

# Iranian Parliament investigating fraud at the Equestrian Federation



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

The vice-chairman of the Iranian Parliament's investigation board said he and his fellow-lawmakers have been looking into reports of misconduct and fraud in the country's Equestrian Federation. "We delved into the matter and realized that several violations have taken place at the federation over the past years, including unauthorized import of cheap breeds of horses that have undermined the integrity of the Iranian purebred horse," Mohammad Vahidi told Iran Daily. "There have also been cases of financial breaches, with regards to sending horses to global events, which have jeopardized the export of Iranian horses in the global market, while leading to the country's suspension from international competitions," Vahidi added. Regarding the microchips injected under the horses' skin, Vahidi said: "Our investigations showed that identification microchips are being smuggled into country and repeatedly used on different horses, which is blatantly against the domestic and international regulations, damaging the pedigree and reputation of the Iranian purebred horse." "The federation defended its actions in the Cultural Committee of the Parliament, though the

lawmakers were eventually convinced of the wrongdoings through compelling evidence and documents presented by the investigation board." Vahidi said a summary of a 700-page report on the matter was read to the lawmakers, with a case of charges on eight counts of financial and managerial fraud in the federation being referred to the Iranian Judiciary.

"The members of the Parliament will put in all the efforts into protecting the identity of the Iranian purebred horse," Vahidi insisted, while praising the Sports Ministry for offering full cooperation on the matter.

However, Vahidi was still critical of the country's sport governing body for appointing a number of caretakers for the Equestrian Federation over the past 20 months, no of whom have managed to comprehensively deal with the managerial defects in their organization – a massive blow for the horse owners and breeders in the country.

"There have been major shortcomings in issuing birth certificates and pedigree documentation for Iranian horses, which massively harm the Iranian horse's identity," said Vahidi, adding: "That is why we insist the Sports Ministry should deploy the concrete measures on the matter."

Underlining the country's high potentials in horse export, Vahidi said: "Horse breeding is widely re-



Iranian lawmaker  
Mohammad Vahidi



garded as a profitable, job-creating business all around the world, even overtaking the fashion industry in some countries."

Vahidi says different breeds of Iranian horses enjoy the attributes to shine in the global equestrian events.

"The breeding business is of high importance to Iran as a hub for pure breeds – including Turkoman, Arabian, Caspian, and Kurdish horse – making massive contribution to the economy.

"Different types of Iranian horses possess various characteristics, which suit different purposes in racing, show jumping, endurance riding, and dressage," Vahidi said.

"Many countries are eager to import Iranian horses, which provides us with the opportunity to position them as a highly valuable export commodity for the nation, yielding substantial profits."



## Son says 'no excuses' after firing South Korea into Asian Cup semis



AFP – Son Heung-min said South Korea have "no excuses" not to win the Asian Cup after he scored an extra-time winner to beat Australia 2-1 on Friday and set up a semi-final against Jordan.

It was another great escape for the Koreans, who needed a 96th-minute penalty from Hwang Hee-chan to stay alive after Australia took the lead in the first half through Craig Goodwin.

Tottenham's Son, Asia's best player and South Korea's skipper, had yet to fully make his mark at the tournament in Qatar but he delivered when it counted.

First he won a penalty when Lewis Miller brought him down in injury time at the end of normal time, then he stepped up to curl home a sublime free-kick from the edge of the box in the 104th minute.

South Korea have not won the Asian Cup in 64 years and Son said he would accept nothing less than the title.

"There are only going to be four teams left in Doha (after the weekend), and only one is going to lift the trophy," he said.

"Fatigue, whatever – there are no excuses. We're just trying to win the trophy and bring it back home."

Son is South Korea's regular penalty-taker but he handed the ball to Wolverhampton Wanderers forward Hwang after winning the spot-kick.

"At that moment I was a little tired and Hee-chan was confident, so I said 'fine,'" said Son.

"He's an important player and it was a good chance to prove it."

Coach Jurgen Klinsmann, who has been under fire for South Korea's performances in Qatar, led his team in a wild celebration at the end.

It was the fourth time in five games that the Koreans had scored in second-half injury time.

"I don't want to leave it so late all the time,

believe me," said Klinsmann, a World Cup winner with Germany as a player.

"I would be happy to get it done earlier, but it is maybe our story in this tournament to leave it late."

### Australia 'devastated'

Australia finished the match with 10 men after Aiden O'Neill was red-carded for lunging at Hwang at the end of the first period of extra time.

"We're devastated at the moment, quite emotional for all the players and the staff," said Australia's coach Graham Arnold.

"For the first 90-odd minutes we did very well until giving that penalty away. It's been a great tournament for a lot of my players."

South Korea's semi-final opponents will be Jordan, who beat tournament surprise packages Tajikistan 1-0 earlier in the day's other quarter-final.

The Koreans will have to play without Kim Min-jae after the Bayern Munich defender picked up his second booking of the tournament.

"Not having Min-jae is obviously not good for us because he is our leader at the back and a fantastic professional," said Klinsmann.

"But we have a number of excellent players."

Australia came into the match with two days' extra rest, with South Korea also battling the effects of a gruelling penalty-shootout win over Saudi Arabia in the last 16.

South Korea dominated the first half but it was Australia who opened the scoring in the 42nd minute.

Hwang In-beom gave the ball away in defence and Connor Metcalfe floated the ball to the back post for Goodwin to volley home.

The Socceroos had chances to double their lead but failed to take them and the Koreans made them pay with the equaliser from the spot deep into injury time. Son then completed the turnaround, curling the ball inside Maty Ryan's post for the winner.

## Navidkia named new Mes Rafsanjan manager

### Sports Desk

Sepahan legend and former international midfielder Moharram Navidkia has made a dramatic return to the Iranian top-flight football as he was appointed as the new head coach of the Persian Gulf Pro League club Mes Rafsanjan.

Navidkia takes over from Saket Elhami, who stepped down from his role in the midseason, following a run of below-par results and performances in the league. Mes last played to a 1-1 draw at home against defending champion Persepolis on January 1, which ended the club's five-game losing streak.

Mes is 10th in the league table with 15 points, five points above the relegation zone.

A five-time Iranian champion and an AFC Champions League finalist as the Sepahan player, Navidkia made his managerial debut in 2020, steering Sepahan to a runner-up finish in the league before paring ways with the club after his team stood third in the table by the end of the following campaign.

He led Sepahan to 41 wins in 75 outings, while leaving the pitch empty-handed on 16 occasions. Navidkia's first game on Mes bench will come at home against Esteghlal in the last 16 of the Iranian Hazfi Cup on Friday.



Son Heung-min celebrates scoring South Korea's second goal in a 2-1 victory over Australia in the AFC Asian Cup in Al Wakrah, Qatar, on February 2, 2024.  
● THAIER AL-SUDANI/REUTERS