

### Raisi Bought 12 Night Vision Choppers From Russia

TEHRAN – Iran purchased 15 helicopters from Russia during the administration of late President Ebrahim Raisi, an official with the IRCS said Sunday. Head of the Relief and Rescue Organization of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Babak Mahmoudi told IRNA that Iran purchased 12 rescue helicopters with night vision capability and three fire-fighting helicopters from Russia under President Raisi. The contract was signed with the officials of the company that produces specialized helicopters in late April, Mahmoudi added. He said Russia has announced that it can deliver four helicopters by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (ending on March 20, 2025). These helicopters, which are large and specialized, also have 6 small supporting helicopters, and the total price of these helicopters is about \$500 million, the IRCS official explained.

# Kayhan International



### Russia Says Backs Amicable Iran-Arab Relations

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russia's Special Envoy to the Middle East and North Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, says Moscow endorses the fostering of amicable relations between Iran and Persian Gulf countries, because of their shared regional presence and similar interests. Bogdanov stated that Moscow expects to restore ties between Bahrain and Iran based on mutually acceptable principles, just as Bahrain has good relations with Russia, noting that such principles include respect for the sovereignty of governments and a commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of countries.

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## New Iran-India Deal on Chabahar Revives Connectivity Hopes

By: Vincent Hooper\*

India and Iran have signed a 10-year deal allowing India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) to develop and manage parts of operations at the Iranian port of Chabahar, facilitating the transit of Indian goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Sarbananda Sonowal, India's Minister of Ports and Shipping, attended the signing ceremony in the Iranian capital earlier this month. Since 2016, IPGL has invested \$85 million in Chabahar, aiming to rival Chinese-funded Pakistani ports and boost regional trade.

Delays in the Chabahar-Zahedan railway have hindered progress, but the new agreement raises the expected investment to \$370 million, benefiting from a U.S. sanctions waiver obtained in 2018.

The Port of Chabahar, situated in southeastern Iran, holds immense strategic importance for India, Iran, and Afghanistan, acting as a linchpin in their economic and geopolitical aspirations. Despite the challenges posed by U.S. sanctions on Iran, the development of this port continues to be a focal point for these nations, underscoring their commitment to fostering regional connectivity and economic growth.

For India, Chabahar is a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing the geopolitical blockade posed by Pakistan. This direct route not only enhances India's trade and economic ties with Afghanistan but also with the broader Central Asian region. The significance of this cannot be overstated, as it allows India to rival China's growing influence in the region, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the development of the Gwadar Port in Pakistan.

Furthermore, Chabahar serves as a crucial conduit for India's energy security. With direct access to Iranian oil and potentially to Central Asian energy resources, the port helps diversify India's energy imports, reducing dependence on traditional routes that are more susceptible to geopolitical tensions.

For Iran, Chabahar is a beacon of economic potential, particularly for the underdeveloped southeastern region. The port's development aims to boost trade and attract investment, which is vital for Iran's economic resilience in the face of sanctions. Additionally, Chabahar is a pivotal link in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), enhancing Iran's role in global trade networks by connecting India with Russia and Europe through Iranian territory.

The port also offers Iran a strategic tool to mitigate the impacts of sanctions. By facilitating trade with regional partners and reducing reliance on routes vulnerable to sanctions enforcement, Chabahar enables Iran to sustain its economic activities and pursue development goals despite external pressures.

**Afghanistan's Lifeline**

For landlocked Afghanistan, Chabahar offers an alternative trade route that circumvents Pakistan's ports. This is a significant development, as it reduces transit costs and opens up new economic opportunities. Improved access to international markets via Chabahar can spur Afghanistan's economic development, facilitating exports and imports that are crucial for the country's growth.

Moreover, enhanced trade connectivity through Chabahar can contribute to regional stability by fostering economic interdependence and cooperation among Afghanistan, Iran, and India. This interconnectedness is vital for the overall stability and development of the region.

Chabahar is more than just a port; it is a symbol of regional integration and cooperation. It embodies the collective economic ambitions and geopolitical strategies of India, Iran, and Afghanistan. Despite the formidable challenge of U.S. sanctions, the commitment to developing Chabahar illustrates the participating countries' dedication to achieving economic resilience and self-sufficiency through alternative trade routes and partnerships.

**Navigating U.S. Sanctions**

While U.S. sanctions on Iran pose significant challenges, India has managed to negotiate waivers and special arrangements to continue the development of Chabahar. The port's strategic importance in promoting regional stability and development, coupled with its potential to counterbalance other strategic influences, underscores its critical role. The determination of India, Iran, and Afghanistan to push forward with Chabahar's development amidst these sanctions highlights their resolve to pursue their economic and geopolitical goals.

In conclusion, the Port of Chabahar stands as a testament to the interplay between economic aspirations and geopolitical strategies in South Asia and Central Asia. It demonstrates the involved countries' determination to foster connectivity and economic growth despite external pressures, making it a pivotal project in the region's future landscape and potential peacefulness.

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Courtesy: IRNA

## Operation Triggers Celebrations in Palestine, Lebanon Hamas Captures Zionist Troops, Targets Tel Aviv



A screen grab from footage released on May 26, 2024 by Al-Qassam Brigades shows military fatigue and rifle seized from Zionist forces during an operation by Palestinian resistance fighters in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp.

KHAN YOUNIS (Dispatches) -- Hamas said Palestinian fighters captured members of an Israeli force in an ambush inside the Gaza Strip on Saturday, sparking celebration by Palestinian and Lebanese people.

Abu Obaida, spokesman for the group's armed wing, Al-Qassam Brigades, said resistance fighters killed, wounded or captured members of the Israeli force during fighting in Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza.

He did not say how many had been abducted and provided no further information about their identities. He said more details would follow soon.

"Our fighters lured a Zionist force into an ambush inside a tunnel ... The fighters withdrew after they left all members of the force dead, wounded, and captured," Abu Obaida said in a recorded message broadcast by Al Jazeera early on Sunday.

Abu Obaida's message was fol-

lowed by a video released by Al-Qassam Brigades showing fighters pulling inside a tunnel a man who appeared to be unconscious. He was pulled alongside military gear.

The video separately showed three semi-automatic rifles and other military gear that Hamas said were taken from the captured Zionists.

People in the occupied West Bank and Lebanon took to the streets to celebrate the operation.

Celebrations took place at the Palestinian city of Dura in the southern West Bank, as well as the refugee camps of Ain al-Hilweh, Nahr el-Bared, el-Buss and Rashidieh in Lebanon.

Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement praised Hamas's "heroic" operation.

In a statement, the Ansarullah political bureau said the resistance fighters had made the Palestinian nation proud with their "bravery" and amazed the entire world with their "patience, steadfastness, and victories."

"This operation is one of the heroic operations that devastates the Israeli enemy and inflicts heavy losses upon them," it added.

"These operations come within the context of the natural and legitimate right to respond to the genocidal massacres in the Gaza Strip."

The comments by Abu Obaida came after weeks of renewed intense close-quarter combat across the Gaza Strip in recent weeks, according to Israeli and Palestinian media.

The Israeli military sent tanks and troops to Rafah and north Gaza in fresh attacks early in May.

The advances have been met by some of the fiercest resistance by Hamas and other Palestinian groups, especially in the Jabalia refugee camp.

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## Iran Begins Preparations for Snap Presidential Election

TEHRAN -- Iran on Sunday began the process of early presidential elections in late June just a week after president Ebrahim Raisi lost his life in a tragic helicopter crash in northwest of the country.

Interior minister Ahmad Vahidi issued a decree ordering governors of provinces and cities across Iran to set up election executive committees in their regions within the next three days.

The decree also ordered authorities to launch other programs mentioned in a timetable that had been earlier announced for the elections.

Early presidential elections are required under Article 131 of Iran's Constitution which stipulates that a new president should be elected by public votes within a maximum of 50 days from the day when a president dies or is incapacitated.

President Raisi, along with Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian, two senior local officials, a protection officer and

three flight crew members, were onboard a helicopter that crashed in mountainous regions near Iran's Varzeghan region on May 19 as they were returning from a dam inauguration service held on the border with Azerbaijan.

A council comprising of heads of three branches of the Iranian government held a meeting a day after the helicopter crash and agreed on June 28 as the date for early presidential elections in the country.

Iran's Elections Headquarters issued a first notice on Sunday announcing that candidates can register for the elections between May 30 and June 3.

Iran's Guardian Council, a key constitutional and religious supervision body responsible for health of elections, will decide on a list of candidates some two weeks before the votes.

Campaigning will begin on June 12 and will run until June 27, according to the timetable announced by the government.

## Fresh Pro-Palestine Protests Hit Cities Across Europe

BERLIN (Dispatches) -- Major European cities have seen fresh protests in solidarity with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, with demonstrators calling for an immediate ceasefire in the eighth month of Israel's genocidal war against the besieged territory.

Thousands of Germans took to the streets across the capital Berlin, where participants carried Palestinian flags and placards that read, "Free Palestine," and "Stop Genocide," among others.

"We are here today at these demonstrations, as at all demonstrations since the terrible genocide of Israel against the Palestinians, to support this protest," said Angela Niklaus, European candidate for the Socialist Equality Party.

"We are here because of the Palestine Protest because we think it's important to support those people," another protester said. "Palestine will never die."

The mass rally in the German capital was heavily policed, with about 200 officers deployed to rein it. Before the demonstration

began, law enforcement officials instructed participants on which slogans were permissible.

The central German city of Frankfurt was also the scene of protests as demonstrators gathered ahead of the European elections to demand reforms in EU policies.

The protesters called for more democracy, political accountability and an end to arms deliveries to Israel as well as other conflict zones across the world.

Voicing their opposition to Germany's arms exports, the demonstrators said, "We are in favor of Germany stopping immediately delivering weapons and taking up peace talks with all crisis areas, with Russia, Ukraine, Israel and Palestine and all other war zones in the world."

People also gathered outside Montmartre Sacré-Coeur, a Roman Catholic church, in Paris to protest against the Israeli war on Gaza.

Waving Palestinian flags, the demonstrators held banners and

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