

# Iran finds common purpose on and off the field at World Cup

Knockout round there for taking, but Egypt presents tough test



Belgium's Thomas Meunier (L) heads the ball past Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi during the World Cup Group G soccer match between Belgium and Iran in Inglewood, near Los Angeles on June 21, 2026. ● AP

players and even the supporters. Everyone is pulling in the same direction for Iran's name and pride. That mentality extends to the bench as well. Even players who have not seen action are fully invested, constantly lifting up their teammates and providing encouragement. That collective spirit is one of the national team's most valuable assets.

### Based on the results and performances so far, how likely is Iran to advance from the group stage?

We have completed our first two group-stage matches and remain firmly in the race with two points. Now we must prepare ourselves mentally and physically for the final match against Egypt.

I believe our players are gradually finding their rhythm, both physically and mentally. We should be capable of producing a more cohesive and attack-minded performance in the next match and earning the result needed to move on.

However, there is one condition: the team cannot become complacent or take Egypt lightly. The players must step onto the field with full focus, maximum determination, and the hunger to compete for every ball.

### Before the tournament, there were predictions that some spectators and groups opposed to the Islamic Republic might create distractions for the national team. Instead, fans have been overwhelmingly supportive in both matches. What is your view?

Contrary to many of the predictions and off-field noise, Iranian fans have backed the national team wholeheartedly in

both matches, both through their presence and their support in the stands.

They demonstrated that Iranians around the world, regardless of their personal views or beliefs, carry Iran in their hearts. Whenever their country needs support, whether in sports or any other arena, they put differences aside and stand behind Iran and the national team. The unity and solidarity we are witnessing inside the stadiums, and even across society more broadly, along with the excitement generated among the public, are among soccer's greatest achievements.

That is why I believe the Football Federation and, at a higher level, the Ministry of Sport and Youth must do everything possible to continue developing the sport.

The growth of soccer infrastructure. The foundation begins with standard playing fields and adequate facilities throughout the country.

Alongside improving pitches and equipment, we must also make better use of the resources already available. I know of soccer facilities that have fallen into disrepair and can no longer be used effectively for youth development. That is deeply unfortunate and highlights the need for better management of existing infrastructure.

I can confidently say that if we create the right environment for soccer to grow, given the tremendous talent of Iranian youth and the nation's passion for the game, we can consistently compete for major honors in Asia and make our presence felt on the world stage.

We can bring pride and joy to Iranian soccer fans both at home and abroad.

That is why I believe that once the national team returns from the World Cup, preparations for future Asian competitions must begin immediately. With a younger, more energetic squad and the invaluable experience gained from this tournament, Iran can set its sights on reclaiming the summit of Asian soccer.

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

## INTERVIEW

Iran's national soccer team remains in contention for a place in the knockout stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup after opening Group Stage play with back-to-back draws against New Zealand and Belgium. The team's performances under head coach Amir Ghalenoei, the unusual circumstances surrounding its preparation for the tournament, player readiness, and the outlook for the decisive match against Egypt have all become key talking points among soccer analysts.

Beyond the tactical discussions, the remarkable support from Iranian fans in the stadiums and the strong sense of unity within the squad have stood out during the tournament, fueling optimism about Iran's chances of advancing beyond the group stage.

To discuss these issues, we spoke with Bijan Zolfagharnasab, a veteran soccer analyst and former Iranian international who was part of

Iran's 1976 AFC Asian Cup-winning team and represented the country at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Holding a doctorate in physical education

and sports science, Zolfagharnasab has also coached Iran's senior and U-23 national teams. In this interview, he evaluates Iran's first two World Cup performances, identifies the team's strengths and weaknesses, assesses its chances of qualification, discusses the importance of player unity and fan support, and outlines what Iranian soccer must do after the tournament.

IRAN DAILY: What is your assessment of Iran's match against Belgium and the team's performances in its first two World Cup games?

ZOLFAGHARNASAB: In my view, holding Belgium to a scoreless draw was a positive result. Although Iran spent long stretches defending, the team played a disciplined, intelligent, and well-organized game. We also turned in a respectable performance against New Zealand in our opener.

From what I have seen in the assessments of European analysts and experts, they share a similar view. Despite the difficult circumstances Iran faced in preparing for and traveling to the World Cup, our team has shown solid organization, strong defensive structure, and even promising attacking play.

The players, particularly in the second match, were on the same page and consistently covered for one another across the field.

So far, the results have not been disappointing. Had we arrived at the tournament venue earlier and avoided some of the logistical challenges surrounding travel and visas, we might have picked up even better results and been sitting in a stronger position in the group standings.

That said, the players, coaching staff, Football Federation, and Ministry of Sport and Youth deserve tremendous credit. At a time when both the country and our soccer program were dealing with various challenges, they managed to pull everything together and get the team to the tournament.

Especially against Belgium, Iran delivered a result-oriented performance while executing a well-thought-out game plan. It was a display worthy of recognition.

### Where do you see the national team's biggest strengths and weaknesses?

One of our biggest weaknesses has been the lack of quality warm-up matches. Had the team entered the tournament after playing more friendlies against stronger opponents, I have no doubt we would have collected better results by now.

Even so, every player, member of the

coaching staff, federation official, and Ministry of Sport and Youth representative deserves praise. The team has put in respectable performances and has represented Iranian soccer with pride.

Iran entered this tournament far from ideal conditions, yet the players have left everything on the field.

As for our strengths, the most important one is the unity and togetherness within the squad. That has strengthened our belief in the team's chances of success.

The players have rallied around a shared objective and are leaving everything on the field to make the Iranian people proud. You can see that spirit throughout the team, from the coaching staff to the

## TENDER NO.: 08-38-0440045

**First Announcement**

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out

exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at [www.setadiran.ir](http://www.setadiran.ir). Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES WITH API REGULAR TOOL JOINT PIN CONNECTION I.A.D.C. CODES: 1.1.1 OR 1.1.4 OR 1.1.5 ARE ACCEPTED IN EVALUATION MARKING: ALL SPECIFICATION OF BIT SUCH AS: TYPE, SIZE, MANUFACTURER, SERIAL, THREAD, ISO & IADC IN ACCORDANCE WITH API SPEC 7-1/ISO 10424- SHOULD BE DIE STAMPED ON THE TOP OF THE BIT LOCATION: DRILLING MOVEABLE MCAPP: DR/03/87/003 34 IN. X 7-5/8 IN.	8NO
2	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, WITHOUT CENTER JET, LESS WITH API REGULAR TOOLJOINT PIN CONNECTION LEVEL OF INSPECTION: 2 (L.O.I.: 2) "QCP/MPS DOCUMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO REVIEW & CONF" "ITP DOCUMENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR TECHNICAL EVALUAT MARKING: ALL SPECIFICATION OF BIT SUCH AS: TYPE, SIZE, MANUFACTURER, SERIAL, THREAD, ISO & IADC IN ACCORDANCE WITH API SPEC 7-1/ISO 10424- SHOULD BE DIE STAMPED ON THE TOP OF THE BIT LOCATION: DRILLING MOVEABLE MCAPP: DR/03/85/003, 80/001, 81/001, 80/006 8-1/2 IN. X 4-1/2 IN. 26 IN., I.A.D.C. 1.1.4	60NO
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4, 5, 6	NOZZLES FOR DRILLING BITS COMPLETE WITH O-RING & RETAINING RINGS NOZZLES FOR DRILLING BITS ONE SET CONSISTS OF 3 NUMBERS CONNECTION SIZE AS SPECIFIED LOCATION: DRILLING MOVEABLE FOR SIZE 26 TO 34 INCH	48ST
7, 8, 9	NOZZLES FOR DRILLING BITS COMPLETE WITH O-RING & RETAINING RINGS NOZZLES FOR DRILLING BITS ONE SET CONSISTS OF 3 NUMBERS CONNECTION SIZE AS SPECIFIED LOCATION: DRILLING MOVEABLE FOR SIZE 14-3/4 TO 26 INCH	149ST

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention to Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: [www.setadiran.ir](http://www.setadiran.ir), not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 31,974/87 EURO or 54,508,560,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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