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By Cara Anna

Iran's president begins a rare visit to Africa 'to promote economic diplomacy'

Президент Ірану починає рідкісний візит до Африки «для просування економічної дипломатії»

Президент Ірану розпочав рідкісний візит до Африки, оскільки його країна, яка перебуває під жорсткими економічними санкціями США, прагне поглибити партнерство в усьому світі. Візит президента Ібрагіма Райсі до Кенії став першим візитом іранського лідера на африканський континент за понад десять років.

Очікується також, що він відвідає Уганду та Зімбабве та зустрінеться з тамтешніми президентами.

Африка є «континентом можливостей» і чудовою платформою для іранської продукції, заявив І. Райсі журналістам на брифінгу. Президент Кенії Вільям Руту назвав Іран «важливим стратегічним партнером» і «мотором глобальних інновацій». Він висловив зацікавленість у розширенні сільськогосподарського експорту Кенії до Ірану та Центральної Азії, і не лише чаю.

<https://apnews.com/article/kenya-iran-africa-president-visit-3ee4f376b66442cfe1c734a5a429aea2>



NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Iran's president has begun a rare visit to Africa as his country, which is under heavy U.S. economic sanctions, seeks to deepen partnerships around the world. President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Kenya on Wednesday is the first to the African continent by an Iranian leader in more than a decade. He is also expected to visit Uganda and Zimbabwe and meet with the presidents there.

Africa is a "continent of opportunities" and a great platform for Iranian products, Raisi told journalists in a briefing. He didn't take questions. "None of us is satisfied with the current volume of trade," he said.

Iran's leader specifically mentioned Africa's mineral resources and Iran's petrochemical experience, but the five memoranda of understanding signed on Wednesday by the Islamic Republic and Kenya appeared not to address either one. Instead, they addressed information, communication and technology; fisheries; animal health and livestock production and investment promotion.

Kenyan President William Ruto called Iran a "critical strategic partner" and "global innovation powerhouse." He expressed interest in expanding Kenya's agricultural exports to Iran and Central Asia well beyond tea.

Iran also intends to set up a manufacturing plant for Iranian vehicles in Kenya's port city of Mombasa, Ruto said,

Raisi's Africa visit is meant to "promote economic diplomacy, strengthen political relations with friendly and aligned countries, and diversify the export destinations," Iran's foreign ministry said in a statement upon his arrival.

Last month, Iran's leader made his first visit to Latin America, stopping in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua.

In March, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to re-establish diplomatic ties in a major diplomatic breakthrough.

Iran is in a growing standoff with Western nations over its nuclear program, which has made major advances in the five years since then-U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from an international agreement that restricted it. Trump also restored sanctions on Iran that have contributed to a severe economic crisis.

The U.S. last month accused Iran of providing Russia with materials to build a drone manufacturing plant as Moscow seeks weaponry for its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Iran has said it provided drones to Russia before the start of the war but not since.

Kenya is East Africa's economic hub and an ally of the U.S., with President Joe Biden's wife, Jill, visiting the country early this year. Last year, the U.S. and Kenya signed a memorandum of understanding on "strategic civil nuclear cooperation." Kenya has expressed interest in using nuclear power for energy production.

Under Ruto, Kenya is struggling with debt and rising cost of living, with more [protests](#) expected on Wednesday in the capital, Nairobi, and elsewhere.

Few details have been released about the Iranian leader's visit to Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, a U.S. ally on security matters, has previously voiced support for Iran's controversial nuclear program. During a 2010 visit by former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Museveni asserted that all sovereign countries had a right to pursue peaceful nuclear programs even as he urged the eradication of all nuclear arsenals.

Uganda is trying to set up a nuclear power plant that authorities this year said would be generating electricity by 2031. The plant, which is being developed with the technical support of the China National Nuclear Corporation, would exploit the East African country's substantial deposits of uranium.

Zimbabwe, like Iran, is under U.S. sanctions. A ministerial delegation from Zimbabwe visited Tehran early this year and agreed to deepen cooperation in areas including petroleum trade.

Associated Press writers Rodney Muhumuza in Kampala, Uganda, and Farai Mutsaka in Harare, Zimbabwe, contributed to this report.