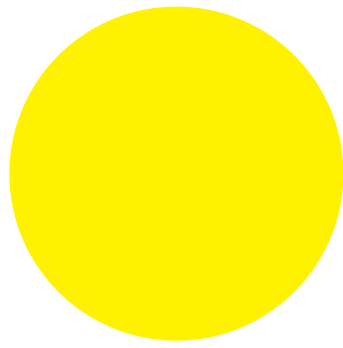


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President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) speaks during a meeting of senior clerics in the central city of Qom, Iran on June 30, 2026. president.ir



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Iran's capital market could emerge as regional investment hotspot

By **Delaram Ahmadi**
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran's capital market has come under simultaneous pressure in recent years from sanctions, sharp economic volatility and persistent political uncertainty, limiting both its growth and its ability to support the broader economy. The recent war, which forced the stock market to remain closed for weeks, underscored just how vulnerable financial markets are to geopolitical and security shocks. Yet despite these setbacks, the Tehran stock market remains a vital source of financing for businesses and a key channel for directing investment into productive sectors. In this interview with Iran Daily, economic journalist M.A. Mokarrami examines the



M.A. Mokarrami

capital market's role in Iran's economy today and its prospects should international tensions ease. He argues that if an international agreement is accompanied by meaningful domestic reforms, Iran's capital market has the potential to become one of the region's most compelling emerging investment destinations.

IRAN DAILY: How would you assess the state of Iran's capital market in the current economic environment? How significant a role can it play in financing businesses, boosting production and supporting the country's broader economic growth?

MOKARRAMI: Looking at the past few months alone, Iran's capital market has turned in one of its most surprising performances. After trading was suspended for nearly 80 days following the recent war, many expected the market to reopen with a massive wave of selling. Instead, the opposite occurred. The market not only weathered the initial pressure but

also posted nearly 40% growth during the first quarter of the [Iranian] year (beginning March 21), recording the strongest return among Iran's financial markets. The market's dollar value also increased from roughly \$70 billion to nearly \$100 billion. Several key factors explain this performance. First, the Securities and Exchange Organization, together with market stabilization and development funds, played an effective role in maintaining market stability. Second, the stock market had lagged behind inflation and the appreciation of other asset classes for several years, leaving many listed companies trading at attractive valuations. Corporate price-to-earnings ratios also remain relatively low, which many analysts view as evidence that the market is undervalued. In addition, the recent memorandum of understanding signed by Iran and the United States to extend the ceasefire and continue negotiations has strengthened hopes for lower political tensions and an improved economic environment.

The capital market's role, however, extends far beyond rising stock indices. If Iran enters a more stable economic period, the capital market could become the country's primary source of financing for companies and large-scale projects. Expanding the debt market, issuing bonds and increasing corporate capital could reduce the economy's dependence on the banking sector while directing financial resources toward productive investment. In an economy that has faced years of underinvestment, the capital market has the potential to become one of the main engines of growth and development.

If Iran and the United States reach an agreement and sanctions are eased, what would that mean for Iran's capital market? How could it reshape the market's performance and its integration into the global economy?

In my opinion, a potential agreement would represent far more than a short-term catalyst for the stock market. It could mark

the beginning of a new chapter for Iran's economy. Today, a significant share of listed companies' profits stems from inflation and nominal price increases. However, if sanctions are eased and Iran's trade relations with the rest of the world become more normalized, companies would have the opportunity to achieve genuine growth through higher production, stronger exports and increased investment. Iran has substantial potential in major industries such as petrochemicals, metals, mining, banking and transportation. Yet much of this capacity has remained underutilized over the past several years because of external restrictions and domestic challenges. An agreement could reduce trading costs, make it easier for companies to access export markets and advanced technologies, and create a more predictable business environment. Under such circumstances, the value of listed companies could also rise.

At the same time, it would be unrealistic to assume that simply signing an agreement would

solve every problem. The experience of the JCPOA [2015 nuclear deal] demonstrated that domestic reforms are equally important. Exchange-rate reform, reducing administrative price controls, increasing transparency, improving financial reporting standards and ensuring greater consistency in economic policymaking are all essential to strengthening investor confidence.

If these two tracks—an external agreement and domestic reforms—go hand in hand, Iran's capital market could become one of the region's most attractive emerging markets. The country's stock market capitalization still falls well short of the Iranian economy's true potential, and under improved conditions, sustained growth in both real and dollar terms would be well within reach.

How well positioned are Iran's financial markets to attract foreign investors and Iranians living abroad? What would it take to turn that potential into actual investment?

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Pezeshkian: Iran-US talks fully coordinated with Leader

'Tehran will stand by deal only if Washington does so'



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with clerics in central city of Qom on June 30, 2026.
● president.ir

the rights of the Iranian people "from a position of dignity, strength and safeguarding national interests" and had neither accepted nor would accept demands imposed by what he called Iran's enemies, IRNA reported. Speaking at a meeting with a group of clerics in the central city of Qom, the president described the agreement as "another achievement of the Iranian nation in the field of diplomacy" and said Iran had entered the negotiations with the US "from a position of strength," crediting public resistance, the capabilities of the country's armed forces and the preservation of domestic unity.

He said every stage of the negotiations had been carried out in line with the Islamic Republic's overarching policies, in continuous coordination with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei and

through the country's legal mechanisms.

Despite security constraints and considerations, the final text of the agreement underwent expert and security reviews by the relevant authorities before receiving what Pezeshkian said was strong backing from members of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Pezeshkian accused some political currents of trying to chip away at the diplomatic achievement by attacking Iran's negotiating team and questioning national decisions.

He said stronger coordination among different branches of the state and greater internal cohesion were essential to resolving the country's problems, adding that reaching national objectives would remain difficult "until we reach a common language and a shared understanding of the issues." The president again underscored the need to preserve national unity.

"Wherever national solidarity has been strengthened, the country has moved along the path of progress and strength, and wherever divisions have widened, the ground has been pre-

pared for enemies to exploit," he said. In a post on X late on Monday, Pezeshkian also referred to recent military threats by the US president against the Islamic Republic, saying that any agreement between Tehran and Washington must be based on "mutual respect and reciprocal commitments", not threats or one-sided pressure.

"Mutual understanding is a two-way street. If the American side adheres to the agreement, we will also fulfill our commitments," he wrote.

"Our approach to unreasonable saber-rattling and baseless threats is to rely on rationality and human dignity in decision-making, and to defend decisively and fearlessly when it comes time to act," he added.

His remarks came as Iran and the United States work toward implementing a Pakistan-mediated Memorandum of Understanding aimed at ending the recent cycle of US-Israeli aggression and easing regional tensions.

Iran has repeatedly said it remains ready for serious diplomacy based on justice and equality while rejecting coercion and what it describes as empty promises.

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday that all stages of Tehran's recent negotiations with the United States were conducted in full coordination with the country's Lead-

er and within Iran's legal framework, adding that Tehran would not bow to "imposed demands" as both sides work to implement a recently reached agreement.

Pezeshkian said the government had pursued the negotiations to secure

Iran to hold talks with Qatar on blocked funds; denies US meeting

International Desk

Iran will hold talks with mediator Qatar on Wednesday regarding its frozen assets, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said, denying that any meeting with the United States was planned in the Persian Gulf state, where delegations from both sides were expected.

"What is expected to take place in Doha, probably tomorrow, will be discussions regarding the implementation of provisions of the memorandum of understanding, including the provision concerning the release of Iran's restricted assets, and these discussions will be held with the Qatari side," Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told reporters at a weekly press conference on Tuesday. "Therefore, I emphasize that we have not planned any meeting with the American side at any level for the next few days," Baqaei added.

While there is no official figure for the total amount of frozen Iranian assets, media reports have estimated the sum at between \$100 billion and \$123 billion.

His remarks came after US President Donald Trump claimed on Monday that a meeting would be held in Qatar's capital at Iran's request on Tuesday.

According to Qatar's Foreign Ministry,



US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff have also arrived in the country's capital, Doha, despite having no meetings with Iranian officials scheduled.

Tehran and Washington have signed a Pakistan-mediated 14-point memorandum of understanding to end a recent aggression by the US and Israel against Iran.

They have also set a 60-day period to discuss further issues including sanctions imposed on Iran as well as the country's nuclear program in order to reach a comprehensive agreement between the two countries.

However, Iran has insisted full implementation of the provisions of the Islamabad memorandum, especially a cessation of military operations on all fronts, including Lebanon, as preconditions for the resumption of negotiations. But the Israeli regime has never stopped its attacks on Lebanon despite the Iran-US agreement which

requires the cessation of such attacks. Baqaei stressed that Tehran will monitor the US's compliance with the memorandum "moment by moment" and warned that Tehran will not implement its commitments unilaterally. Baqaei said Tehran had never expected the diplomatic process to proceed without challenges, given the deep mutual mistrust and bitter past experiences of US breaches of commitments and Israeli obstruction.

He called the cessation of military operations on all fronts the most critical provision of the agreement, saying that, the United States, as the other party to the memorandum, must adhere to its commitments and do whatever is necessary regarding Lebanon to ensure that Israel's military aggression against Lebanon is halted.

Baqaei warned that if the US fails to rein in Israeli violations, Iran will not hesitate to use all available tools to protect its national security and interests.

Qatar, alongside Pakistan, has acted as a mediator in talks between Iran and the United States aimed at ending the war in the Middle East.

The most recent discussions between Tehran and Washington took place in Switzerland on June 21 with the attendance of delegations from all four countries.

Tehran rejects France-proposed Hormuz demining plan

Deputy FM: Mine clearance to be carried out exclusively by Iran

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi rejected France's bid to demine the Strait of Hormuz in collaboration with its allies, saying the operation will exclusively be carried out by the Islamic Republic.

Gharibabadi made the remarks on Monday after French President Emmanuel Macron said that his country and Oman had decided to work jointly, in coordination with partners, on demining the Strait of Hormuz to secure maritime routes and ensure free and unconditional passage through the strategic waterway.

"Under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) demining [the strait] will be carried out solely by Iran and not by any other country," he said.

The deputy foreign minister also noted that Iran will not allow any foreign meddling in the removal of mines from the Strait of Hormuz given the current "sensitive and complex" situation in the critical energy chokepoint.

"We strongly advise France not to make the situation more complicated with its provocations," he added.

His remarks came after Macron said in a post on X that France and Oman had decided to work jointly, in coordination with partners, on demining the Strait of Hormuz to secure

maritime routes and ensure "free and unconditional" passage through the strategic waterway.

Macron made the remarks following talks in Paris with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq during his first official visit to France.

Iran has repeatedly maintained that navigation management, demining operations and temporary maritime arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz are governed by Article 5 of the Islamabad memorandum and remain under Iranian coordination as a coastal state. Iran restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz, responsible for a fifth of global oil demand, in response to the illegal US-Israeli aggression on the country that began on February 28 and came to a halt under a ceasefire on April 8.

On July 18, Iran and the US signed the Pakistan-brokered MoU, which calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts and includes a commitment from both sides to hold further talks on a final agreement in the next 60 days.

Under the 14-point deal, Iran is required to ensure toll-free passage for commercial vessels for at least 60 days, with full restoration of traffic in the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days.

Iran has stressed that the strait will not return to prewar conditions, emphasizing its legitimate right to sovereignty over the waterway.

Iran's capital market ...

Contrary to perceptions outside Iran, the country's capital market has made significant progress in

developing its financial infrastructure. Today, a broad network of online brokerages, asset management firms, investment advisory companies, investment funds and a wide range of financial instruments operates within the market. Investors can choose among equity funds, fixed-income funds, gold-based funds and other exchange-traded funds according to their individual risk tolerance. Risk-management instruments such as futures and options contracts are also available, while younger generations have shown strong interest in online investing.

From a regulatory standpoint, Iran's capital market also allows foreign investors to participate by obtaining trading codes. Foreign companies may likewise receive licenses to establish financial institutions in Iran when the right conditions are in place. The period following the 2015 nuclear agreement also demonstrated considerable interest among foreign investors in exploring opportunities in Iran's market. However, because the agreement was never fully implemented and political risks persisted, that interest never translated into large-scale investment.

If the political and economic environment becomes more stable, the capital market could become one of

the country's principal gateways for foreign capital as well as investment from Iranians living abroad. New instruments, including foreign currency-denominated investment funds, could also be introduced to reduce investors' concerns over exchange-rate volatility. After years of underinvestment, compounded by the damage caused by the recent war, Iran's economy needs fresh financial resources more than ever. If political stability, economic reforms and greater alignment with international standards come together, Iran's capital market has the potential to become one of the country's most important financing channels for economic reconstruction and long-term development.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



From Pirouz to Helia

No tough decisions, no future for Asiatic cheetah: Researcher

**INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE**

The Asiatic cheetah, also known as the Iranian cheetah and the nation's emblematic wildlife species and the sole surviving representative anywhere on Earth, has, for many years, subsisted upon the precipice of extinction. Notwithstanding the implementation of diverse conservation initiatives, ranging from captive propagation to the execution of programs intended to diminish roadway fatalities, numerous questions concerning the efficacy of these measures, the authentic demographic status of the cheetah population, and the prospective destiny of this invaluable species, continue to persist. Conversely, the dissemination of encouraging reports, such as the successful reproduction of certain cheetahs in the wild, together with accounts of habitat contraction and the perpetuation of existential threats, has rendered an exact appraisal of the species' condition more consequential than ever before.

Under such circumstances, the absence of a systematic and scientifically rigorous monitoring framework, disagreements concerning the actual number of surviving cheetahs, the fate of the captive-breeding program, the imperative necessity of genetic investigations, and even the proposition of employing African cheetahs to avert the extinction of the Asiatic cheetah, have all turned into contentious subjects among specialists.

To scrutinize these issues, Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Morteza Pourmirzai, a wildlife conservationist, researcher, Asiatic cheetah specialist, and chief executive officer of the Sarvin Wildlife Conservation. Having devoted many years to the study and monitoring of the Asiatic cheetah, and having also served for several years as the CEO of the Iranian Cheetah Society, he elucidated the latest condition of the Asiatic cheetah, while addressing the challenges of conservation, the deficiencies of executive programs, the destiny of the captive-breeding project, the status of habitats, and the strategies capable of extricating this invaluable species from the crisis of extinction. The complete transcript of the translated interview appears below.

Morteza Pourmirzai



IRAN DAILY: How do you evaluate the current condition of the Asiatic cheetah? Some contend that the situation has improved, whereas others maintain that it has remained unchanged or has even deteriorated. What is your perspective regarding this matter?

POURMIRZAI: The indispensable prerequisite for asserting that a demographic alteration has occurred within the cheetah population, and subsequently evaluating whether that alteration has been beneficial or otherwise, consists of one element alone: population monitoring. In other words, the population must undergo proper and scientifically rigorous monitoring. Upon the foundation of an almost integrated monitoring system, the antecedent and subsequent findings must undergo comparative evaluation, and only thereafter may one ascertain what alteration has transpired and whether the situation has ameliorated or deteriorated.

At present, the previous form of monitoring has entirely ceased to exist. Limited camera-trap deployment persists only within certain sectors of the Touran region, and even that activity is not conducted by a specialized team. Rather, an interested individual who had connections with environmental authorities has installed several cameras there. For approximately the last two years, we ourselves have not received authorization for camera deployment. Consequently, I myself cannot inform you

whether conditions have improved or worsened. Perhaps they have improved; perhaps they have not. Nevertheless, the most precise response I can furnish is that I simply do not know. Indeed, nobody else knows either because no precise monitoring or surveillance has been conducted.

However, as a researcher, upon the basis of the available evidence and activities, what is your assessment of the present situation?

As a researcher in this field, upon the basis of the available evidence, activities, and measures undertaken for the cheetah, I can present an evaluation of the current situation. At present, activities concerning the cheetah are conducted in a relatively systematic manner by the Department of Environment, and this organization, pursuant to its responsibilities and institutional procedures, performs a variety of tasks. For instance, it recruits new game wardens. The most recent announcement, approximately one year ago, indicated that eight individuals had been recruited, although the status of their contract renewals remains indeterminate. Several others had already been employed previously. Nevertheless, for a species confronting an exceptionally elevated risk of extinction, considerably more comprehensive measures are required. Recruiting eight game wardens, whose continued employment has not yet been confirmed, does not constitute a substantial ac-

complishment. For example, the Touran Protected Area possesses approximately 30 to 35 game wardens. This number is inadequate for a habitat encompassing 1.5 million hectares, within which only half that number — namely 15 wardens — conduct patrols during each shift. In practical terms, each game warden bears responsibility, on average, for safeguarding 100,000 hectares, and the reality is that no individual game warden possesses the capacity to protect 100,000 hectares. Consequently, proclaiming the recruitment of eight auxiliary personnel cannot be regarded as a noteworthy achievement for cheetah conservation.

What deficiencies exist regarding the collection of cheetah-related data?

With respect to the collection of cheetah-related data, the prevailing methodologies are unscientific and devoid of professional rigor. Moreover, the monitoring and census of ungulate (hoofed) species are considerably less complicated than those of carnivorous species because, among ungulates, observers may approach herds more closely, enumerate individuals through direct observation, and subsequently announce statistical estimates. Conversely, conducting a population census of carnivorous animals is by no means so straightforward because such animals deliberately avoid visibility and rapidly flee. Indeed, throughout approximately 17 years devoted to

cheetah research and field exploration, I have personally observed a cheetah only twice.

Consequently, an unequivocal assertion that, for example, "upon the basis of camera registrations and monitoring, we possess 20 cheetahs," cannot possess a particularly high degree of precision. Furthermore, within these monitoring efforts, recently, cubs have occasionally been incorporated into the reported population totals, whereas, from a scientific perspective, a cub cannot be considered part of the population until it has attained independence from its mother. Approximately two years after birth, cheetahs gradually become independent and commence reproduction. In other words, within an approximately three-year interval, they achieve independence and enter the breeding population. Only after reaching the age of three, if a photographic record is obtained, may we affirm that one additional individual has entered our recognized population. Otherwise, prior to that stage, innumerable contingencies could result in its mortality.

One encouraging development concerning the cheetah was that "Helia," a female cheetah inhabiting the Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in North Khorasan Province, gave birth to five cubs. More recently, however, reports initially indicated that two cubs had disappeared, and subsequently asserted that two cubs had been observed independently of their

Helia's successful reproduction in the wild during the past year, producing five cubs, constituted extraordinarily auspicious news for the cheetah population and revitalized hopes for the continuation of the Asiatic cheetah lineage and the prevention of its extinction. Subsequently, reports emerged that two cheetahs had been observed in Miandasht, accompanied by assertions that they were Helia's remaining cubs, which had attained independence earlier than expected. Scientifically, however, that interpretation is erroneous.

mother within the region. What is your opinion concerning this matter?

Helia's successful reproduction in the wild during the past year, producing five cubs, constituted extraordinarily auspicious news for the cheetah population and revitalized hopes for the continuation of the Asiatic cheetah lineage and the prevention of its extinction. Subsequently, reports emerged that two cheetahs had been observed in Miandasht, accompanied by assertions that they were Helia's remaining cubs, which had attained independence earlier than expected. Scientifically, however, that interpretation is erroneous. Those two cubs have, in all probability, not yet attained independence, and their survival remains imperiled. Our supposition is that they most likely became separated from their mother because of circumstances such as pursuit by hunters or livestock herders.

On certain occasions, individuals pursuing photographic opportunities also pursue cheetahs with motorcycles, and such actions may fragment family groups. Ordinarily, cheetah cubs do not separate from their mothers before reaching 18 months of age. The probability that such an involuntary separation occurred is exceedingly high. Fortunately, however, the two cubs remained together and therefore possess the capacity to hunt cooperatively.

Consequently, the assertion by certain officials that these cubs achieved premature independence

A male Asiatic cheetah named Koushki is seen in the Miandasht Nature Reserve, North Khorasan Province, Iran, on September 3, 2014.

● ABACA





appears incorrect to me. This constituted an unintended occurrence, and the cubs could easily have perished. Fortunately, they remained together and succeeded in hunting. In essence, we were fortunate. Subsequently, if one wishes to evaluate the matter from scientific and conservation-oriented perspectives, one must investigate the circumstances that occasioned their separation from their mother and then determine whether additional protective measures or assistance have become necessary.

What measures have proven beneficial and efficacious for rescuing the Iranian cheetah?

At present, cheetahs confront the danger of roadway collisions resulting from vehicular impacts. We already know that, regarding cheetah conservation, the same measures as before are still being implemented, albeit at an exceedingly slow pace. For example, roadside fencing is not being completed with the requisite expediency, and the procurement of equipment is likewise not proceeding with the necessary swiftness.

The Department of Environment also administers a project entitled the "Captive Cheetah Breeding Program," which has now persisted for more than 10 years since its inception. A cheetah cub named Pirouz constituted the latest achievement and outcome of this project in 2023, yet that outcome — namely, Pirouz — perished during the same year. That cub represented the final product of a project upon which billions of tomans had been expended.

For the implementation of that project, a healthy adult female cheetah was removed from the wild, captured near Miandasht, and transferred into the breeding enclosure. We have even received reports indicating that another wild cheetah was also confined within the enclosure for a period of time. Nevertheless, none of these measures has produced any tangible outcome. Admittedly, this captive-breeding program still continues, yet it has generated no results whatsoever, nor has any information concerning its progress been disclosed. Ordinarily, by May, we should have witnessed another cheetah birth. Instead, several years have elapsed, and, subsequent to Pirouz, no outcome has materialized and no development has occurred. Meanwhile, the project's funding has not been discontinued, and its specialists continue their work, yet no tangible result exists.

Under these circumstances, may we conclude that the captive cheetah project has now failed and ought not to continue?

Two issues exist. Whenever the population becomes exceedingly small, we must maintain a supplementary captive population, so that, should our wild population

encounter any adversity, or, for example, should one of the cheetah cubs that has become separated from its mother sustain an injury and consequently become incapable of hunting, it may be maintained within the supplementary captive population. The essential issue is that, under these circumstances, we must assist every individual cheetah in transmitting its genetic material to the succeeding generation, whether in the wild or in captivity.

However, transporting cheetahs from the wild into captivity at the present time, while achieving no reproductive success whatsoever, is by no means desirable. At present, we possess four females and one male in captivity, none of which has produced any accomplishment subsequent to Pirouz, and, regrettably, they are advancing in age and consequently forfeiting their reproductive capacity because, if females fail to reproduce within the first two or three years after attaining sexual maturity — that is, within one or two years following maturity — the probability of successful reproduction declines suddenly.



At present, we have Azar, Touran, and another female cheetah named Mahour; all of which have already attained that stage of life and have not yet reproduced. The fourth female cheetah, named Delbar, is now exceedingly aged and no longer possesses reproductive capability.

Please explain the latest demographic estimates concerning the Asiatic cheetah population, the trajectory of its continued survival, and its remaining regions and habitats within Iran.

At present, the majority of the cheetah population inhabits eastern Semnan Province and southern North Khorasan Province, namely, the Touran region and Miandasht. Their habitat in Yazd Province has disappeared. The latest estimate that we produced, and that we may still legitimately announce, is fewer than 30 individuals. Throughout these 13 years, cameras have been deployed across 12 distinct regions to document cheetah numbers. The cumulative outcome of studies conducted over a 13-year interval

The photo shows the Asiatic cheetah named Helia and some of her cubs in Iran. **IRNA**

is that, after 13 years, we now possess 30 cheetahs. That constitutes the most recent conclusion upon which we may legitimately predicate any assertion.

Regrettably, throughout these 13 years and continuing until the present, the trend has been one of reduction because our initial estimate indicated a population of fewer than 70 individuals. Gradually, however, we entirely forfeited the southern habitat, and we likewise forfeited our western habitat, namely Kavir National Park. Throughout the entire period during which research and monitoring were conducted, these habitats disappeared, and the remaining habitats have now become confined to the Touran region and Miandasht. Regrettably, during this interval, we even experienced one occasion upon which Miandasht lost its entire cheetah population. Nevertheless, owing to Helia and her cubs, after six years during which the cheetah had become extinct

Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) specialist team prepare an African cheetah for the translocation to India at the CCF centre in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, on September 12, 2022. **CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND**

there, cheetahs once again inhabit the area. Overall, however, the trajectory remains unpromising. Precisely for that reason, I maintain that merely recruiting, for example, eight auxiliary personnel exerts no influence whatsoever upon the destiny of the cheetah.

For the purpose of ensuring the continuation of the cheetah lineage in Iran, another proposal had also been advanced, namely, importing several cheetahs from Africa. Does that proposal remain under consideration?

No action whatsoever has been undertaken in that regard. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it is an excellent proposal because, if we intend to prevent the extinction of our cheetah, we must undertake every conceivable measure. At present, no simple solution exists for preserving the cheetah



lineage, and we must possess the fortitude to adopt difficult decisions. One such difficult solution consists of maintaining a genetically mixed cheetah population; such a population is preferable to possessing no cheetahs whatsoever. Certainly, all of us would prefer to preserve a genetically pure Asiatic cheetah because it survives exclusively in Iran. Occasionally, however, no alternative remains. Before reaching that juncture, we have, for several years, consistently maintained that comprehensive genetic studies must be conducted upon our cheetahs. Such investigations require considerable financial resources, resources that only the Department of Environment can provide, and only that organization possesses the legal authority to authorize their execution.

For what purpose should genetic studies be conducted?

Whenever one intends to undertake an activity concerning, for example, cheetah conservation, one must first establish its scientific foundation. In other words, I must ascertain the genetic status of our cheetahs. If, for example, I import two male cheetahs and two female cheetahs from Africa, will I possess sufficient genetic diversity to preserve the health of my population throughout the next 10 years, or will I not? Alternatively, is the situation considerably more catastrophic than that, thereby necessitating the importation of a substantially larger population, or even annual importations?

The answer to every one of those questions resides within the genetic study. In other words, whenever one intends to resolve a problem, one must first ascertain its magnitude, and only thereafter undertake its resolution. Consequently, for the cheetah, a genetic study is more indispensable than daily sustenance. We have articulated this necessity for several years, yet it has received no attention because genetic investigations require genetic samples, and, from a legal standpoint, only the Department of Environment may conduct such procedures.

I believe that the Department of Environment must awaken to reality without delay and, rather than



An Asiatic cheetah lies dead next to the road after being hit by a car in Iran. **VORTEX**



At present, no simple solution exists for preserving the cheetah lineage, and we must possess the fortitude to adopt difficult decisions. One such difficult solution consists of maintaining a genetically mixed cheetah population; such a population is preferable to possessing no cheetahs whatsoever. Certainly, all of us would prefer to preserve a genetically pure Asiatic cheetah because it survives exclusively in Iran. Occasionally, however, no alternative remains.

A home kit of the Iranian men's national football team for the 2026 World Cup is revealed in an event in Tehran, Iran. Local manufacturer Majid has once again brought back the Asiatic cheetah print. **X**

merely attempting to suppress criticism through the publication of favorable news, generate authentic achievements and permit independent, nongovernmental individuals and supporting institutions to contribute their expertise and assistance. Otherwise, if it merely endeavors to soothe public opinion through favorable publicity, the ultimate consequence will be an immensely tragic announcement: the extinction of the Asiatic cheetah. At that moment, the Department will confront that very public opinion in complete isolation.

For several years, the image of the Asiatic cheetah has appeared upon the uniforms of Iran's national athletes during multiple FIFA World Cups and international competitions in support of the species. In your opinion, has this initiative been beneficial for the cheetah?

It has been extraordinarily efficacious, both within Iran and internationally. In my opinion, it has constituted an immensely significant contribution to the cheetah. The presence of the cheetah upon the national team's jersey has enhanced public awareness and familiarity with the species and has increased public affection for it. Nevertheless, we may assert that this influence has contributed to conservation only if it results in the attraction of financial support, an increase in the number of sponsors supporting the cheetah, greater governmental dedication of time and financial resources, and heightened public and institutional attention. Unfortunately, although this initiative has profoundly influenced both the Iranian public and the international community, it has not exerted a comparable influence upon the government, the policymaking apparatus, or the acquisition of financial support and international assistance for the Asiatic cheetah conservation project.

To secure such financial assistance, one must also resolve the issue of sanctions, and that objective requires lobbying and sustained effort. It is not impossible, but it is arduous, and the government must undertake that responsibility. Meanwhile, the project for restoring the cheetah population in Iran and augmenting its numbers represents an exceptional opportunity to generate foreign-currency revenue for the country, create employment within local communities, and thereby mitigate rural-to-urban migration. Consequently, the continuation of the initiative featuring the cheetah upon the uniforms of the national athletes is commendable because awareness-raising is invariably beneficial from our perspective. Likewise, preserving our national symbols and giving them the respect that they deserve is invariably a very fine undertaking.

Long-term fundamental reform needed throughout Iranian football: *Modirrousta*



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran's national football team bowed out of the group stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup despite producing determined performances and earning respectable results against its Group G opponents. Ultimately, however, Team Melli failed again to capitalize on the opportunity to reach the knockout rounds for the first time in the history of the showpiece.

Many observers identified Iran's match against New Zealand in their opening match as the defining moment of the campaign. Victory in that fixture would have put qualification firmly within reach, but a 2-2 draw against a team that was comfortably beaten by Egypt and Belgium later left Iran's fate dependent on results in other groups. Beyond the team's on-field performances, analysts also pointed to a series of off-field challenges leading up to the tournament.

These included the lack of high-quality warm-up matches, logistical difficulties stemming from the team's training base in Mexico and travel restrictions imposed by co-host United States, as well as criticism of several management decisions and the team's overall preparation. Former Iran international Ali-Asghar Modirrousta believes the players gave everything despite the circumstances, but argues that the absence of an effective tactical plan and the coaching staff's conservative approach ultimately prevented Iran from advancing. In an interview with Iran Daily, Modirrousta discussed Iran's World Cup campaign, the reasons behind the team's elimination, tactical and managerial shortcomings, the need for generational renewal, the future of head coach Amir Qalenoee, and the structural reforms Iranian football requires to succeed in future tournaments.

Ali-Asghar Modirrousta



IRAN DAILY: How would you assess Iran's overall performance at the 2026 World Cup?

MODIRROUSTA: Our national team arrived at the World Cup under very difficult circumstances. The regional situation and the war had a significant impact on our preparations. We faced a challenging training camp, lacked quality friendly matches, and based ourselves in Tijuana, which meant we had to travel back and forth between Mexico and the United States for every game.

Those conditions made things extremely difficult, especially psychologically. A team preparing for the World Cup needs strong preparation matches, but we simply didn't have them. We also didn't have an ideal base close to the tournament venues.

The decision to base the team in Mexico raises important questions. We need to know whether it was solely because some federation officials and staff were denied U.S. visas or whether other considerations influenced that decision.

If the choice was made primarily so federation officials and media personnel could remain with the team, then I believe we made the wrong decision and the players paid the price. Had those officials returned home and the team itself been based in the United States, the constant travel between Mexico and the U.S. would have been avoided, making life much easier for the players.

What about the team's performances on the pitch?

Given the circumstances, I think our players fought admirably in all three matches. Every member of the team deserves credit because they entered the tournament without proper preparation but still gave everything they had. With the World Cup expanding to 48 teams, many believed our path to qualification would be easier. Qualification ultimately depended on beating New Zealand, and unfortunately that didn't happen.

Defensively, Iran performed well against Belgium and Egypt. But that's really the only area where we excelled. From a tactical and attacking perspective, our performances were far from convincing.

The results came largely because of the players' work ethic and commitment rather than any sophisticated tactical approach. We saw very little evidence of clear tactical planning from the coaching staff, and many of the substitutions were questionable.

When the head coach says that "even God was against us" during these matches, I don't



AFP

agree. The outcome was largely a consequence of our tactical approach, and another part of it comes down to what I would call football karma.

What do you mean by 'football karma'?

Several young players who truly deserved to be part of the squad were either omitted or never called up, even though they could have contributed to the team's future.

There were legitimate questions about selecting Ehsan Hajsafi despite his lack of fitness, Shahriar Moghanlou despite there being no prior indication he would be called up, Roozbeh Cheshmi despite his injury, and Alireza Jahanbakhsh, who has been away from regular football and no longer possesses the same effectiveness.

Some senior players should step aside voluntarily instead of waiting to be dropped and allow younger players to take their place. How much does it really matter if someone can say they played in three or four World Cups?

We also brought in the dual-national player Dennis Dargahi but didn't give him even a single minute on the pitch.

When these things add up, questions of fairness inevitably arise. In football, those decisions eventually come back to affect you, and I believe we saw that reflected in our results.

We also shouldn't exaggerate these results by saying the draws were satisfactory. We had a genuine opportunity to qualify from this group and failed to do so. The federation and coaching staff must treat this as a lesson for the future.

Many people felt Iran lacked

courage, particularly against Belgium and Egypt. Could the team have played more aggressively?

Courage starts on the bench and transfers onto the pitch. The national team was overly cautious. We needed to beat New Zealand by adopting a far more attacking approach. Instead, we left qualification until the final day, when our fate depended on other teams' results, and ultimately that led to our elimination.

How do you see Amir Qalenoee's future as national team coach? Can he lead Iran to success at the Asian Cup?

Based on the approach he showed at the World Cup, I don't believe he will succeed at the Asian Cup unless he changes his philosophy and returns to the right path.

One problem is the way he responds to criticism. Some criticism is fair and some isn't, but he dismissed virtually all of it as biased or malicious.

He needs to rethink both his attitude toward constructive criticism and his tactical philosophy.

That said, I don't believe changing coaches after every disappointing result is the answer. The Asian Cup is not far away, and replacing the head coach now would not be the right move.

If we want to proceed in a principled way, he should stay - but only if he is willing to change his approach.

What about the rest of the coaching staff?

Changes are needed among the assistants.

Some members of the staff seem more interested in im-

pressing people through interviews and the use of English football terminology than demonstrating genuine coaching expertise.

I'm not referring to Andranik Teymourian or Rahman Rezaei. Both were outstanding internationals who have earned their place in coaching. Although they are relatively inexperienced, their international pedigree benefits the team's morale.

How is it possible to make so many unnecessary - and at times incorrect - substitutions in just three World Cup matches? Were these changes made to showcase certain players for future transfers, or were they simply tactical mistakes?

To Qalenoee's credit, he admitted that some substitutions were wrong, but we expected him to learn from those mistakes in the following matches, and that didn't happen.

For example, Mahdi Torabi came on briefly against Belgium and immediately troubled the opposition with his dribbling, yet he was barely used afterward.

How much does the squad need to change before the Asian Cup?

This rebuilding process should have started one or two years ago. By the time the World Cup arrived, we should already have had a younger team.

Even at this tournament, we could have replaced five or six older players, but that didn't happen.

The Asian Cup must feature a significantly younger squad. Of course we want to win the tournament after so many years, but if we once again rely on the same aging core and

only make gradual changes, Iranian football will suffer.

I believe the Asian Cup should mark a genuine overhaul, with older or less effective players making way for younger talent. We should already be preparing for the next World Cup. Unfortunately, our federation typically plans only one or two years ahead. If we instead adopted an eight-year development strategy focused on youth and structural reform, we could achieve meaningful progress in future tournaments. That simply cannot be accomplished within one or two years.

Should winning the Asian Cup remain the main objective?

I don't think Japan or South Korea will bring their strongest squads to the Asian Cup. They'll likely use the tournament to introduce younger players, with results becoming secondary.

In Iran, however, we tend to focus too much on statistics and immediate success.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to win the Asian Cup, but our primary focus should be on the future and on bigger competitions.

If Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and other rivals arrive with youthful squads while we win the title using our current aging team, how satisfying would that really be?

But if we also field a young team and become champions after years of rebuilding, that would be a far more meaningful achievement.

Do you believe Iranian football needs a long-term strategy. What should that strategy aim to achieve?

Absolutely. We need an eight-

year development plan capable of transforming Iranian football.

Success at the World Cup should mean consistently reaching the knockout rounds while playing attractive, entertaining football that earns international respect.

Our players worked incredibly hard in these three matches - it felt as though they covered the workload of six games. They ran tirelessly, disrupted opponents and fought for every ball. Those qualities were among Iran's greatest strengths at this World Cup.

But determination alone is not enough.

A modern team must also demonstrate tactical sophistication - moving the ball intelligently and repeatedly executing rehearsed patterns of play throughout a match. We didn't see enough of that.

We struggled to build attacks from the back. Instead, we repeatedly bypassed midfield with long balls from defense, hoping to win second balls before delivering crosses, often through Ramin Rezaeian on the right.

Modern football begins with controlled build-up from the goalkeeper and central defenders. Our approach, by contrast, was to send the ball long after one or two passes.

Part of the problem also lay in midfield, where we lacked a true playmaker capable of linking defense with attack.

These shortcomings aren't limited to the national team. They reflect broader problems throughout Iranian football. Our domestic league still relies far more on physical effort and fighting spirit than on modern tactical football.

That's why we need comprehensive structural reform across the entire game - from youth development to the senior national team. Only then will we see sustained success at the international level.

Too much of our league football is spent battling for possession in midfield rather than creating scoring chances. In many matches, clear opportunities are few and far between.

I would even say that our football is moving backwards rather than keeping pace with global trends.

Long-term structural reform is needed throughout Iranian football, beginning at the grassroots level and extending all the way to the senior game. That process must start with the Football Federation, while club administrators must also embrace change and create opportunities for people who can genuinely help move Iranian football forward.

Nashtifan windmills show Iran's ancient mastery of wind power

Iranica Desk

The windmills of Nashtifan in northeastern Iran stand among the most remarkable examples of indigenous engineering and climate-adapted architecture. Long before the concepts of renewable energy and sustainable development entered modern discourse, Iranian communities had learned to harness the power of the wind to grind grain and sustain local livelihoods.

In a commentary provided to ISNA, Hamidreza Nasser, a faculty member at the University of Tehran's Faculty of Natural Resources and head of the university's International Desert Research Center, highlighted the significance of Iran's historic windmills and called for renewed efforts to secure their international recognition.

According to Nasser, deserts and arid regions are often associated with drought, dust storms, soil erosion, and advancing sands. Yet focusing solely on these challenges overlooks another reality: deserts have also been landscapes of innovation and wisdom. Throughout history, Iranian communities developed ingenious

responses to harsh environmental conditions, including qanats, water reservoirs, mud-brick ice houses, Persian gardens, and windmills.

Rather than fighting against nature, Nasser argued, Iran's ancestors learned to understand their environment and transform its limitations into opportunities. In places where rainfall was scarce, qanats brought water to settlements; where scorching heat prevailed, ice houses preserved cool water; and where powerful winds swept across the landscape, windmills converted natural energy into a source of food security.

Among these achievements, the windmills of Nashtifan in Khorasan Razavi Province remain particularly significant. Built centuries ago, the structures use vertical-axis technology specifically designed to capture the strong and relatively consistent winds of eastern Iran. Without electricity, engines, or fossil fuels, the system was capable of grinding wheat into flour and supplying local communities with bread.

Nasser recently reflected on this legacy during a visit to the historic Witte Molen (White Mill) in Nijmegen,



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the Netherlands. While the Dutch windmill is an important symbol of local identity and heritage, he noted that its significance lies not only in its history but also in the way Dutch society has preserved and presented it to the world. In the Netherlands, windmills serve not merely as historical monuments but also as museums, educational centers, tourist attractions, and living symbols of national identity. In some regions, they contin-

ue to operate and produce goods for local communities.

A similar approach can be seen in Kinderdijk, where a collection of historic windmills has become one of the Netherlands' most recognizable cultural landscapes. According to Nasser, what visitors encounter there is more than a group of historic structures; it is a narrative about the relationship between humans and nature.

Although the windmills of

Nashtifan and those of the Netherlands are both powered by wind, they were designed for entirely different environments. Nashtifan's vertical-axis windmills were developed to harness the powerful winds of Iran's arid eastern plateau. Their tall mud-brick walls channel air toward wooden blades and millstones in a system carefully adapted to desert conditions.

Dutch windmills, by contrast, feature horizontal axes and large sails suited

to open plains exposed to winds from multiple directions. Their upper structures can be rotated to face changing wind patterns. If Nashtifan's windmills symbolize the harnessing of wind in a land of scarcity, Dutch windmills represent cooperation with wind in a landscape shaped by water. These differences, Nasser argued, make Nashtifan's windmills particularly valuable. They are not simply Iranian versions of European windmills but independent technological achievements developed in response to the specific environmental conditions of the Iranian plateau.

He described the structures as among the world's outstanding examples of indigenous technology and sustainable wind-energy use, demonstrating that Iranian were applying principles now associated with sustainable development centuries before the term entered the global scientific vocabulary. Nasser also emphasized that eastern Iran should not be defined solely through narratives of drought, dust, water shortages, and migration. The region is equally a landscape of knowledge and innovation, where genera-

tions developed sophisticated methods for adapting to some of the world's most challenging climates.

Each qanat, reservoir, ice house, and windmill, he said, represents a chapter in a largely overlooked history of human ingenuity. At a time when climate change poses growing challenges worldwide, these historical experiences offer valuable lessons in sustainable adaptation.

Calling Nashtifan the potential "capital of Iran's wind heritage," Nasser proposed transforming the site into a center for education, research, tourism, and dialogue on renewable energy. Just as Kinderdijk has become a symbol of the Netherlands' relationship with wind, he argued, Nashtifan could serve as a global symbol of Iran's long-standing tradition of environmental knowledge and innovation.

He also urged Iran's cultural heritage authorities, in cooperation with UNESCO, to pursue the world heritage inscription of Nashtifan's windmills with a renewed perspective, presenting them not merely as historical structures but as a living legacy of human creativity and sustainable interaction with nature.

Bandar-e Tang mud volcano reactivates with monsoon winds

Iranica Desk

With the arrival of seasonal monsoon winds along the Makoran coast, one of Iran's most remarkable natural phenomena has once again come to life. The Bandar-e Tang mud volcano, located in Konarak in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, has resumed activity, ejecting mud from its cone-shaped vent and offering a striking display of the Earth's dynamic geological processes.

In addition to reflecting natural environmental changes associated with



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the seasonal winds, the phenomenon highlights one of Iran's most valuable geotourism attractions and

underscores the potential for expanding nature-based tourism along the Makoran coast, chtn.ir wrote.

Mud volcanoes are rare geological formations created when pressure from natural gases deep beneath the Earth's surface forces mud and soft clay upward. Unlike conventional volcanoes, they do not emit lava or high-temperature materials; instead, their activity is characterized by the release of mud, water, and natural gases.

Earth scientists consider the Makoran coast one of Iran's most important regions for active mud volcanoes. These formations are valued for their scientific, educational, and tourism

significance, with many Iranian and international researchers describing them as natural laboratories for studying geological structures and subsurface processes.

The monsoon winds, which affect the coasts of the Sea of Oman and Makoran from late June through early autumn each year, bring relatively cooler temperatures, higher humidity, and occasional rainfall. Experts note that these climatic conditions also contribute to the activation of certain natural phenomena, including mud volcanoes.

The region's distinctive climate and landscapes attract large numbers of visitors each year, drawing tourists to the Sea of Oman coastline and the Makoran coast's unique natural attractions.

According to Taher Mirzaei, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Konarak, the Bandar-e Tang mud volcano is one of Iran's rarest geological phenomena and among the most prominent natural attractions in the country's southeast.

"The mud volcano creates a

unique landscape by expelling cold mud from deep underground," Mirzaei said. "Its activity typically intensifies with the onset of the monsoon winds and the accompanying climatic changes."

He added that the mud volcano's activity has increased significantly in recent days and that conditions are favorable for visits by both domestic and international tourists.

"With the start of the summer travel season, we expect growing interest in this natural attraction," he said.

Takht-e Soleyman sees strong spring tourism

Iranica Desk

The director of the Takht-e Soleyman World Heritage Site in Takab, West Azarbaijan Province, announced that 32,643 tourists visited the historic complex during the first quarter of the Iranian year (March 21-June 21, 2026). Afrasiab Geravand said that keeping the site open during the recent war was aimed at fostering hope, peace, national solidarity, and social cohesion. The initiative was well received by visitors and demonstrated that the civilizational and cultural roots of ancient Iran re-

main resilient and enduring even in times of crisis, according to chtn.ir.

He added that the Takht-e Soleyman World Heritage Site, which contains cultural and historical remains dating from the first millennium BCE to the medieval Islamic period, is one of Iran's most significant archaeological complexes and is widely known as the "turquoise jewel" of northwestern Iran.

Referring to the site's geographical location, Geravand noted that Takht-e Soleyman is situated 40 kilometers northeast of Takab in West Azarbaijan Province. The site was

inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2003 as Iran's fourth registered World Heritage property.

He further stated that, in addition to exploring the historical monuments within the complex, visitors can enjoy handicraft stalls, the region's mineral springs and thermal waters, and Qeynarjeh Waterfall, while gaining a deeper understanding of the area's natural and cultural attractions.

Takht-e Soleyman is regarded as one of Iran's most outstanding historical and archaeological sites. Located in a moun-

tainous plain in southern West Azarbaijan Province, the complex is centered around a natural lake fed by a deep artesian spring, which has played an important role in local beliefs and religious traditions for thousands of years.

During the Sassanid era, the site served as one of the most important religious and political centers of the Iranian Empire. It was home to the renowned Adur Gushnasp Fire Temple, one of the three most sacred fire temples of ancient Persia. The remains of palaces, ceremonial halls, defensive fortifications, and

religious structures surrounding the lake testify to the site's exceptional historical significance and its prominent place in Iran's cultural heritage. Recognized for its outstanding universal value, Takht-e Soleyman continues to play an important role in Iran's cultural tourism landscape. The complex attracts thousands of domestic and international visitors annually, as well as researchers and heritage enthusiasts who come to explore its archaeological significance, spiritual heritage, and unique natural setting in northwestern Iran.



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30 countries to attend martyred Leader's funeral

Social Desk

More than 30 countries have requested to attend the funeral ceremonies for Iran's late supreme leader, while religious leaders and scholars from more than 90 countries have also confirmed their readiness to participate, Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian, secretary of the National Headquarters for the Funeral and Farewell Ceremonies, said in Tehran on June 30, as the government announced a multi-day program spanning Iran and Iraq.

Speaking at the Interior Ministry, Pourjamshidian said the ceremonies would be held in the coming days under plans approved by the Supreme National Security Council and coordinated with the Office of the Leader. A national organizing committee, headed by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, has

been established to oversee the events alongside state institutions and security agencies.

He said the program would extend across Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Najaf and Karbala, with Iraq forming a parallel national committee chaired by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani. Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, recently travelled to Baghdad for consultations with Iraq's president, Parliament speaker and other senior officials to finalize arrangements.

He said a formal ceremony for foreign heads of state, senior officials and religious figures would be held in Tehran on July 3.

Public farewell ceremonies will begin in Tehran on July 4, followed by funeral prayers on July 5 and a procession across the capital on July 6. Ceremonies



Secretary of the National Headquarters for the Funeral and Farewell Ceremonies Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian addresses a press conference regarding the funeral arrangements for Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran on June 30, 2026.

● IRNA

will continue in Qom on July 7, before the body is transferred to Iraq on July 8 for official receptions and processions in Najaf and Karbala. Burial is scheduled for July 9 in Mashhad.

Iranian authorities said several public holidays have been declared to facilitate attendance, while Tehran's metro will operate free of charge and around the clock during the main events. More than 300 foreign journalists have applied for accreditation to cover the ceremonies.

Pourjamshidian also dismissed specu-



lation about communications restrictions, saying there would be "no internet limitations whatsoever" during the events. Security measures will instead

focus on crowd management, temporary airspace restrictions on July 3, and controls on drones and aerial filming during the ceremonies.

Russian ethnic festival awards Iranian film



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian feature film 'Havar' (Poultry Farm) won the Best Screenplay award and the Special Jury Prize for Best Music at the Mari International Ethnic Film Festival in Russia, its producers said.

Written and directed by Mohammadreza Ardalani and produced by Bahman Ardalani, the film earned the screenplay prize for Ardalani, while composer Navid Hejazi received the Special Jury Prize for his original

score. International distribution is handled by Madakto Pictures, ILNA reported.

Released overseas under the title 'Poultry Farm,' the film was originally produced as Faryad (Cry), but was renamed 'Havar' before receiving its Iranian screening permit to avoid confusion with a film of the same name by veteran Iranian director Masoud Kimiai.

The Mari International Ethnic Film Festival showcases films exploring cultural identity, heritage and indigenous traditions from around the world. The latest honors add to the international profile of Iranian cinema, which has maintained a consistent presence on the global festival circuit despite limited commercial distribution abroad.

The Best Screenplay award recognized Ardalani's script, while the jury praised Hejazi's score with its Special Jury Prize, citing its contribution to the film's narrative and emotional depth.

Iran handled 12-day war relief without seeking foreign aid



Social Desk

Iran managed humanitarian relief throughout the 12-day war in June 2025 without formally requesting international assistance, while 18 countries voluntarily sent humanitarian aid, Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) chief Pirhossein Kolivand said on Tuesday as the organization signed a new cooperation agreement with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of Imam Khomeini (EIKO).

Kolivand said the IRCS mobilized rescue teams from the first hours of the conflict, carrying out search-and-rescue operations, debris removal, casualty evacuation and the recovery of victims under what it dubbed the "front line of humanity".

He said the society's operational capacity had been significantly strengthened in recent years, enabling it to respond independently during the conflict.

He said 56 IRCS medical and relief facilities were damaged in the attacks. The cases were documented as alleged violations of international humanitarian law and compiled into reports submitted to 19 international organizations, including the International Criminal Court prosecutor, the International

Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations and other humanitarian bodies.

"Our documentation was collected and transmitted on a daily basis so it could be used in legal proceedings," Kolivand said.

Alongside emergency operations, specialist teams provided psychological support, medical care and services for women and children in affected areas, while the IRCS also stepped up humanitarian diplomacy.

Kolivand said the organization issued 35 official letters and 11 public statements, maintained contacts with Red Cross and Red Crescent societies abroad and facilitated visits by UN representatives to damaged areas in coordination with Iran's Foreign Ministry.

He added that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies had recognized the Iranian Red Crescent as a leading national society and designated it a regional hub for rescue training and disaster management.

Although Tehran made no formal appeal for foreign assistance, Kolivand said 18 countries voluntarily dispatched humanitarian supplies, which were distributed rapidly to those affected.

The cooperation agreement signed on Tuesday builds on joint work that intensified during the conflict. Officials said the two organizations expanded volunteer training, field assessments, telemedicine and psychological support. Through the IRCS's Chelsey online platform, 2,420 trained counsellors delivered more than one million minutes of specialist consultations, with the program set to continue during major national and religious gatherings.

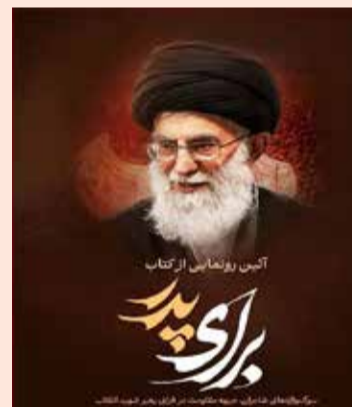
Poets from 12 countries unveil first tribute to Ayatollah Khamenei

Arts & Culture Desk

A poetry anthology featuring works by writers from 12 countries was unveiled in Tehran on Tuesday as the first collective literary tribute to Iran's "martyred leader", with organizers describing it as the opening chapter of a broader cultural initiative to preserve his legacy through literature.

Titled 'For Father: Elegies by Resistance Front Poets in Mourning the Revolution's Martyred Leader,' the 478-page volume brings together poems from across the Resistance Front literary community, IRNA reported.

The book was compiled by Hossein Alaeddin, with an introduction by Rouhollah Mokhtari and literary scholar Mohammadreza Sangari.



Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari, head of Iran's National Council for Friday Prayer Policy, called the publication the literary community's "first gift" to the martyred leader and said it reflected an unprecedented cultural response that had emerged since his mar-


tyrdom.

"Our poets entered the field from the very first moments and fulfilled their mission," Haj Ali Akbari said. "They have rendered a lasting service to Persian poetry and literature, while strengthening the literary voice of the Resistance Front in Iran and across the region."

He described the collection as evidence of a wider "literary renaissance", saying the country's poetic tradition had responded swiftly to the national moment through verse.

The project was produced through cooperation between the Friday Prayer institution and leading Iranian poets and literary figures. Haj Ali Akbari said the initiative would continue, with a particular focus on nurturing younger writers.

Second Announcement



ESCO
Esfahan Steel Company

Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Tender No. 1032795

It is hereby announced that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to procure the bosh lokomotive, in accordance with the required conditions and technical specifications, through a two-stage international tender. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir so as to obtain the tender document no later than 05.07.2026 and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to 06.07.2026 at 00:45 p.m. It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose.

Yours Respectfully,
M.Shateri,
 Equipment and Goods Procurement Management
 Esfahan Steel Company