

# Iran dominates 60% of Qur'anic awards: Official

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has dominated 60 percent of Qur'anic accolades of the international competitions, said the spokesperson for the Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization. Gholamreza Adel, speaking at the 40th edition of Iran's International Qur'an Competition, informed that out of the 540 worldwide Qur'anic competitions held in the last years,

370 top awards were given to Iranians. He highlighted Iran's significant status, given that 40% of the positions are from other countries, IRNA wrote. He added the evaluations show Iran's record achievement in organizing Qur'anic competitions. Forty-four countries are participating in this round of Qur'anic recitation and memorization com-

petition, Adel said. He noted the presence of Malaysia in this edition, with over 60 years of experience in Qur'anic matters, contributing to the increased competitiveness of the event. The spokesperson concluded by addressing the theme of resistance in Islamic countries, expressing that these countries have advanced globally due to Islamic principles.



## Minister: Younger generation focus of 12th Razavi Book Reading Festival



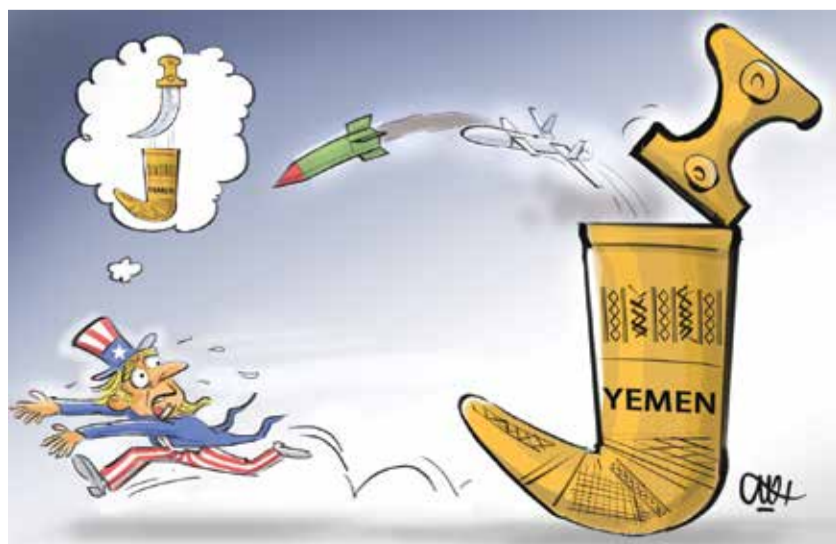
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Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili emphasized that children, adolescents, and youths, particularly, are the main focus of their objectives in the field of books and cultural productions within

the community of readers. Esmaeili, speaking on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the 12th Razavi Book Reading Festival stated, "By establishing numerous libraries for children and adolescents, we have created a more vibrant space in this field

compared to the past. By continuing on this path, we can build a better future for reading in the country." According to IRNA. He added, "the presence of over one million people in this year's book reading festival indicates that we have achieved successes in this area."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
 Cartoonist



## Iran ahead of West in defending animals' rights: Lawmaker

By Sadeq Dehqan  
 Staff writer

The issue of animal cruelty and the neglect of animal rights, particularly urban and domestic animals, has been a consistent focus of Western media outlets to portray a negative and violent image of Iran in recent years.

They commonly share video clips depicting animal cruelty, specifically dog killings and cruelty leading to the deaths of stray dogs. At times, these reports suggest municipal authorities' indifference towards animal rights in Iran, leading to occasional media hype. However, Somayyeh Rafiei, the head of the Environmental Commission of the Iranian Parliament, questions the accuracy of Western media claims regarding animal rights in Iran. She acknowledges that there are some circulated images depicting animal abuse in Iran, stirring voices of environmental activists and animal lovers within the country. Rafiei emphasizes that while animal mistreatment is condemnable in any form, it is not exclusive to Iran and is prevalent worldwide.

Rafiei states, "Western media consistently searches for instances of animal-related crimes in Iran, exaggerating them beyond reality. However, I am willing to engage in a debate with environmental and animal rights activists to demonstrate that animals in Iran have better situation." She urges a more nuanced understanding of the issue, highlighting that animal mistreatment is a global concern rather than a uniquely Iranian problem. In a recent interview with France 24, Rafiei highlighted that even if we accept their claims about the absence of specific laws regarding ani-



mal rights in Iran, our country still adheres to various international laws related to animal welfare. She argues that the conditions for animals in Iran is much better than those in many other countries, emphasizing that animal rights extend beyond dressing them in peculiar outfits and using them as entertainment props.

### Iran has stringent laws in animal's rights

The official states, "I believe that animal rights in Iran are better upheld than in the West, where the emphasis is often on slogans rather than actions. Iran boasts solid laws, such as the permanent Hunting and Wildlife Preservation Act, providing full protection to animals crucial for environmental ecosystems and wildlife." Iran also enjoys another significant law, the Environmental Protection and Improvement Act, outlining responsibilities for various entities in the field of wildlife and animal care. These laws demonstrate Iran's firm commitment to the protection of ecologically valuable animals. The official emphasizes the cultural and religious aspects, explaining, "In addition to legal measures, Iran's rich Islamic culture places great emphasis on respecting the rights of animals and all creatures bestowed with the right to live. Humans are advised to uphold ethics and justice when interacting with animals and

other living beings." The rapid increase in stray dogs is partly due to families initially opting to keep animals like dogs and cats, she says, but later finding it financially challenging or unsuitable for their living spaces. Consequently, these animals are abandoned, contributing to the growing population of ownerless and stray dogs.

### Growth of rabies diseases among stray dogs

Rafiei accepts the criticisms regarding the organization of stray dogs, saying, "While many countries have various laws governing the care of domestic animals and commitment to them, we lack any such laws in our country. This issue has led to consequences, including the phenomenon of ownerless dogs, contributing to the spread of diseases among dogs, specifically the outbreak of rabies diseases." The increase in ownerless and stray dogs has resulted in the growth of rabies diseases, imposing significant costs on the government. Each visit for rabies exposure by stray dogs, and the potential risk of contracting rabies diseases, on average requires three doses of vaccine and the injection of a vial of serum. The total cost for the government ranges between \$180 to \$240 per dog, providing these services for free. Considering the high number of dogs needing these services daily, the

government faces substantial expenses to cover the demand.

### Organizing stray animals

There has been no specific rule or law regarding the organization of stray dogs in the country. However, efforts are underway as part of the Seventh Development Plan to address this issue, she says. The government is tasked with presenting a proposal to the Parliament swiftly to regulate the situation and assign responsibilities for handling stray animals. A comprehensive top-level law is needed to guide various government entities, including the Ministry of Interior, Health Ministry, Iran's Department of Environment, and municipalities, in their roles related to stray and aggressive animals. In addition to the challenges posed by the increase in ownerless and stray dogs, another issue drawing criticism regarding animal management in Iran is the decline in rare and endangered species, specifically the Iranian cheetah. Statistics show a significant reduction in the number of cheetahs, from around 80 in the early 2000s to approximately 30 to 40 in 2022, indicating a 50% decrease in the Iranian cheetah population. Rafiei addresses this concern, stating, "Global biodiversity has faced limitations, and Iran is no exception. Climate change has impacted wildlife habitats, imposing constraints on their existence. Other factors, including road accidents and hunting, have also contributed to the decline in populations of rare or endangered animals. The Hunting and Fishing Act, established in 1967 with subsequent amendments in the 1970s, plays a crucial role in conservation efforts, particularly focusing on protecting rare and endangered species. However, there is a need for a comprehensive review of laws related to animals, and efforts have been made in the Seventh Development Plan to amend and improve these regulations."