

For the love of Asiatic cheetah

# Reduce Your Speed

Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

The vast, rugged landscapes of central Iran has been the stage for a heart-breaking phenomenon for the past couple of decades – the untimely death of Asiatic cheetahs, one of the world's most endangered big cats, in road accidents. There have been many instances in which these magnificent creatures' lives were cut short due to accidents; some as recently as the last spring, when Majrad, a pregnant cheetah ready to give birth to its three cubs, died in a car accident.

Iran, as a last stronghold for this subspecies, must do more to ensure its survival. Fortunately, in order to protect the Iranian chee-

tah, a decision has been made to reduce the allowed speed of cars on the Abbasabad-Meyami route by 30 km, according to Mehr News Agency.

The Director General of the Office of Wildlife Protection and Management announced that following Saturday's meeting of the country's Road Safety Commission, it was agreed to lower the permitted speed from 110 km/h to 80 km/h in order to safeguard this endangered species.

Gholamreza Abdali, speaking about the meeting held by the Road Safety Commission to ensure wildlife protection, stated that its purpose was to enhance road safety on the Abbasabad-Meyami route. Officials from various organizations including the Ministry of Roads and the Department

of the Environment were present at the meeting. Abdali further mentioned that as per the approval during the meeting, reducing car speeds from 110 km/h to 80 km/h will minimize risks posed to wildlife in this region, especially cheetahs. In addition to speed reduction measures, other necessary actions such as fencing installation, improved lighting systems along with increased signage and CCTV cameras are responsibilities assigned to be carried out by the Ministry of Roads. Programs related to these measures will be prioritized accordingly.

The Abbasabad-Meyami road located in Semnan Province serves as one of Tehran-Mashhad road's transportation axes, traversing through Turan

wildlife reserve's northern border. Research studies indicate that road accidents are major contributors leading towards loss in population for valuable Iranian cheetah species.

Cheetah fatalities resulting from collisions with vehicles represent devastating losses for Iran's biodiversity. Hopefully, the new speed limit might help mitigate the alarming phenomenon. Yet, more should be done in terms of infrastructure planning amidst sensitive ecological zones. Wildlife corridors play an important role in preserving genetic diversity, while allowing animals like the Asiatic cheetah to move freely between habitats. This, in turn, reduces the risk of genetic isolation and promoting population growth.

## Iran's SWO turns to small-scale care centers for the disabled

Social Desk

Deputy of rehabilitation affairs at Iranian State Welfare Organization (SWO) highlighted several plans aimed at improving care center operations and staff training while discussing the supervision of care centers for people with disabilities.

"One plan involves implementing preventive programs to provide necessary training for staff members who work in non-governmental centers," said Fatemeh Abbasi, according to ILNA.

She then pointed out that there will be a focus on caregiver training due to their constant proximity to patients.

"A specialized program has been developed to ensure caregivers receive appropriate training and also caution is exercised when selecting caregivers for the centers," she said.

Addressing concerns about inexperienced and underqualified caregivers being employed at care centers, Abbasi clarified that special expertise is not necessarily required. "Individuals who possess a diploma and have received relevant training related to caring for sick individuals can fulfill these roles effectively," the official proclaimed.

Abbasi emphasized that family-based caregiver training is another part of their programs as maintenance and care for people with disabilities are highly important.

"Regular monitoring of the centers occurs through monthly visits by city officials, quarterly visits by provincial capital representatives, as well as annual or semi-annual inspections conducted by colleagues from central headquarters sent out to provinces and cities," she noted.

The deputy pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, these visits faced challenges due to the conditions; however, revised circulars now allow inspections conducted by both specialized vice-chairs and organization inspection departments.

To address safety concerns associated with bigger care centers, Abbasi noted that efforts are being made towards downsizing them into smaller facilities.

"All provinces have been informed about separating large-scale centers and transitioning towards smaller ones. However, one challenge they face is a lack of applicants interested in establishing facilities for mental patients in

some regions," she said. Abbasi also mentioned a preference for maintaining patients within their families whenever possible.

"Currently, approximately 93 percent of targeted groups are kept within their families while offering nursing rights along with home-based care services, home visits, and provision of sanitary supplies to ensure their dignity is upheld. The goal is to minimize the need for attending care centers by providing adequate support within a home environment," she said. Abbasi also noted an increase in homeless or abandoned individuals on the streets.

"They are mainly the elderly or the mentally challenged," she said, adding that families unable to afford care for these individuals often abandon them. Abbasi acknowledged the necessity of establishing centers for such cases but highlighted that accidents occur more frequently in large-scale centers and may compromise individual dignity.

"Therefore, our solution is to establish smaller centers as an alternative," the SWO official said. Currently, there are 191 rehabilitation homes nationwide catering to el-



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derly and chronic mental patients with up to 10 residents per center. According to Abbasi, conditions in these centers are better than large-scale centers, but the cost per person is higher, requiring more funds.

Establishing smaller centers for SWO is part of a long-term plan. Applicants interested in setting up such centers are encouraged to establish small-scale facilities. Most residents referred to these centers are unknown individuals who fall into various categories, including mentally ill people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Abbasi urges action from the Ministry of Health regarding this issue since lack of support and availability prevents admission into mental hospitals.



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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Iranian delegation visits Baghdad to discuss dust storms

ISNA – In order to follow up on the bilateral and multilateral agreements from last year, a delegation led by the adviser to the head of Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE) and the secretary of the National Headquarters for Policy and Coordination of Dust Storm Phenomenon Management departed for Baghdad yesterday.

Ali-Mohammad Tahmasebi Birgani made the announcement, stating that numerous agreements regarding dust management have been exchanged with Iraq.

"However, they have not yet been implemented," he said.

Tahmasebi Birgani emphasized that the main objective of the trip is to carry out joint executive measures with Iraq in order to share knowledge, technology, and experiences related to dust storm control. The aim is to establish a regional technical-executive working group and secure approval for implementing the draft of a sub-regional action plan initiated by Iran. Additionally, efforts will be made towards establishing a regional dust storm fund as approved during last year's regional meeting in July.

Based on information from the DoE shared by Tahmasebi Birgani, it was mentioned that Iraq's Minister of Environment will also be invited to participate in an international conference addressing sand and dust storms scheduled for later this year. This conference aims at gathering ministers from countries significantly impacted by such phenomena along with relevant international organizations.

#### 843m people may live with lower back pain by 2050

SCIENCE ALERT – Low back pain is the leading cause of disability in the world, with over 600 million people living with the condition. This is one of the key takeaways of a June 2023 study published in the journal *The Lancet Rheumatology*.

The study's systematic analysis synthesizes data from approximately 500 studies throughout the world over 30 years to estimate the global burden of low back pain, broken down by country, year, age, sex, and severity.

The study found that if society could directly address three major risk factors – obesity, smoking, and workplace ergonomic factors – it could cut the burden of low back pain by 39 percent.

Fatemeh Abbasi, deputy of rehabilitation affairs at Iranian State Welfare Organization  
ILNA

