and monetary exchanges, and energy as

suitable areas for expanding cooperation. He touched on negotiations held between the two sides for joint investment, stressing the need to finalize the establishment of a joint investment fund.

Raisi also pointed to the common positions of the two countries on the issues related to Yemen and Palestine and appreciated the role of Oman and especially the Sultan "Haitham bin Tariq" in trying to achieve the rights of the Yemeni people as well as the Palestinian people and called for the serious continuation of this role.

Sultan Haitham's visit to Tehran marks a significant milestone in relations between the two regional allies, opening new avenues for closer diplomatic cooperation and increased dialogue.

Iran's president traveled to Muscat on a key visit last May, during which Iranian and Omani officials signed 12 cooperation documents and memorandums of understanding for the expansion of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The two-day visit by the Omani leader has been hailed by both sides as marking "a new chapter" in bilateral relations.

Jamal Razaghi, chairman of the Iranian side in the Omani-Iran Joint Business Council (OIJBC), said the Sultan of Oman's meetings

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Protests Hit Occupied Cities for 21st Week

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- For the 21st week in a row, tens of thousands have swarmed the streets in several cities throughout the occupied Palestinian territories in protest at Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right cabinet and its extremist policies.

The crowds thronged the streets of Tel Aviv and other cities, including Haifa and Beersheba, as well as dozens of other locations across the occupied territories.

The new protests came only days after the Knesset approved the regime's annual budget. Opposition figures have slammed Netanyahu's proposed budget as "outrageous," saying "it gives certain sectors perks and doesn't take the general population into consideration."

The rallies have been occurring every week since January, when Netanyahu announced his intention to push through with the so-called overhaul plan.

Faced with overwhelming public pressure, including the biggest protests ever seen across the occupied territories as well as several strikes, Netanyahu announced

a pause in the scheme on March 27 to supposedly enable talks on the reforms.

Last week, 280 leading economists warned in response to the budget announced by Netanyahu's far-right coalition that Israel is becoming a third world economy.

Details of this year's budget were revealed by the occupation regime in a meeting held in a tunnel underneath Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In their warning reported by Haaretz, the academics cited massive subsidies expected to go towards the ultra-Orthodox school system, as well as bigger stipends for full-time yeshiva students.

The current far-right cabinet is heavily influenced by extreme religious parties. Netanyahu is said to have agreed last year to boost public funding substantially for ultra-Orthodox institutions that don't teach core subjects such as maths and English, to the tune of billions of shekels a year.

According to Haaretz, concessions made by Netanyahu to build his far-right coalition include an

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China's C919 Makes Maiden Commercial Flight

BEIJING (AFP) -- China's first domestically produced passenger jet made its maiden commercial flight on Sunday, a milestone event in the nation's decades-long effort to compete with Western rivals in the air.

Beijing hopes the C919 commercial jetliner will challenge foreign models like the Boeing 737 MAX and the Airbus A320, though many of its parts are sourced from abroad.

Its first homegrown jetliner with mass commercial potential would also cut the country's reliance on foreign technology as ties with the West deteriorate.

"In the future, most passengers will be able to choose to travel by large, domestically produced aircraft," state broadcaster CCTV said.

China Eastern Airlines flight MU9191 from Shanghai "arrived smoothly" in Beijing just after 12:30 pm, around 40 minutes ahead of schedule, according to CCTV.

Footage showed passengers filing out of the plane and into the

terminal, before a few dozen staff and officials posed for photographs in a brief ceremony on the tarmac.

"(The flight) was extremely smooth, comfortable and memorable. I think I'll remember this fondly for some time to come," a male passenger told CCTV.

The broadcaster had aired footage of the plane rising into the skies above Shanghai Hongqiao Airport on Sunday morning, saying it had 130 passengers on board.

State media footage showed passengers gathering at the sun-drenched Shanghai airfield to admire the sleek white jet before embarking.

Passengers received red boarding passes and a sumptuous "themed meal" to commemorate the flight, CCTV reported.

Other footage showed passengers waving national flags and singing a patriotic song while a cake was being cut during the flight.

China has invested heavily in

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