

Hangzhou  
Asian Games:Iran captures 13 golds,  
stands seventh in medals table

## Sports Desk

A number of 54 medals, including 13 golds, saw Iran finish seventh in the medals table of the Hangzhou Asian Games in China. Iranians also collected 21 silvers and 20 bronzes across the 15 days in Hangzhou. Iran's golds came in volleyball, wrestling, wushu, kurash, athletics, sport climbing, karate, and chess competitions, while there were also podium finishes in rowing, taekwondo, artistic gymnastics, weightlifting, roller skating, mountain

bike cycling, table tennis, fencing, shooting, canoe sprint and kabaddi.

On Sunday, karateka Sara Bahmanyar brought the curtain down on the campaign for the 285 Iranian athletes by bagging a bronze in the women's kumite -50kg contests, thanks to a 6-5 victory over Japan's Miho Miyahara. Bahmanyar's medal was the 18th for the Iranian female athletes and teams in Hangzhou – including Haniyeh Rostamian's shooting bronze in the 10m air pistol mixed team contest – though none of the country's 77 women walked away with a gold.

Despite some historic achievements, Iran's run in the Games will fairly go down as a failure, as the number of golds was seven short of the figure the Iranians tallied for a sixth-place finish in Jakarta-Palembang

2018, while it was the lowest for the country since 2006, when Iran grabbed 11 gold medals in Doha.

In fact, Iran had to wait until the penultimate day of the Games to reach double figures in gold medals – courtesy of title-winning performances by freestyle wrestlers Younes Emami, Hassan Yazdani and Amirhossein Zare' as well as a maiden chess triumph for the men's team.

Iran's total medal haul was also down by eight from five years ago, though the country was represented by 93 more athletes in Indonesia.

For all the lack of success in certain events – most significantly football, weightlifting, basketball, and shooting – the Iranian Ministry of Sport and the National Olympic Committee could still find silver lining elsewhere in the Games.

The Iranian men's chess team – comprising Parham Maq-

soudloo, Bardia Daneshvar, Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei, Amir-Reza Pouraqabala, and Pouya Idani – was joined by Mahdi Olfati, Faranak Parto-Azar, and Taraneh Ahmadi in writing their names into the Asian Games' history books.

Olfati won a first-ever medal for the country in artistic gymnastics – a men's vault silver – while Parto-Azar's cross country bronze was a maiden mountain cycling medal for Iranian women.

Ahmadi also bagged a first roller skating medal for Iran, taking the bronze in inline freestyle skating speed slalom.

Meanwhile, Alamian brothers, Nima and Noshad, also enjoyed a memorable campaign as their men's doubles and team – Amirhossein Hodaei – bronzes were the first table tennis medals in the Asian Games for the country in 65 years.

## Dominant host

China, as expected prior to the Games, topped the medals table with a record 201 gold medals. China, which surpassed the previous high of 199 golds it won on home soil in Guangzhou 2010, also scooped 111 silvers and 71 bronze medals – finishing well clear of East Asian rivals Japan, which had 52 golds, and South Korea on 42.

India stood fourth with 28 golds – a massive improvement for the Peninsula after the eighth place in 2018 with 16 golds.

Uzbekistan and the Chinese Taipei also ended above Iran in the table, claiming 22 and 19 golds respectively.



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Persian Gulf Pro League:  
Sepahan maintains perfect run; Esteghlal edges Mes

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Issa Alekisir bagged a brace on his debut as Sepahan routed San'at Naft Abadan 4-1 at home to keep its perfect start to the Persian Gulf Pro League season.

Esteghlal, meanwhile, defeated Mes Rafsanjan 1-0 – courtesy of a second-half own goal by the host center-back Meysam Taymouri.

In Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan, summer signing Morteza Asadi headed home his fifth goal of the campaign to put Sepahan in front with 13 minutes into the game before Arya Yousefi's effort went in off Iraqi keeper Fahad Talib's hand for the home side's second on the half-hour mark.

Alekisir, whose contribution in the second part of last season played a pivotal role in the league and cup glories for Persepolis, had to wait for two months to make a first appearance for Sepahan – due

to a contract registration issue – but it took him only 33 minutes of playing time to open his account in the yellow jersey.

The striker dribbled past a defender and then his effort from an acute angle found the bottom corner, though he refused to celebrate out of respect for his former club.

Alekisir's second of the night came in the 50th minute, when he tapped in from close range on the rebound after Mohammad Karimi's sizzling strike was initially kept out by Talib. Prolific skipper Taleb Rikani pulled one back for the visiting side 11 minutes from normal time but it proved too little too late as San'at fell to a third defeat in five outings.

The victory was the fifth in as many games for Jose Morais's men, though they were deducted four points by the Iranian football governing body last month over a budget cap violation during the summer transfer window.

Elsewhere, there was little to separate Mes and Esteghlal during the course of the 90 minutes, but Javad Nekounam's men believed they deserved a first-half spot-kick when Mehrdad Mohammadi went down in the box by Taymouri, with the referee thinking otherwise.

The Tehran Blues still had their ex-defender to thank for the maximum points, as Taymouri's header on a Saeed Mehri's cross found the back of Mes net seven minutes after the break. The away win took Esteghlal's tally for the season to 12 points.



▲ Sepahan striker Issa Alekisir (top) celebrates with teammates after scoring during a 4-1 victory over San'at Naft Abadan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium, Isfahan, Iran, on October 7, 2023.  
● MOHAMMAD AMIRHOSSEINI/varzesh3.com

Ex-FIFA boss Blatter slams  
decision for World Cup  
in six countries

REUTERS – Former FIFA PRESIDENT Sepp Blatter has criticised the decision by world soccer's governing body to hold the World Cup in six countries across three continents.

Morocco, Spain and Portugal were named hosts of the 2030 tournament, while Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay will also host the opening matches to mark the tournament's centenary, FIFA said in a surprise announcement on Wednesday. The decision was criticised by Sepp Blatter, who was FIFA President from 1998 to 2015, before being forced out after a corruption investigation.

"It is absurd to tear the tournament apart in this way," Blatter told Swiss newspaper SonntagsBlick.

"The World Cup finals must be a compact event," he said, adding this was important for the identity of the event, for the organisation and for visitors.

Blatter, once one of soccer's

most powerful figures, has previously criticised FIFA for awarding the 2022 tournament to Qatar, saying the Middle East country was too small.

The 87-year-old said the 2030 tournament should take place in South America, marking the 100th anniversary of the first event which was hosted and won by Uruguay.

"For historical reasons, the 2030 World Cup should have belonged exclusively in South America," he told the newspaper.



● ARND WIEGMANN/REUTERS