



Pezeshkian pushes shift to people-led environmental protection

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called for a structural overhaul of Iran's environmental governance, arguing that durable protection hinges on devolving responsibility to communities, producers and other direct stakeholders rather than relying on top-down state regulation. Speaking at the 40th meeting of the Supreme Council for the Environment in Tehran, Pezeshkian said policies drafted without the input of those who implement them tend to remain abstract, unworkable and ultimately counterproductive, president.ir reported.

He warned that regulation-heavy approaches, when divorced from operational realities, often turn into compliance traps that burden executors and inflate reported violations without improving environmental outcomes.

The meeting brought together the head of the Department of Environment and ministers overseeing interior affairs, roads and urban development, agriculture, and industry to review 11 agenda items spanning biodiversity, land management and industrial compliance.

Pezeshkian underscored evidence presented to the council showing that environmental rules perform better when execution is delegated to local actors and sectoral beneficiaries under firm state



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, flanked by Head of Iran's Department of Environment Shina Ansari, (L) and Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, attends the 40th meeting of the Supreme Council for the Environment in Tehran on December 27, 2025.

president.ir

supervision.

He pointed to historical water management systems run by local stewards as a benchmark, arguing that centralized control has weakened accountability and worsened allocation stress.

The president instructed regulators to recalibrate environmental rulemaking by front-loading consultations with process owners and frontline operators, aligning directives with economic and social conditions to lift implementation rates.

He framed the approach as a governance reform rather than deregulation, stressing that oversight

and enforcement would remain intact.

Turning to industry, Pezeshkian pressed large and small manufacturers to internalize environmental stewardship across their operations.

He backed updated, precision rules that assign primary responsibility for environmental protection to producers themselves, coupled with rigorous monitoring to curb externalities and raise compliance efficiency across supply chains.

On biodiversity, Pezeshkian urged deeper scrutiny of a proposed national comprehensive biodiversity plan adapted from global frameworks, noting that

international targets require localized execution models.

He asked for full documentation before approval, signaling that Iran's plan must reflect domestic capacities, regional ecosystems and socio-economic trade-offs rather than replicate global templates.

He also linked biodiversity protection to a broader, integrated environmental master plan that factors in economic incentives, social dynamics and inter-agency coordination. Pezeshkian cited ongoing water-governance reforms led by 12 specialized teams as a model that could be replicated for environmental governance to streamline decision-making and reduce policy fragmentation.

Addressing newly emerged coastal lands following the Caspian Sea's retreat, the president ordered immediate coordination among environmental authorities, the Interior Ministry and provincial governors to prevent encroachment and misuse.

He called for rapid approval of clear rules defining land status, management responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms to safeguard public interest.

Pezeshkian framed the agenda as a shift toward outcome-driven governance, asserting that when communities and economic actors are accountable for the environments in which they live and operate, protection becomes more disciplined, cost-effective and resilient.

'Alone Together' brings home Batumi's top int'l short film prize

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Alone Together' by writer-director Omid Mirzaei won the Best Short Film award in the international section at the 19th Batumi International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF) in Batumi, Georgia.

The festival ran from December 13 to 17, and screened 15 feature films and 25 shorts from more than 20 countries. Founded in 2006, BIAFF is organized by the Batumi Art House Organization and is positioned as a regional hub for art-house cinema along the Black Sea corridor, IRNA reported.

'Alone Together,' produced by Saeid Khani and the Rafsanjan branch of the Iranian



Youth Cinema Society, has built strong international momentum over the past year, picking up awards across Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East.

Its Batumi win adds to a slate that includes an honorary

prize at Germany's 47th LUCAS International Festival for Young Film Lovers, the special jury award at Poland's 28th Zoom Festival, Best International Film at the 15th Anthem Festival in the United States, and Best Screen-

play and Best Film at Italy's Movie Valley Festival. The film has also secured acting, directing and editing awards at festivals in Algeria, Tunisia and Iran, alongside multiple nominations at major domestic events, including the 43rd Fajr Film Festival.

Set over a single winter night, the film unfolds at a roadside police checkpoint where officers grow suspicious of passengers on a bus. Tension escalates when attention centers on a young boy traveling alone, drawing scrutiny from police, the driver and fellow travelers, and exposing fault lines of fear, authority and moral responsibility.

The cast includes Alireza Sanifar, Parham Gholamloo, Sadegh Borghei, Mohammad Movahednia, Saba Amiri and Mohammad Rashidi. International sales and festival distribution are handled by Solmaz Etemad.

Lebanese Nancy Ajram to sing global theme for Iran's 'Dolphin Boy 2'



Arts & Culture Desk

Lebanese pop star Nancy Ajram was selected to perform the global theme song for the Iranian animated feature 'Dolphin Boy 2,' Iranian media reported, as the film prepares for its international rollout across the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East and North Africa, with a premiere event scheduled in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on January 8.

Videos circulating online show Ajram recording the title track, confirming her role as the voice of the Arabic and international versions of the soundtrack. The collaboration was finalized in the run-up to the film's regional release and is set to be unveiled at a special screening in Jeddah, marking the official launch of the global cut, Hamshahri Online reported.

For the domestic Iranian version, singer-songwriter Shervin Hajipour performs the main title and two additional musical numbers. His involvement previously delayed the release of the final cut inside Iran, with screenings reportedly halted several times over the choice of vocalist.

'Dolphin Boy 2' won the Crystal Simorgh for best animated feature

at Iran's 43rd Fajr Film Festival, cementing the franchise's status as one of the country's most commercially viable animation properties.

The first installment has already screened in 30 countries, including the United States, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, Turkey, Portugal and Saudi Arabia, and secured distribution deals with major global platforms, including Netflix, Apple TV and Amazon.

Ajram, one of the Arab world's most prominent recording artists, brings significant regional reach to the project.

She has more than 40 million followers on Instagram and a track record of chart-topping releases across Arabic-speaking markets, a factor expected to lift brand awareness and box office traction as the sequel enters Persian Gulf cinemas. Directed by Mohammad Kheirandish and produced by Mohammad-Amin Hamedani, 'Dolphin Boy 2' is written by Kheirandish with Mohammad Shokouhi.

The voice cast includes Nahid Amirian, Hamed Azizi, Maryam Joleyni, Soraya Ghasemi, Sharareh Hazrati, Arsalan Joulai, George Petrosi and Touraj Nasr.

Israel seeks US ...

Given Iran's demonstrated deterrent capacity during the 12-day war, if full US backing is absent, what alternative options would Israel consider in confronting Iran?

A lack of US cooperation with Israel would raise the chances of Iran easily gaining the upper hand in any future conflict. Iran's vast geopolitical reach makes a prolonged war of attrition between Tehran and Tel Aviv virtually untenable. It appears that without US military and media support, Israel lacks the capacity

to confront Iran directly and would only be able to inflict damage through surprise operations.

The deterrent power demonstrated during the 12-day conflict made it clear to the world that Iran, as a military force in West Asia, commands significant capabilities and can inflict severe and lasting damage on Israel on its own.

Yet, if a new war were to break out between Iran and Israel, several West Asian countries would likely become involved. This, in turn, could trigger a crisis surpassing the eras of the wars in Iraq, Syria, and Af-

ghanistan, potentially extending even to other continents. Under such circumstances, a dire situation could emerge across the region, with these wars possibly continuing in an attritional form for many years.

What deterrent tools and measures does Iran have at its disposal to prevent Israeli military action or to raise its costs?

More than seven months into the 12-day war, Iran has drawn serious and thought-provoking lessons from that experience. Efforts have been made to identify previously unimaginable vulnerabilities and to address the ways Israel might again resort

to blind operations. As a result, improving military hardware has been placed high on the priority list, alongside increasing the defense budget, to deter Israel from any military action and prevent it from even contemplating another attack.

Conversely, the Israeli regime has also taken note of Iran's military deterrence measures, recognizing that today's Iran is different from the Iran of June 2025. It is no longer possible for a renewed attack to threaten or dismantle Iran's structural foundations. Israel will therefore continue to keep a close watch, hoping that a more favorable opportunity might eventually emerge.