

## Qatari bidder withdraws from process to buy United

BBC – Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani has withdrawn from the process to buy Manchester United. Sheikh Jassim had bid £5bn for the club but further talks this week have broken down. The Glazer family, who bought United for £790m in 2005, announced in November 2022 they were considering selling. British businessman Sir Jim Ratcliffe's Ineos Group was the other main bidder. Sources have told BBC Sport that Ratcliffe is now hoping to conclude a deal for a minority stake in the club, thought to be 25%. Earlier this month BBC Sport reported Ratcliffe was considering whether to offer to buy a minority stake in the club in an effort to break the impasse over the ownership situation.



PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

The Glazer family's announcement last year that they were considering selling United led to a flurry of interest but only two offers, from Ineos and Sheikh Jassim. Both tabled bids of about £5bn. Sheikh Jassim's camp have always maintained he was only interested in buying the club outright. United supporters have held demonstrations against the Glazer family inside and outside Old Trafford. The club are 10th in the Premier League having lost four of their opening eight matches, and were beaten in their first two Champions League games. In a statement, the Manchester United Supporters' Trust said: "MUFC is in desperate need of new investment and new majority ownership. We hope this news accelerates that process rather than delays it."

"Based on the last 11 months, no-one can be quite sure. The Glazers need to make their position clear." It is understood that Sheikh Jassim's bid would have been a fully cash offer and would have cleared all old debt. There would also have been more than £1.4bn to finance new stadium plans, new training centre facilities, buy players and also for community regeneration projects. Figures in March showed United owed £969.6m through a combination of gross debt, bank borrowings and outstanding transfer fees with associated payments.

# MP calls for more investment and dedication in Iranian sports



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

A member of the Iranian Parliament says more investment needs to be made in the sports to contribute to the country's status on the international stage. Speaking to Iran Daily, Ramezan-Ali Sangdovini said: "We have no choice but to acquire the modern-day techniques, tactics, and science, if the Iranians are to reach the global heights of the sport." Sangdovini's remarks came days after the 19th Asian Games concluded in Hangzhou, China, where the Iranian 285-athlete delegation grabbed 13 golds, 21 silvers and 20 bronzes to finish seventh in the overall medals table. Some believe Iran's run in the Games will fairly go down as a failure, as the number of the golds was seven short of the figure the Iranians tallied for a sixth-place finish in Jakarta-Palembang 2018 – the lowest for the country since 2006, when Iran grabbed 11 gold medals in Doha. Iran's total medal haul was also down by eight from five years ago, though the country was represented by 93 more athletes in Indonesia. Still, the Iranian sport reveled in some historic achievements in certain competitions – namely gymnastics, roller skating, chess, table tennis, and mountain cycling. "Given the investment and efforts made in the sports in the country, I don't think we could expect more success than what the Iranians already achieved in the Games, while you have to give credit to some of the athletes for collecting first-ever medals for the



The Iranian athletes parade during the opening ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games in China on September 23, 2023. hamshahronline.ir

country," the Iranian lawmaker said. Asked about the importance of investing in sports, Sangdovini said: "Nowadays, sport plays a massive role in promoting the countries worldwide as it is among the factors by which a nation's development and status are measured. You could see in the Asian Games how some countries, with a relatively low profile in other fields, established themselves as successful in the sports." "When you look at other countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, South Korea, and even Uzbekistan and

Mongolia, you can see how they have contributed to the development of the sports," Sangdovini added. With less than a year until the Paris Olympics, the outcome in Hangzhou was a wakeup call for certain federations in Iran and Sangdovini believes more work needs to be done if the Iranians are to succeed in the French capital. "We have to make sure that the Iranian athletes will have no personal life concerns when preparing for the Olympics," said the Iranian MP. "I went to meet with Mahdi Olfati last week to con-

gratulate him on his vault silver at the Asian Games, which was a maiden gymnastics medal for the country in the history of the event. When I saw his poor training facilities, I could realize what a great job done he has done in competing with some high-profile athletes from China, South Korea, and the Chinese Taipei. "You can see how massively the Saudis have invested in football, as the sum they paid to Cristiano Ronaldo to bring him to their league is roughly equal to the Iranian Sport Ministry's annual budget.



Ramezan-Ali Sangdovini  
TASNIM



That's what makes the difference between us and them. The Iranian athletes surely possess the talent and skills; all they need is more support," added the member of the Parliament,

who also underlined the "shortcomings in the sporting infrastructures" as the main reason behind some Iranian athletes leaving the country to embark on a new career elsewhere.

## Qalenoey has points to prove against Queiroz



Amirhadi Arsalanpour  
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There will be more at stake for Iran and head coach Amir Qalenoey than success in the final showpiece of a friendly tournament, when they square off against Qatar in Amman, Jordan, today. With the AFC Asian Cup less than three months away, a win against the host and defending champion will be a statement towards other title favorites – namely Japan, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and South Korea – ahead of the continent's flagship international event. Qalenoey, meanwhile, will have his personal reasons to go all out for a victory against a familiar face on Qatar bench, Carlos Queiroz, from whom the Irani-



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an took over after a group stage exit in last year's World Cup. When Qalenoey replaced the high-profile Portu-

guese – a former assistant to Sir Alex Ferguson and the ex-coach of Real Madrid as well as Colombia and Egypt – his appoint-

ment was deemed as a step backward for the Iranian football, and today he will be eager to prove his credentials for the job.

Qalenoey has always been outspoken in lamenting the lack of time he was given during his previous spell on the national team bench – a 12-month period ended by a last-eight shootout defeat against South Korea in the 2007 Asian Cup – which was in stark contrast with what Queiroz experienced during his nine-year tenure in Iran. Back in June, after a 5-1 thrashing of Kyrgyzstan in the CAFA Nations Cup, Qalenoey said he had been trying to change his team's "decade-long tactical approach and mindset." "Throughout my career, I've always been known as an attack-minded coach and a free-flowing football is what I want to instill in the national team," said the former manager of Esteghlal and Sepahan, who is the most decorated

coach in the history of the Iranian top flight with five trophies. The Iranian's comments were somewhat of a veiled swipe at his Portuguese predecessor, who, despite some decent World Cup performances against football powerhouses Argentina, Spain, and Portugal, was often criticized for adopting a defensive, boring gameplan, even against relatively easier opponents in the World Cup qualifiers and the Asian Cup. Today's contest at the Amman International Stadium will provide the Iranian with the perfect opportunity to show he is up to the task of steering the three-time champion to a first trophy in 48 years in January's showdown in Qatar, while giving the Iranian fans a more entertaining brand of football.