



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Iran

Digest

November 2023

- **President Raisi attends OIC summit in Saudi Arabia**
- **President Raisi visits Tajikistan, attends the ECO Summit in Uzbekistan**
- **Commander of Iran's Quds Force writes public letter to Hamas**
- **Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee Meeting organised in Tehran**
- **Iran expands transit cooperation with Turkmenistan**



President Raisi attends OIC summit in Saudi Arabia

On 11 November, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi attended the 'Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit on Israeli Aggression against the Palestinian People' in Riyadh. It was the first visit by an Iranian president to Saudi Arabia in 11 years. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian told reporters ahead of the summit that it was the Iranian President who requested the [emergency meeting](#), and that Saudi Arabia acted cooperatively by heeding the request. At the summit, accused the United States of playing the "most destructive role" by arming Israel and obstructing ceasefire efforts at the UN Security Council. Raisi put forward [10 points proposal](#) to help the Palestinians, which included "end to the massacre of the people of Gaza and blind attacks on civilians," immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, lifting of the humanitarian blockade of Gaza, establishment of international court to prosecute and punish the criminal leaders of Israel and the US, and naming the day of the bombing of Arab Al-Ahli Hospital as the day of genocide in member countries' official calendars. On the side-lines, Raisi had a meeting Saudi crown prince [Mohammad Bin Salman](#), where they discussed bilateral relations as well as developments in the region, with a particular focus on Gaza. Raisi invited the crown prince to pay a visit to Iran.

President Raisi visits Tajikistan, attends the ECO Summit in Uzbekistan

On 8 November, President Raisi on the invitation of Tajik President Emomali Rahmon made a [one-day visit to Tajikistan](#) aimed at strengthening bilateral political, economic, and cultural ties. Noting that previous high level visits had given a boost to bilateral ties, he urged more steps to be taken in the field of culture, especially the development of the Persian language. He

stated that culture is a "lasting reservoir," which can protect society in case of cultural invasion. He also emphasized that the two countries have common views on regional issues such as restoration and peace and stability in Afghanistan. They also exchange views on security challenges posed by terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and cybercrime. Raisi left Dushanbe for Tashkent to attend the 16th summit of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO). In his address at the summit, Raisi expressed Iran's "unconditional support" for activities of the ECO, which he called as one of the most effective and advanced mechanism of [economic cooperation](#) in the region. He noted that at a time of change in the international system, "change must be aimed at boosting the discourse of justice and freedom from the system of domination and coercion. Multilateralism has now clearly lined up against unbridled unilateralism," he stated. On the sidelines, Raisi had meetings with his counterparts from Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Commander of Iran's Quds Force writes public letter to Hamas

On 16 November, the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Brigadier General [Esmail Ghaani](#) in a public letter addressed to Qassam Brigades commander Mohammed Deif argued that Iran led Resistance-axis will not allow Israel to defeat Hamas in Gaza. Ghaani wrote that "your brothers in the axis of al-Quds and the resistance are united with you, and they will not allow the enemy to reach its dirty goals in Gaza and Palestine." The resistance axis includes Iran, Syria and anti-Israeli groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere which have hit Israeli and US targets in recent weeks in solidarity with Gaza. He further noted that the 'Operation al-Aqsa Storm', term Iran uses to refer to the Hamas incursion into Israel on

7 October, caught Israel off guard and shattered the regime's myth of superiority in everything from military to intelligence power. "Palestine and the region after the al-Aqsa Storm will not be the same as before," Ghaani stated. Though Ghaani wrote similar [letters of support](#) during Hamas-Israel conflict in May 2021, the present letter came after reports emerged in international media that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had told Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran that Iran was not given warning about Hamas's military operation and therefore will not enter into a war with Israel on its behalf. Over the last two months, Iranian official standpoint has been that it supports the Palestinian cause as a centerpiece of its foreign policy, but it is [not involved in the escalation](#) of the conflict.

Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee Meeting organised in Tehran

On November 4, Tehran hosted the first [Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee meeting](#) since Taliban came to power in August 2021. Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar led the 30-member delegation, while on the Iranian side Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht and President Raisi's special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi led the discussions. They discussed the formation of joint working groups in fields such as trade, transit, transportation, customs and the environment. Later, on 7 November, Economic Adviser of the Iranian President's Special Envoy in Afghanistan Affairs Mohammad-Mehdi Javanmard-Ghassab in a meeting with Taliban's Minister of Commerce and Industry Nooruddin Azizi in Kabul noted that Iran has a 35 percent share in Afghanistan's import market. He further argued that the two sides need to take the necessary measures to increase the level of [trade up to US\\$10 billion per year](#). Azizi identified mining industry, agriculture and

transit as potential areas for expansion of economic ties. Subsequently, on 8 November, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash hosted Taliban's Minister of Civil Aviation and Transport Hamidullah Akhundzada for a meeting in Tehran with the agenda of expanding [bilateral transport cooperation](#). In addition to removing the obstacles to transportation at the border crossings, two sides also discussed the increase in flights and activation of international air corridors.

Iran expands transit cooperation with Turkmenistan

On 17 November, Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash travelled to Ashgabat to participate in a meeting of Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Commission. Bazrpash in his meeting with President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedow noted Turkmenistan's "special status" in advancing the [Iran-Rah Initiative](#). The initiative projects Iran as a route for facilitating neighboring countries' access to international waters. The two sides reached an agreement to increase the number of transit wagons from the Sarakhs border crossing to 600 wagons per day and from Incheh Borun crossing to 100 wagons. An agreement was also reached to launch flights from Mashhad to Ashgabat, or through other countries to Mashhad and then to Ashgabat. Other agreements include the contract signed by Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR) for the construction of electric power transmission by Iran through the bartering of gas valued at US\$200 million and an initial agreement for the export of US\$140 million in electric power equipment to Turkmenistan. At an exhibition by Iranian companies, Bazrpash noted that the bilateral trade is expected to reach US\$1.0 billion from current US\$500 million in the near future.