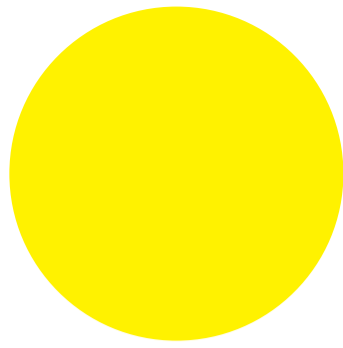


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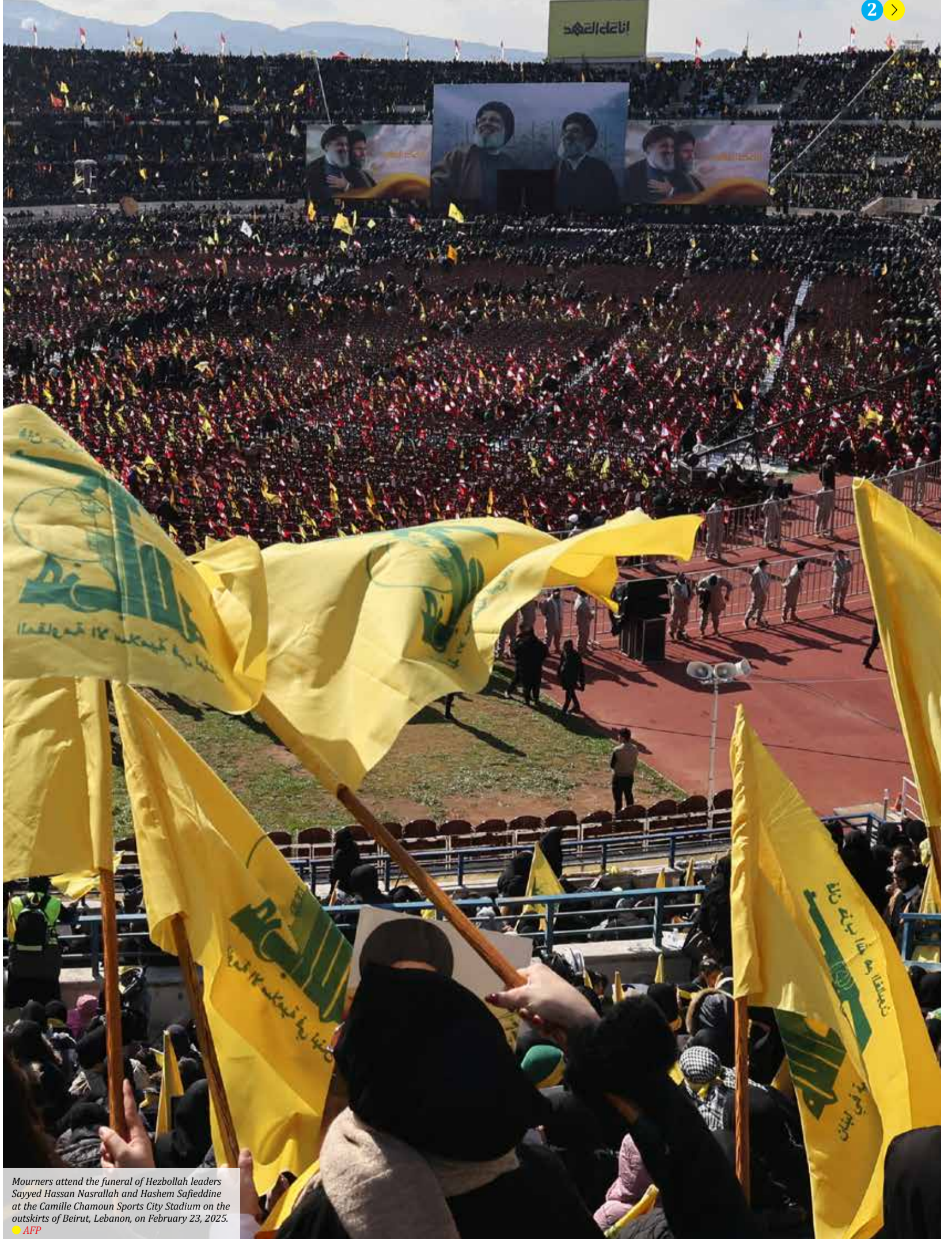
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Stupendous farewell to Nasrallah

'Resistance not over,' Hezbollah chief stresses

Leader: Enduring resistance against oppression, arrogance to continue

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Mourners attend the funeral of Hezbollah leaders Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine at the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium on the outskirts of Beirut, Lebanon, on February 23, 2025. **AFP**

Stupendous farewell to Nasrallah

'Resistance not over,' Hezbollah chief stresses

Leader: Enduring resistance against oppression, arrogance to continue



A woman holds the picture of Lebanon's former Hezbollah leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, as she attends his funeral procession in Beirut, Lebanon, on Feb. 23, 2025.
● BILAL HUSSEIN/AP

International Desk

Tens of thousands of people bid farewell to Hezbollah's slain leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah at a mass funeral in Beirut on Sunday, nearly five months after he was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike.

Carrying pictures of Nasrallah and Hezbollah flags, supporters from Lebanon and other countries in the region filled the 55,000-seat Camille Chamoun Sports City stadium in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Women wailed as a truck carrying the coffins of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine - Nasrallah's chosen successor assassinated in another Israeli air strike - slowly moved through the crowd, topped with two black turbans and draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag. Nasrallah was assassinated in Israel's bombardment of southern Beirut on September 27, 2024. Using 85 tons of explosives, Israeli jets leveled six residential buildings in Dahiyeh, following a week-long bombing campaign that hit many areas from southern Lebanon to Beirut.

As a founding member of Hezbollah in 1982, Nasrallah won renown around the Arab world in May 2000 when Israel ended its 22-year occupation of south Lebanon under relentless attacks by the group under his leadership.

'Resistance not over'

In a televised address to the ceremony, Nasrallah's successor Naim Qassem said Hezbollah would keep following his "path"

and rejected any control of "tyrant America" over Lebanon.

"The resistance is not over, the resistance is still present and ready" to face Israel, he said.

"We do not accept the tyrant America to control our country," Naim Qassem.

"You will not gain through politics what you failed to gain in war," he said.

Earlier this month, US Deputy Special Envoy for the Middle East Morgan Ortogus said the group was "defeated by Israel," declaring what she claimed as "the end of Hezbollah's reign of terror."

"Know this Americans, if... you try to pressure officials and Lebanon, you will not be able to achieve your goals", adding "officials in Lebanon know the balance of powers," Sheikh Qassem said. "Do not interpret our patience and wisdom in assessing priorities as weakness," he warned.

Emphasizing Nasrallah's contributions to the Palestinian cause, he affirmed, "Sayyed Nasrallah's contribution was great in reviving the Palestinian cause; we will preserve this trust and will continue to tread this path." He vowed that Hezbollah would remain steadfast, stressing, "We will continue Sayyed Nasrallah's path, even if our houses should be destroyed over our heads, even if we are all killed."

Ayatollah Khamenei's message

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in a message to the ceremony

warned the enemy that the enduring resistance against oppression and arrogance will continue until it achieves its ultimate objective.

The Leader described martyred Nasrallah as the leading commander of the resistance in the region, saying he is now at the "height of honor." Nasrallah's spirit and path will shine more gloriously each day, illuminating the way for his followers, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Nasrallah speeches were blasted as the mourners raised their fists in the air and chanted, "We are at your service, Nasrallah," and "We are loyal to the promise, Nasrallah." Men, women and children walked in the biting cold to reach the site of the ceremony, that was delayed for months over security concerns.

Since Saturday, roads into Beirut have been clogged with carloads of supporters travelling in from south and east Lebanon. Hezbollah's Al-Manar television said the movement deployed 25,000 members for crowd control. A security source said 4,000 troops and security personnel were on duty.

Israeli warplanes

As the funeral began at the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium, Israeli warplanes flew at a low altitude over Beirut in what minister of military affairs Israel Katz said was a "clear message" against anyone who threatens Israel.

The official National News Agency (NNA) also reported Israeli strikes in Lebanon's south, in-

cluding a location about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the border, but also in the east.

Israel's military claimed it had struck "sites containing rocket launchers and weapons" in those areas.

Israel has carried out multiple strikes in Lebanon since a November 27 cease-fire deal with Hezbollah ended more than a year of hostilities including two months of all-out war.

The funeral comes days after the deadline for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon's south, with Israeli troops pulling out from all but five locations.

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun asked parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, to represent him at the ceremony, while Prime Minister Nawaf Salam was to be represented by a minister.

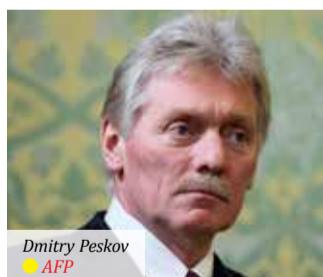
Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were in attendance, with representatives of Iraq's main factions also expected to come.

Araghchi, in a speech from Beirut, described the slain leaders as "two heroes of the resistance" and vowed that "the path of resistance will continue."

Before the funeral, Araghchi and other Iranian officials met Lebanon's President Aoun.

According to a statement from Aoun's office, he told the Iranian delegation that Lebanon was "tired of the war of others," and that it had "paid a heavy price for the Palestinian cause."

Kremlin says will 'never sell' captured Ukrainian territory



Dmitry Peskov
● AFP

The Kremlin ruled out any territorial concessions as part of a truce with Ukraine, saying that Russia would never "sell" territory it has seized in eastern Ukraine as part of any cease-fire deal.

"The people decided to join Russia a long time ago," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV, referring to votes in eastern Ukraine held amid the offensive, AFP reported. "No one will ever sell off these territories. That's the most important thing."

The Kremlin also hailed dialogue between Donald Trump

and Vladimir Putin - two "extraordinary" presidents - as "promising".

Trump broke with Western policy earlier this month by phoning Putin to discuss how to end the Ukraine conflict.

Top Russian and US officials then met in Saudi Arabia last week to discuss a "restoration" of ties and start a discussion on a possible Ukraine cease-fire - all without the involvement of Kiev or Europe.

"This is a dialogue between two extraordinary presidents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state TV on Sunday. "It is important that nothing prevents us from realizing the political will of the two heads of state."

Trump's overtures to Moscow have triggered alarm in Kiev and across Europe. But it is unclear whether his moves will be able to bring Moscow and Kiev closer to a truce.

Hamas raps Israel's procrastination in release of Palestinians

Palestinian resistance group Hamas condemned Israel's decision to postpone the release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners, saying its claim that the captives' handover ceremonies are "humiliating" was false and a pretext to evade Israel's obligations under the Gaza cease-fire agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision reflects a deliberate attempt to disrupt the agreement, represents a blatant violation of its terms, and shows the occupation's lack of reliability in implementing its obligations," Ezzat El Rashq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said in a statement on Sunday, Al Jazeera reported.

Israel delayed the release of 620 Palestinian prisoners

scheduled to be released on Saturday after Hamas upheld its side of the cease-fire deal by releasing six Israeli captives from Gaza, the last group of living captives to be freed under the cease-fire's first phase.

Netanyahu earlier on Sunday said freeing Palestinians would be delayed until Hamas ends its "humiliating ceremonies" while releasing Israeli captives, issuing a new demand not spelt out in the cease-fire agreement. Hamas accused Netanyahu of playing "dirty games to sabotage and undermine" the deal.

"The prisoner handover ceremony does not include any insult to them, but rather reflects the noble humane treatment of them", Hamas said, referring to the staging



● AFP

of the captives' release, as it called on mediating nations to ensure Israel sticks to the terms of the deal.

Since the cease-fire came into effect on January 19, Hamas has released 25 Israeli captives in high-profile handovers, with masked fighters parading the captives on stage. The cease-fire deal does not categorically define how Hamas and Israel should release the

Israeli captives and the Palestinian prisoners.

In Gaza and the occupied West Bank, Palestinian families waited for hours on Saturday for their loved ones to be released from Israeli prisons. The Palestinian Prisoner's Society advocacy group said Israel would free 620 inmates, most of them from Gaza who were taken into custody during the war.

Seven oil contracts signed on sidelines of Petrotech confab in Tehran

Economy Desk

Seven technology-oriented contracts were signed on the sidelines of a two-day Petrotech conference in Tehran between state-owned and knowledge-based companies. The Third Petrotech Conference commenced in Tehran on Sunday with the participation of key subsidiaries of Iran's Oil Ministry and senior oil industry officials, Shana reported.

On the first day, seven technology-related contracts in the oil industry were signed between state-owned and knowledge-based companies, which was inked by senior oil industry executives. Accordingly, a contract was signed between the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), and the Petro Pazhohan Nano Gostar.

The NISOC also signed another contract for the "Localization of 20-inch, 10.562-inch thick, 60X grade slotted casing pipes," which was signed with Ahvaz Pipe Mills Co. (APM). The National Iranian Gas Company also signed a contract for the provision of Methyl Diethanolamine (MDEA) with an oil

and petrochemical equipment supplier. The contract was finalized between the National Iranian Gas Company, and Petro Tolid Fahm Co.

MDEA has extensive application in the gas sweetening process in refining and petrochemical industries, aiming to separate hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide to prevent corrosion of gas transmission pipelines and preserve the thermal value of natural gas. The National Iranian Offshore Oil Company also signed two contracts. It first signed a contract with the manufacturing company, Turbin Machine Middle East, for the production and localization of 6 to 9 MW class Solar Taurus 70 turbine turbo generators.

Additionally, the National Iranian Offshore Oil Company signed another contract with a knowledge-based company for the design, construction, and commissioning of the Qeshm processing plant's industrial wastewater treatment system for discharge according to environmental standards.

The Arvandan Oil and Gas Company also clinched a contract for the provision of a device for measuring sulfur



The Third Petrotech Conference commenced in Tehran on February 23, 2025 with the participation of key subsidiaries of Iran's Oil Ministry and senior oil industry officials. **MOJTABA MOHAMMADQOLI/SHANA**

in crude oil with a knowledge-based company. The conference, held in collaboration with all key players in the oil industry's technology ecosystem, is supported by the Oil Ministry's Engineering,

Research, and Technology Department, along with the four main oil sector companies. During the event, also nine first-time-produced products will be unveiled. The conference features special-

ized panels on topics such as "Knowledge-Based Oil and Gas Production Enhancement," "Energy Economics and Smart Supply Chain Management of Petroleum Products," "Digital Transformation in the Nation-

al Iranian Gas Company," "Petrochemical Industry Research Achievements," and "The Hydrogen Economy: A Clean Fuel for the Future - Challenges and Opportunities," attended by senior industry officials.

Iraq rejects purported resumption of Kurdistan oil exports under US pressure



An oil field is seen in Kirkuk, Iraq, October 18, 2017. **ALAA AL-MARJANI/REUTERS**

Iraqi authorities have rejected reports that they have allowed a resumption of oil exports from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region because of threats by the US government. Farhad Alaaldin, a foreign affairs adviser to the Iraqi prime minister, said in a statement that Baghdad was facing no threats from Washington if oil exports were not re-

sumed from Kurdistan, Press TV reported. "Decisions related to the management of national resources are taken in accordance with Iraqi sovereignty and in a way that serves the country's economic interests," said Alaaldin. He insisted that Iraq's parliament had already passed a law establishing a price for the oil planned to be exported

from Kurdistan. The statement came after the Reuters claimed in a report that US President Donald Trump's administration has been piling pressure on Iraq to allow Kurdish oil exports to restart or face sanctions. The report said that the resumption of oil exports from Kurdistan, which will amount to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd),

would help to offset a potential fall in Iranian oil exports as a result of Washington's efforts to impose more sanctions on Iran. Iran is currently supplying up to 1.8 million bpd of oil to international markets despite a harsh regime of US sanctions that imposes heavy penalties on buyers. The sanctions started seven years ago during Trump's first term in office. Trump has announced a re-enactment of his so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran. Iranian authorities have downplayed the threats, saying the country has put in place policies to counter Washington's hostile actions targeting its energy sector.

Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines to resume Iran flights: IKA

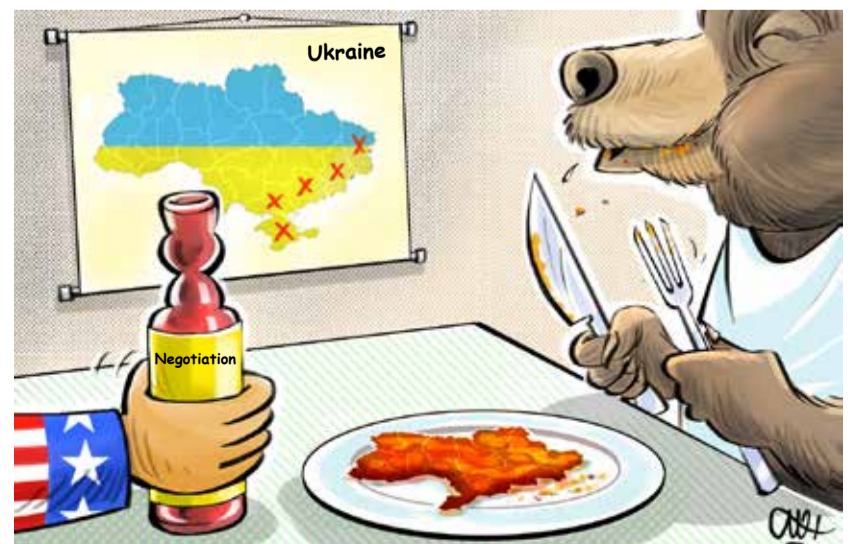


Economy Desk

The CEO of Imam Khomeini Airport (IKA) announced that flights by Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines will be resumed at the international airport. Saeed Chalandari said that according to the plans, the flights of the two airlines will resume on March 1 and 2, respectively, ISNA reported. The resumption of flights by the German flagship airline Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines to Iran comes amid an EU ban on flights by Iran's major

airlines to European airports. The IKA head reported a growth in flights and passengers over the past 11 months. He stated that during this period, 47,476 passenger flights were operated, marking a 4.8% increase compared to the same period last year. Regarding cargo flights, he said there has been a significant growth of over 69%. According to Chalandari, the total number of passengers transported during this period was 7,380,590, indicating a 5.3% rise compared to the same period last year.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran's steel output to surpass double domestic needs by next year

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Atabak said that by the end of the next Iranian year (to begin on March 20, 2025), the country's steel production capacity will surpass 50 million tons, building up more than double the domestic requirement. The minister hailed the country's rapid progress in developing strategic industries and mentioned steel as

one of these strategic sectors, Tasnim reported. Atabak pointed out that the industry has already hit the next Iranian year's target ahead of schedule, "with current production at 45 million tons effectively doubling the country's operational capacity." According to the minister, steel production will cross the threshold of 50 million tons by the close of the next year.



IRNA

Where is Trump headed with Russia?

ANALYSIS

The official launch of bilateral talks between the Trump administration's secretary of state and their Russian counterpart marks a pivotal shift in US-Russia relations and the future of the Ukraine war. Yet questions linger over how far the new American president can follow through on his campaign promises and strategic goals in this arena.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) and US President Donald Trump arrive for a group photo at the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan, on June 28, 2019.

● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP

Tuesday's meeting between the Russian and US foreign ministers in Riyadh signaled the formal end to a period of heightened tensions between Moscow and Washington. Post-negotiation remarks by Marco Rubio and Sergey Lavrov suggested both sides, at least publicly, are satisfied with the discussions and are open to ironing out their differences. Trump's approach underscores his preference for direct, personal diplomacy in international affairs—a tactic he leaned on during his first term. Meanwhile, European leaders and Kyiv officials have not hidden their unease over these talks, which they fear could sway the fate of the Ukraine war, NATO, and transatlantic relations.

On another front, experts are weighing the implications of recent Kremlin-White House negotiations for the standoff between Iran and the West over the nuclear issue. Some argue a thaw in US-Russia ties might ease tensions, while others warn Moscow could double down on self-interest, sacrificing broader alliances. Kremlin officials, however, have publicly denied this. Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, dismissed claims that Tehran-Moscow relations would be swayed by any US-Russia détente.

Trump's 2024 election win reignited debates over his second-term foreign policy, particularly his stance on Russia and Ukraine. During his campaign, Trump repeatedly vowed to "end the Ukraine war swiftly—even within 24 hours."

Trump's campaign rhetoric on Ukraine war

The US president has long claimed he

would broker peace through direct talks with Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Post-victory, Trump stated he had already spoken with Putin, adding that the Russian leader "wants the bloodshed to stop." This reflects Trump's trademark style of personal diplomacy, though analysts caution he may be overestimating Moscow's willingness to compromise—especially as Russian forces gain ground on the battlefield.

Putin's calculus and Trump's diplomatic challenges

A major obstacle to Trump's promise of a quick peace is Russia's current military momentum. Security analysts suggest the Kremlin is in no rush to settle, betting that Kyiv and its Western backers will eventually cave in to concessions favoring Moscow. Moreover, Russia's economy—outperforming 2024 forecasts despite Western sanctions—has strengthened Putin's negotiating hand. Trump, meanwhile, faces pushback from Congress and US security agencies wary of cozying up to Moscow, potentially tying his hands in striking a rapid deal.

Trump's sanctions and tariffs playbook

Economic pressure remains Trump's go-to tool. He has threatened to slap heavy sanctions and tariffs on all Russian goods if Moscow resists talks, warning, "If we don't make a 'deal,' and soon, I have no other choice but to put high levels of Taxes, Tariffs, and Sanctions on anything being sold by Russia to the United States, and various other participating countries," Trump said.

Sanctions against Russia are nothing new

for Trump. During his first term, he signed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in 2017, targeting Russia, Iran, and North Korea. In April 2018, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on seven Russian citizens and 12 companies owned by them, 17 senior Russian government officials, and a state-owned arms company. These sanctions were implemented with the claim of countering Russia's disruptive activities around the world.

Conflicting positions of Trump's national security team

Trump's national security advisors are sharply divided over Russia and the Ukraine war. For his second term, Trump has appointed individuals to key security roles that reflect a mix of ideological approaches to US foreign policy. This diversity of perspectives could spark internal debates and slow down decision-making. While some administration officials push for ramping up pressure on Russia, others advocate dialing back US commitments in Ukraine to focus on emerging threats, particularly China. These clashing priorities risk producing contradictory policies and a lack of coordination toward Moscow and Kyiv.

Key figures shaping the administration's Ukraine strategy—with notably divergent views—include:

– **Keith Kellogg, Trump's Special Envoy for Ukraine:** A vocal advocate for tightening sanctions against Russia, Kellogg insists the administration is "ready to turn up the heat" to force Moscow to the negotiating table. He claims current sanctions enforcement is "at a 3 out of 10," leaving

"plenty of room to crank it up."

– **JD Vance, Vice President:** Vance sees China as the "primary threat" and has called for winding down weapons shipments to Ukraine to refocus on Beijing. This stance could pave the way for reduced U.S. military aid to Kyiv and pressure on Ukraine to cut a peace deal with Russia.

– **Michael Waltz, National Security Advisor:** Initially supportive of boosting military aid to Ukraine, Waltz recently argued that such support should be "reexamined" to free up resources for the Indo-Pacific.

– **Marco Rubio, Secretary of State:** Once a neoconservative hawk, Rubio has shifted gears, now urging a pivot toward countering China. He notably voted against a recent military aid package for Ukraine.

Diplomacy or pressure?

With such contrasting voices at the table, Trump's second-term policy toward Russia and Ukraine may blend diplomacy with economic and military pressure. Trump has vowed to "end the Ukraine war quickly" and claims he is already "in talks" with Putin. Analysts outline three potential paths:

1. Negotiating a peace deal:

– **Direct Diplomacy:** Trump could lean on his rapport with Putin to broker a deal, possibly offering sanctions relief or security guarantees in exchange for a Russian cease-fire.

– **Leveraging China:** Bringing Beijing into negotiations to pressure Moscow—though US-China tensions could throw a wrench in this approach.

2. Economic and military pressures:

– **Economic sanctions:** If talks stall, Trump might double down on sanctions, targeting Russia's oil exports and freezing assets of Kremlin-linked entities.

– **Military aid to Ukraine:** Bolstering Kyiv with advanced weapons and training could keep Russia on the back foot while sanctions bite.

3. Pivoting to China:

Some advisors urge Washington to "cut loose" from Ukraine and focus squarely on countering Beijing—a move that would likely slash military and financial aid to Kyiv.

Ultimately, analysts predict Trump's strategy will mix diplomatic outreach with calibrated pressure. Its success hinges on Moscow's willingness to negotiate, reactions from US allies, and the battlefield dynamics in Ukraine. In other words, the success of Trump's policy depends on whether he can adopt a balanced approach that is based on geopolitical realities and aligned with the domestic environment and the US' international partners.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Trump's current national security team reflects ideological diversity, signaling competing visions for handling Russia and Ukraine. As his administration walks this tightrope, the world watches to see whether personal diplomacy can break the deadlock—or if old tensions will resurface.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (2nd-L) meets with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud (C-L), and Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov (R) at Diriyah Palace in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on February 18, 2025.

● EVELYN NOCKSTEIN/AP

Kyiv victim of Trump's avarice for rare minerals

OPINION

US President Donald Trump's proposal to acquire nearly half of Ukraine's rare earth minerals in exchange for continued security assistance stems from the intensifying US-China rivalry over future technologies, which could complicate the peace process in Ukraine. However, experts believe that not even this proposal would reduce the West's dependence on Beijing.

Economic, strategic battle over Ukraine's riches

In recent years, Ukraine has become a battleground not just for political and military conflicts but also for control of its mineral wealth, which could reshape global economic power dynamics.

Last week, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent formally offered a deal to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, under which the United States would acquire 50% of Ukraine's mineral rights worth hundreds of millions of dollars. However, Kyiv immediately rejected the proposal as Zelenskyy deemed it unfair. He emphasized the need for a long-term economic partnership tied to military and European security commitments.

Some experts view this deal as more than an economic agreement — it is a strategic move by Washington to secure rare earth minerals crucial for modern technology. The US believes that controlling these minerals could grant a nation dominance in advanced technologies. Thus, it is unsurprising that Trump is leveraging Ukraine's political crisis to secure these resources.

However, Kyiv, despite its need for military and economic support, is wary of relinquishing its strategic wealth without winning proper concessions. President Zelenskyy insists

of rare and critical minerals essential for energy, defense, aerospace, and other industries. Among these are lithium, graphite, uranium, gallium, titanium, beryllium, and more. Ukraine holds significant reserves of 20 minerals classified as strategic or critical globally. For example, Ukraine's estimated lithium reserves amount to 500,000 tons, a key component in batteries and critical for electric vehicles.

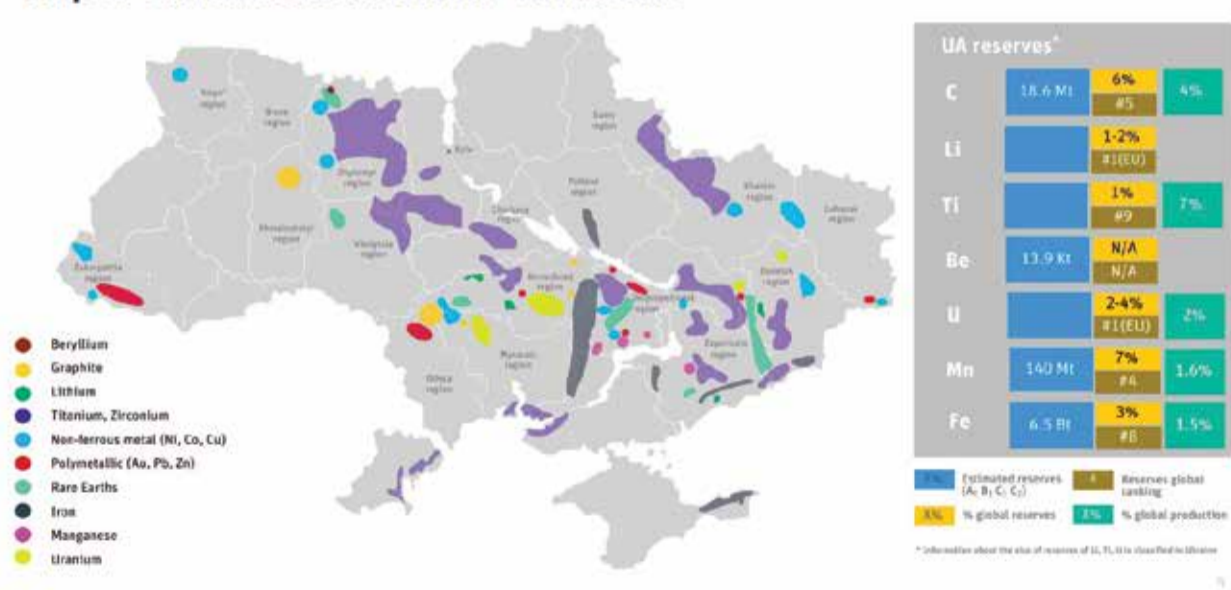
Ukraine is currently not extracting lithium, but successful exploitation of its reserves could make it one of Europe's largest suppliers. Ukraine's graphite reserves rank among the top five globally, with current production from six rich sites at around 5,500 tons. Ukraine's total reserves of graphite, a vital material for batteries and nuclear reactors, are estimated at 13.7 million tons.

Ukraine's list of rare minerals also includes beryllium, the lightest metal on earth, which is extremely rare and highly valued for the aerospace, defense, medical, communications, transportation, and nuclear energy industries. This metal is extracted in only a few countries, with the US, Kazakhstan, China, and Ukraine being the most significant producers. Ukraine's beryllium oxide (BeO) reserves are estimated at 15.3 million tons, potentially meeting global demand for 40 years.



The map shows the deposits of Ukraine's rare earth elements and other critical raw materials (CRM).
● UKRAINIAN GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Map of Critical Raw Materials of Ukraine



that any agreement over natural resources must be part of a long-term partnership, including explicit security commitments from the US and its European allies. Nevertheless, the US has yet to show a willingness to make such concessions, leaving the negotiations complicated and setting the stage for all possibilities.

As the war continues and rare metals become increasingly important for the global economy, this deal remains one of the key issues on the Ukraine-US agenda; Will Kyiv succeed in imposing its conditions, or will the US force it to accept Trump's terms?

Ukraine's rare metal map

Ukraine boasts abundant reserves

On the other hand, Ukraine has the largest uranium reserves in Europe and is among the top 10 producers of this metal, extracting it from three mines in the Kropyvnytskyi region. Uranium is considered one of the most efficient minerals for producing low-carbon energy, as one kilogram of it can generate energy equivalent to 3,000 tons of coal.

Ukraine is also the fifth-largest producer of gallium in the world, a rare and non-toxic metal that replaces mercury and has unique physical properties, making it highly valued for its ability to convert electricity into light and vice versa. Gallium is increasingly important for the production of iron magnets for wind

turbines and solar panels, and experiments are being conducted to use it in hybrid batteries instead of lithium-ion batteries. The US has recently banned gallium imports from China, and Western countries are looking for alternative suppliers, which could make Ukraine an attractive option for European markets.

Russian Army's control over minerals

Ukraine had planned to expand the extraction of rare minerals in 2021 through a package of tax breaks for foreign investors, but the Russian attack disrupted all plans. More than half of Ukraine's rare earth reserves are currently under Russian control,

in addition to the Crimean peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014.

The value of mineral resources in Russian-controlled areas is estimated to be over £6 trillion — or \$7.4 trillion. The value of minerals in the Crimean peninsula alone is estimated to be around £165 billion — or \$204.4 billion.

Any extraction of rare minerals in Ukraine is expected to face challenges due to the Russian military presence in these areas, which could make corporate investments highly risky. In fact, although Ukraine's rare earth reserves are estimated to be worth \$15 trillion, more than half of them are in areas under Russian control, making their extraction difficult.

Beijing's continued dominance

The US is seeking to secure the supply of these precious metals to enhance its global position. The country is the second-largest producer of rare minerals after China. However, the US imports around \$1.5 billion worth of rare earth minerals, including lithium, graphite, zirconium, and titanium.

According to experts, even if

Ukraine's mineral resources prove to be economically viable and Kyiv reaches an agreement with Washington, significant problems will remain, as the US still needs to create a value chain.

For various reasons, Western mining companies, especially American ones, have been unable to create a global business in the rare mineral sector due to environmental and processing challenges, price fluctuations, and intense competition with China.

Extracting minerals is relatively easy, but processing raw materials is extremely difficult and challenging for the West. According to a Bloomberg report, China controls around 60% of refined reserves and 90% of separation and refining capacity. However, Ukraine, despite being one of the top 10 producers of two minerals containing titanium, which are ilmenite and rutile, does not have the grade of titanium required by the US defense industry. Moreover, it lacks the capacity to produce titanium sponges used in aircraft engines and other defense applications.

The article first appeared in Persian on Eghtesad Moaser.



A mining haul truck transports a load at an ilmenite open pit mine in a canyon in the central region of Kirovohrad, Ukraine, on February 12, 2025.
● AP



AFC U20 Asian Cup: Shootout heartbreak sends Iran packing

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a first AFC U20 Asian Cup trophy since 1976 came to an end following a last-eight shootout defeat against Japan in Shenzhen, China, on Sunday. The quarterfinal setback also saw Hossein Abdi's boys miss out on a place in September's FIFA U20 World Cup in Chile.

Having made a clean sweep of three victories, including a 2-1 beating of defending champion Uzbekistan, to win Group C, Iran started right on the front foot against the Blue Samurai – runner-up in Group D – and took an early lead through Reza Ghandipour, who squeezed the ball into bottom corner five minutes into the game.

However, Japan – semifinalist in the past two editions and champion in 2016 – fought back to restore parity on the hour

mark, when Kosei Ogura's tame effort from outside the box found the back of the net.

Both sides had opportunities to score a second goal, with Japan coming close in the closing stages of normal time, before Iran pushed for the winner in the second half of extra time.

Iran got off to dreadful start in the shootout as Erfan Darivsh-Aali hit the crossbar before Pouria Shahrabadi's effort went wide, while Yotaro Nakajima and Rento Takaoka converted from the spot.

Goalkeeper Arsha Shakouri gave Iran a lifeline as he took on the third attempt and scored and then denied Niko Takahashi.

Shakouri's heroics, however, did little to turn the tide for Iran as Rion Ichihara's successful effort sent the Japanese into Wednesday's semifinal against Australia.

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Persepolis coach Kartal rues narrow squad after Iralco stalemate

Sports Desk

Persepolis head coach Ismail Kartal complained about the lack of depth in his squad after the Tehran Reds were held to a 1-1 draw at Iralco in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Saturday.

Aref Haji-Eidi headed home Amin Jahankohan's corner kick in the 67th minute – the ninth set-piece goal conceded by Persepolis this season – before Ali Alipour secured a point for the visitors with his eighth goal of the campaign two minutes from normal time.

The stalemate extended the Reds' winless run to three games in all competitions, with the club managing a single win in six outings since Kartal took over on the bench in late January.

With Persepolis skipper Omid A'alishah joining Oston Urunov, Vahid Amiri, and Saeid Sadeqi in the injury list before the game, Farshad Ahmadzadeh was the only recognized winger available for selection, as Kartal opted for Yassin Salmani and Mohammad Khodabandelou on the flanks.

"We are missing five or six players with injury. I had to pick midfielders, who play as a number six or eight, for the wide areas. I'm sure an established winger would have done better with carrying the ball into box and feeding the strikers," Kartal said after the game.

"There is nothing we can do about the situation and we'll have to continue with the players at our disposal until the end of the season. We'll stick with our philosophy and keep fighting for the title.

"I knew Persepolis is vulnerable on set pieces before I took the job, though today's goal was the first we have conceded on corner-kicks since I came here. As I said, we are short of players in certain positions, and cannot cope with the physical burden of playing

every four or five days," added the former Fenerbahce boss. Saturday's draw, coupled with victories for Tractor and Sepahan, left Persepolis drifting further away from the top two in the table.

The defending champion is now third with 38 points – trailing Tractor and Sepahan by six and five points respectively – with 10 games remaining.

With Persepolis having already crashed out of the AFC Champions League Elite and the Iranian Hazfi Cup within the past 10 days, the Reds faithful fear the end of an era for their team's golden, yet ageing, generation – a group which have dominated the Iranian top flight with seven titles in eight years.

"A lot of things will definitely have to change at the club when the right time comes," said Kartal, hinting at a massive shakeup in the squad in the summer transfer window.

Two-horse race

Elsewhere on Saturday, Croatian winter signing Tractor Domagoj Drozdek bagged his second goal in four league games to help Tractor edge out Khaybar 1-0 in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium.

The narrow victory was enough to send Tractor back on top the league table 44 points, while Khaybar remained 12th in the 16-team table with 20 points – four clear of the relegation zone. Sepahan had temporarily taken the lead in the title race on Friday, thanks to a 4-1 hammering of Zob Ahan at home in the Isfahan Derby.

French striker Aboubakar Kamara and Javad Aqaipour found the net either side of a Sobhan Khaqani's

equalizer for the visiting side, before Reza Asadi and Mahdi Limouchi scored a couple of late goals to seal an emphatic triumph for Sepahan at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium.

Meanwhile, Esteghlal – fresh from progress to the knockout phase in the Asian elite clubs' competition – defeated relegation struggler Nassaji Mazandaran 1-0 at the Azadi Stadium.

Alireza Koushki, who stole the show with a goal and an assist in a 2-0 win against Al Rayyan last time out, built on the performance to head home the decisive goal in the 56th minute – five minutes after Blues captain and goalkeeper Seyyed Hossein Hosseini had kept out Mo Eisa's spot-kick.

Esteghlal moved up to seventh with 26 points, with Nassaji remaining second from bottom with 16 points. In Ahvaz, Mohammad Nemat, Mohammadreza Soleimani, and Ali-Asghar A'arabi were on the scoresheet as Foolad Khuzestan defeated Havadar 3-0 on Friday.

Foolad sits fourth in the table – equal on points with Persepolis – while a 12th defeat of the campaign kept Havadar rock bottom with 12 points. Malavan FC walked away with a 1-0 victory at Shams Azar on Friday – courtesy of a Qaem Eslamikhah's 50th-minute spot-kick – to end a nine-game winless streak in the league.

On Thursday, Golgozar Sirjan was held to a goalless draw at home by Mes Rafsanjan, while goals from Ali Khodadai, Victor Matheus, and Hadi Habibinejad led Chadormalou to an impressive 3-0 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan.



Iranian Hazfi Cup:

Sepahan draws Malavan, Esteghlal to face Paykan in quarters

Sports Desk

Defending champion Sepahan will have to visit Malavan for the their last-eight clash in the Iranian Hazfi Cup.

Eight teams, including three second-tier clubs, learned their fate for the remainder of the Iranian domestic cup competition – the Memorial of Khorramshahr Liberation – during Sunday's draw in Tehran. Trailing Tractor by a single point on top of the Iranian top-flight table, Sepahan defeated Persepolis 3-2 in extra time in a thrilling last-16 tie on Feb. 12 to remain on course for a league and cup double.

Meanwhile, league struggler Nassaji Mazandaran was drawn against

Golgozar Sirjan at home, with the winner taking on Sepahan or Malavan.

Seven-time champion Esteghlal – seventh in the league table – will continue its only realistic bid for silverware this season when hosting second division leader Paykan at Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The Tehran Blues will fancy an easy route to the final showpiece in Kerman as a last-eight win will see them face another second-tier opposition in San'at Naft Abadan or Shahrdari Nowshahr – which will square off in Abadan – in the semifinals.

The quarterfinal fixtures will be played in the last week of April, with the exact date yet to be confirmed by the Iranian League Organization.



Nature, history intertwine in Hasanlu village

The historical villages of West Azarbaijan are masterpieces of traditional architecture and a manifestation of Iranian art, narrating the tumultuous history of this land. They encompass countless untold stories that, if they could speak, would undoubtedly astonish everyone. These villages have endured through the ages, preserving the history of this region within their hearts. They not only showcase ancient architecture but also feature valuable historical attractions. Many of these villages are treasures of structures, mounds, and international natural attractions, their names well-known around the world, welcoming thousands of foreign and domestic tourists each year.

Neglect in promotion

Despite West Azarbaijan Province's unique historical villages, there has been negligence in identifying and promoting these sites for global recognition, similar to other historical villages in the country. The potential could have invigorated the tourism industry in this land, rich in a colorful spectrum of ethnicities and religions, playing a significant role in enhancing the region's economic balance.

UNESCO world heritage proposal

After many years, this year, the historical villages of Hasanlu in Naqadeh, Barun in Maku, and Qareh Kelisa in Chaldoran have been proposed for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Among them, Hasanlu village stands out for its exceptional characteristics and may meet the necessary criteria after evaluations to secure a place on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Significance of Hasanlu Hill

Hasanlu village is one of the historical villages in Naqadeh, located 84 kilometers from Urmia. This village boasts lush nature, and one of its unique historical attractions, which draws both domestic and foreign tourists each year, is the "Hasanlu Hill." This site dates back several thousand years and reflects the rich history of the village.

The historical site is a significant tourism destination with an impressive history, considered one of the most important archaeological sites in the country, with approximately eight thousand years of history. Thousands of precious cultural and historical artifacts, such as pottery, bronze and copper objects, jewelry, weapons, and decorative items, have been discovered through excavations at this site.

Archaeological findings

The Hasanlu Hill is circular in shape, with a diameter of 280 meters, situated in the Hasanlu village and surrounded by many other mounds. According to archaeological studies, this mound has been inhabited during ten different periods, with the oldest period of settlement dating back to

the 6th to 3rd millennium BCE. Approximately 14 archaeological hills have been identified around the Hasanlu Hill, indicating prosperity, a suitable climate, and the cultural development of ancient peoples in this region. Additionally, the Hasanlu National Heritage Site was established in 2013 near the historical hill.

Early inhabitants

The early inhabitants of the Hasanlu Hill were likely a group known as the Man-naea, who left behind a vast and brilliant civilization, with their settlement located in the southern lands of Lake Urmia. The Hasanlu Castle is another unique monument of this historic village; it is one of the most famous castles, dating back to the 1st millennium BCE, and was used for protection. However, much of it collapsed during that same millennium due to enemy invasions and a fire. Many bodies of the castle's inhabitants were later found by archaeologists, leading to various stories about their fate.

Architecture

This castle consists of a two-story building that combines religious and military architecture and was built robustly on the Hasanlu Hill. Excavations were conducted before the Islamic Revolution, during which various parts of the castle were uncovered. The different sections of the Hasanlu Castle include numerous rooms, a hall, defensive walls, and other areas. The castle was established in the fourth century as a residential fortress and features a very large central courtyard measuring 29 by 19 meters, with this polygonal courtyard not having equal lengths and widths.

Golden Bowl of Hasanlu

What made Hasanlu village famous is the most renowned artifact unearthed from the historic Hasanlu Hill, the Golden Bowl of Hasanlu, which dates back three thousand years. This discovery is considered one of the most significant scientific findings in the history of archaeology in Iran and the world and is among the rarest historical, religious, and artistic artifacts from ancient times. The 3,200-year-old bowl is an astonishing and remarkable piece that showcases the highly sophisticated and brilliant craftsmanship in this region. When the American team led by Robert Dyson excavated this area, they could hardly believe they had found such a treasure, and according to witnesses, he was filled with overwhelming excitement upon seeing it.

The Golden Bowl of Hasanlu was discovered in the rubble of a burnt building on the Hasanlu Castle in 1957, a place where time seemed to have stopped. A large fire had occurred here in 900 BCE, burying many bodies and objects beneath layers of ash and debris.

Hasanlu Wetland

The Hasanlu Wetland is an-

other beauty of the Hasanlu village. This wetland, which is a popular destination for recreational and nature tourism, covers an area of approximately 1,100 hectares and is located at an elevation of 1,308 meters above sea level. In recent years, a dam has been constructed on this wetland, slightly altering its functionality and creating a new lake ecosystem. Besides the dam, water from the wetland is also used for agriculture; the surrounding pastures serve as grazing grounds for livestock and a destination for local herders.

Biodiversity and tourism

One reason the Hasanlu Wetland is recognized as a tourism attraction in West Azarbaijan Province and has become a popular spot for nature and recreational tours is the diversity of plant species and the birds that inhabit this wetland.

Prospects for UNESCO recognition

The director of the Hasanlu Hill National Heritage Site Hassan Shiri told IRNA that among the three proposed villages, Hasanlu has a strong chance of being included in the UNESCO World Heritage List due to its most distinguished historical artifact, the Hasanlu Hill, which is also awaiting global registration, as well as other historical hills and international natural attractions.

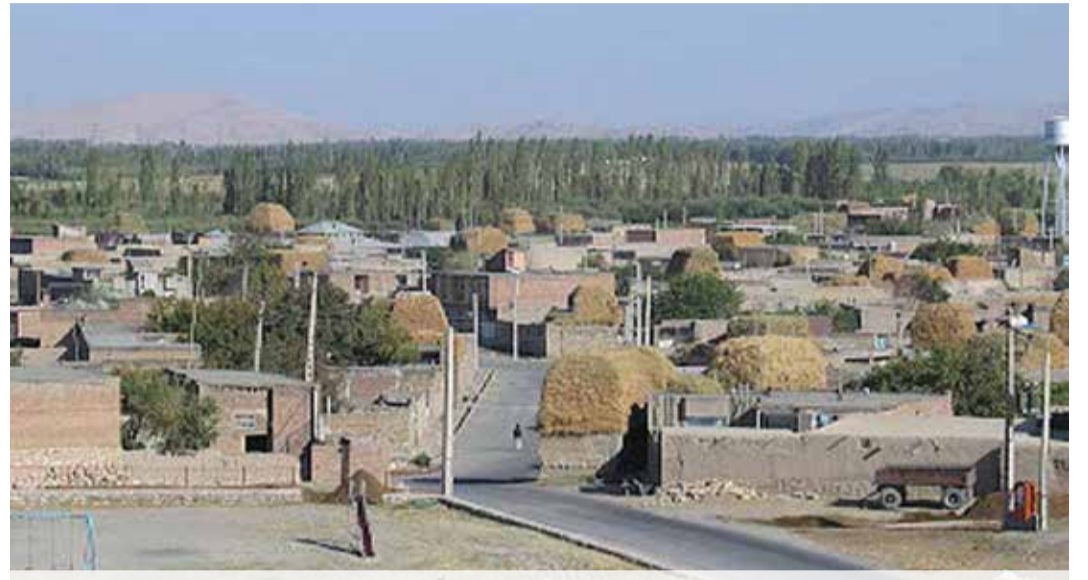
Cultural and economic benefits

Davoud Farazi, the deputy head of West Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, referred to the visit of the proposed villages in West Azarbaijan Province and the assessment by national experts for global registration. He stated that the global registration process for these villages, including Hasanlu, must be followed, and experts will provide their evaluations based on the established criteria before the registration process can begin.

Infrastructure improvements

Farazi announced that the Cultural Heritage Organization will implement necessary infrastructure improvements and restore the traditional appearance of the village after the global registration of this village, or all three villages, is confirmed.

He emphasized that the global recognition of a village in West Azarbaijan Province would not only be a point of pride for the province but also provide significant cultural and economic benefits to the region. Farazi noted that once the infrastructure is completed, the private sector will invest in the village and its neighboring areas, establishing eco-lodges. West Azarbaijan Province features 49 targeted tourism villages, each boasting historical and natural attractions as well as unique characteristics.



Hasanlu village
● uspace.ir



Hasanlu Hill
● borna.news



Golden Bowl of Hasanlu
● IRIB



Hasanlu Wetland
● MEHR

Fajr Visual Arts Festival celebrates unity, creativity over competition

Winners announced

Arts & Culture Desk

The 17th Fajr Visual Arts Festival concluded on February 22 with a closing ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall, marking the end of a restructured, non-competitive edition aimed at fostering artistic unity.

The event was attended by prominent figures, including Nadereh Rezaei, Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Zahra Behrouz-Azar, and artists and cultural officials, Tasnim reported.

This year's festival, which ran simultaneously in Tehran and 31 provincial centers, featured exhibitions under the theme 'My Homeland'. A symbolic performance by artist Bahareh Jahandooost opened the evening, honoring the ancient cypress tree, the festival's emblem.

Festival Secretary General Bahram Kalhornia highlighted the event's non-competitive nature, focusing on collaboration over rivalry.

"We aimed to cultivate friendship, diversity of thought, and a sense of unity," he said, emphasizing the importance of community over individual accolades.

The ceremony honored outstanding women artists, with Fatemeh Rah-

manian (Fars), Maryam Kashi (South Khorasan), Tayebeh Zahedi (Ilam), and Farzaneh Nassiri (Zanjan) receiving recognition in the 'My Homeland' section.

Top artistic directors were also awarded, including Abouzar Norouzi Nejad (Hormozgan), Fatemeh Parinejad (Mazandaran), and Mohammad Javad Zare (Fars).

Also, Rouzbeh Habibian from Kermanshah, Fatemeh Ebrahimi from Bushehr, Behdad Najafi Asadollahi from Tehran, Hamid Behjat from West Azarbaijan, Mehdi Jafari from Kerman, and Ali Soltani from Qom were honored as outstanding artistic directors deserving of special commendation. In the Visual Arts Contributors section, Ali Bakhtiari was recognized for his podcast, and Ruyin Pakbaz for authorship. Other honorees included Mohammad Taghi Faramarzi (translation), Zirzamin Dastan Gallery, and Nazar Publishing.

A moment of international solidarity was marked by Baha Abdul-Hussein Majid from Iraq's Visual Arts Association, who praised the festival's inclusivity and called for cultural exchange among neighboring nations.

The evening also celebrated master artists in various disciplines, including Masoud Zende-Rouh Kermani



(photography), Mohammadreza Zabihollahzadeh (sculpture), Ali Rezaeian (calligraphy), Fathollah Ziarati (ceramics), and

Ahmad Vakili (painting). Rezaei closed the event, expressing gratitude to the organizers and partic-

ipants. "This festival sets the stage for future achievements in Iran's vibrant visual arts scene," she said.

Iran-Indonesia Film Week underway in Jakarta celebrating 75 years of diplomatic ties

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iran-Indonesia Film Week, being held under the theme 'Peace and Friendship,' is underway in Jakarta, marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

The five-day event, running through February 25, will showcase four Iranian and four Indonesian films across cultural centers, universities, and schools in Jakarta, Mehr News Agency reported.

Featured Iranian films include the dramas 'In the Arms of the Tree' and 'Romanticism of Emad and Tooba', alongside the animated titles 'Loupetou' and 'Dolphin Boy'.

The opening ceremony was attended by Indonesia's Minister of Culture, Fadli Zon, Iran's Ambassador to Indonesia, Mohammad Boroujerdi, and Hamidreza Jafarian, head of Iran's Soureh Cinema Organization. The event is organized in collaboration with Indonesia's Ministry of Culture, Iran's Cultural Counselor in Indonesia, and the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.



Speaking at the inauguration, Iran's Cultural Attaché to Indonesia, Mohammadreza Ebrahimi, stressed Iran-Indonesia Film Week is not just a celebration of cinema but a bridge bringing the people of both nations closer through film, music, and shared cultural values." Ebrahimi emphasized the deep-rooted connections between the two countries, adding, "Both Iran and Indonesia, with their ancient civilizations and rich histories, share common values in

religious, cultural, and social spheres." He also underscored Iran's global reputation in cinema, noting, "Iranian cinema is known for its humanistic, artistic, and thought-provoking narratives, earning it worldwide recognition." Commenting on Indonesia's film industry, he said, "In recent years, Indonesian cinema has seen remarkable growth, presenting both local and global stories with artistic depth and emotional resonance."

Tehran Int'l Book Fair to be held from May 7 to 17

Arts & Culture Desk

The 36th Tehran International Book Fair will take place from May 7 to 17, 2025, at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla, following a decision by the event's Policy Council. According to IRNA, Ebrahim Heidari, spokesperson and deputy director of the fair, announced that the council finalized the location after reviewing expert reports on potential venues. The Imam Kho-

meini Mosalla was chosen to host the prestigious cultural event, continuing its legacy as Iran's leading book fair.

Heidari emphasized the significance of the Tehran International Book Fair, calling it "a national heritage and cultural event that not only invigorates the country's literary scene but also draws international attention from cultural figures and enthusiasts worldwide."



He stressed the responsibility of cultural institutions and collaborating organizations to ensure the fair is organized to the highest standards.

Iranian film 'Alone Together' to compete at Polish, Turkish festivals

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Alone Together', written and directed by Omid Mirzaei, has been officially selected to compete at the 28th International Film Festival Zoom-Zblizenia in Poland and the 20th Labour International Film Festival in Turkey. Produced by Saeed Khani in collaboration with the Rafsanjan Youth Cinema Society, 'Alone Together' continues its successful festival run, adding two more events to its growing list of accolades, Mehr News Agency reported.

The International Film Festival Zoom-Zblizenia, set to take place from March 3 to 9, 2025, in Poland, is recognized as one of the most significant platforms for independent cinema in the country. Known for spotlighting bold and artistically ambitious works, ZOOM emphasizes originality and the promotion

of independent filmmaking. Meanwhile, Turkey's Labour International Film Festival—also known as the Turkish Labour Film Festival—will host its 20th edition from May 2 to 11, 2025. Founded in 2006, the festival not only showcases films but also organizes workshops and cultural programs, focusing on themes surrounding labor and social justice.

'Alone Together' has already carved out an impressive festival circuit, having won the honorary award at the 47th LUCAS International Festival for Young Film Lovers in Germany, Best Editing at the 41st Tehran International Short Film Festival, and Best Short Film at the 23rd Hafez Awards. It also earned Best Directing and Editing honors at the 70th Reggio Film Festival and received nominations at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival and the ISFA Awards. The film has previously been fea-



tured at major festivals, including the 23rd Reggio Film Festival in Italy, the 20th Vues d'Afrique International Film Festival in Canada, and Germany's renowned Oldenburg International Film Festival. Set on a cold winter night, 'Alone Together' follows the tense moments at a remote checkpoint when officers grow suspicious of a bus full of passengers. Among them is a young boy traveling alone, drawing the attention of police, the driver, and fellow passengers, leading to an emotional unraveling of hidden truths.