

Iranians bag 12 medals at World Para Athletics Championships



Iran's Yasin Khosravi (L) and Saeid Afrooz set new world records en route to winning a couple of gold medals for the country at the World Para Athletics Championships in Paris.

Sports Desk

Iran rounded off the World Para Athletics Championships in Paris with 12 medals – including four golds. The event also saw the Iranian athletes seal 16 quotas for next year's Paralympic Games, also to be held in the French capital. On Monday, Sajjad Mohammadian and Sadeq Beyt-Sayyah brought the curtain down on a medal-laden campaign for Iran by collecting a couple of silver medals.

Mohammadian registered a best throw of 14.38m to finish second in the men's shot put F63 contest, while Beyt-Sayyah's silver came in the men's javelin throw F41 event, where he tallied 45.46m. Mohammadian's silver was a fifth medal for Iran in the men's shot put competitions after Mehdi Olad, Rashid Masjedi, Yasin Khosravi and had all walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective classes – with Hadi Kaeidi settling for the F34 bronze.

A gold and silver medalist at the Tokyo Paralympics, Olad won the F11 gold with a 13.79m finish, with Masjedi's 8.49m throw earning him the top prize in the F53 contest. This was a second world medal for Olad in Paris, following a silver-winning run in the discus throw competitions. Khosravi, meanwhile, trashed the world record with 16.01m en route to a top-spot finish in the F57 category. Khosravi was not alone in breaking a world record for

the Iranians in Paris as Saeid Afrooz's new high of 40.27m saw the Paralympic champion claim the F34 gold in the men's javelin throw. Elsewhere in Paris, Ali Pirouj (men's javelin throw – F13), Amir Khosravani (men's long jump – T12), and Elham Salehi (women's javelin throw – F54) finished their campaigns with three silver medals. Also a gold medalist in the Games in Tokyo, Hashemiyeh Motaqian left the French capital with a consolation bronze in the women's javelin throw

F56 event. Iran finished 14th among 103 participating countries, which were represented by more than 1,200 athletes in Paris. China dominated the medals table with 16 golds and silvers apiece, plus 14 bronzes, followed by Brazil, which collected 47 medals – including 14 golds. The United States, the Great Britain, and Ukraine all won 10 golds, with the Americans finishing third courtesy of a higher number of silvers (14).

Iran far more beautiful than what I expected: Malaysian biker



Arep Kulal (L), the leader of the Malaysian Expedition of Unity of the 66th Independence Proclamation, and the Malaysian Ambassador to Tehran H.E. Khairi bin Omar pose for a photo in Tehran, Iran, on July 17, 2023.

● IRNA

Sports Desk

Arep Kulal, the leader of a group of six Malaysian motorcyclists visiting Iran, said the country is much more beautiful than he had in mind. The Expedition of Unity of the 66th Independence Proclamation: London-Kuala Lumpur 2023 embarked on an adventurous 66-day journey in late June and crosses 66 cities in 16 countries – covering a total distance of nearly 22,000 kilometers – before entering the Malaysian capital on August 31 – Malaysia's National Day.

As part of the program to celebrate the 66th anniversary of the occasion, the journey is a symbolic way to honor the Southeast Asian country's Father of Independence, HRH Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra. Having visited England, France, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, the bikers entered Iran last week and traveled through the northwest cities of Urmia, Tabriz, and Zanjan on their path to capital Tehran, where they were welcomed at the Malaysian Embassy.

"I really appreciate that you picked Iran among your destinations in this journey. You could tell the Malaysian people about the Iranians' exemplary behavior and hospitality and take this experience as an opportunity to promote this country all around the world," Malaysian Ambassador H.E. Khairi bin Omar told the group. "I hope that by this symbolic act we can reminisce about the efforts of the Father of Independence, HRH Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, who flew to London in 1957 to hold constitutional talks and brought home the Malaysian Declaration of Independence," added the Malaysian diplomat.

Meanwhile, speaking of his time in Iran, Arep – the CEO of Global Bike Explorer Sdn Bhd – said: "Iran was different from everything I had heard. What I saw in Urmia, Tabriz, and Zanjan was nothing but alluring scenes. The country is much more beautiful than what I had in mind. When I return home I will share the truth and grandeur of Iran with my fellow Malaysians."

"I am inviting all Iranians to visit Malaysia. I am sure they will be greeted as warmly as we were treated in this country," added the Malaysian. The group crosses Gorgan and Quchan before entering Turkmenistan through the crossing point in the northeastern border city of Bajgiran.

They will also visit Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, China, Laos, and Thailand on their way to their motherland.

Rice can be a 'lighthouse' for Arsenal, says Arteta

BBC – Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta says £100m signing Declan Rice can be a "lighthouse" for the Gunners and the midfielder is "exactly what we needed". Rice, 24, has joined from West Ham in a deal that could rise to £105m. He is their third signing after forward Kai Havertz joined from Chelsea in a £65m deal and defender Jurrien Timber from Ajax for £34m. Arsenal were second last season behind Manchester City, despite leading for most of the Premier League campaign. "I see him like a lighthouse," Arteta said of England international Rice. "He is willing to put the light in others, improve others and make the team better."

"We discussed a while ago how he could evolve the team and compliment the players and take that winning hunger into a team with players who really want to push themselves to a different level. "He has an aura. The experience he has in this league is going to bring the team to a different dimension. He has the physical qualities we were missing for a while. "The way he talks and presents himself. The ambition he has and his passion for the game is exactly what we needed." Rice was restricted to bike work in the first part of training in Washington before Arsenal's opening pre-season game against Wayne Rooney's MLS All-Star today.

Arteta now has a full month to work with the team before the opening Premier League game against Nottingham Forest on 12 August. Now, the pressure is on. Even legendary former Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger recognises it, tipping the Gunners to win the league, while Arteta certainly feels it. "For sure," he said. "After what we did last year, a lot of people are going to talk about what is next. "In the end, it will be about playing better and earning the right to win every match. "We made some important signings, like other teams are doing, but when you are Arsenal, you have to handle that."



● arsenal.com



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo gestures during a pre-season friendly match against Celta Vigo in Faro, Portugal, on July 17, 2023.

● FRAN SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

Ronaldo says Saudi league 'is better' than MLS in Messi swiipe

THE GUARDIAN – Al Nassr forward Cristiano Ronaldo said the Saudi Pro League "is better" than Major League Soccer and that he has no plans to play in the United States or return to a team in Europe. Ronaldo was speaking to the media after playing the first half of Al Nassr's 5-0 pre-season friendly defeat to La Liga side Celta Vigo in his native Portugal. "The Saudi league is better than MLS," Ronaldo said when asked about whether he'd consider a move to the United States like his great rival Lionel Messi, who was unveiled as an Inter Miami

player on Sunday. "Now all the players are coming here," Ronaldo said. "In one year, more top players will come to Saudi Arabia." Ronaldo, who was substituted at half-time with the score tied 0-0, added: "I opened the way to the Saudi league, and now all the players are coming here." Several high-profile players have followed Ronaldo to Saudi Arabia, including Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema from Real Madrid and N'Golo Kante from Chelsea, who both joined champions Al-Ittihad.

The 38-year-old Portugal captain, who joined Al Nassr in December on a two-and-a-half-year contract following his exit from Manchester United, said he had paved the way for other top players to sign with Saudi teams and that more would make the move to the desert kingdom. "I'm 100% sure I won't return to any European club. I'm 38 years old," ESPN quoted him as saying. "European football has lost a lot of quality. The only valid one and still doing good is the (English) Premier League. They're way ahead of all the other leagues." Messi, Ronaldo's longtime rival during their time in La Liga, was also linked with a move to Saudi Arabia before the Argentine World Cup winner completed a transfer to Inter Miami, signing a deal until 2025.