

World Cup Asian qualifiers:

Newcomer Mohebbi inspires short-handed Iran to fitting finale



Sports Desk

Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi definitely offered the brightest spark for Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee in the latest international week. Having made an impressive debut for the national team against Qatar last week, the 25-year-old winger produced a man-of-the-match performance on Tuesday to lead a depleted Iranian side to a 3-0 home victory over North Korea in the final outing at the World Cup Asian qualifiers. Mohebbi broke the deadlock for Iran with 15 minutes left on clock, slotting in on the rebound after his initial effort was kept out by visiting keeper Kang Ju-hyok, and then provided Mahdi Taremi with a clipped cross three minutes later before the Inter striker headed home his 55th international goal. Substitute Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's composed finish in the third minute of stoppage time rounded off the win against North Korea, which went down to 10 men in the 66th minute through a straight

red card for midfielder Tam Kye. The comfortable victory saw Iran, which had secured qualification with two games to spare, finish atop the Group A table with 23 points, with Team Melli's sole defeat coming in the dead-rubber against Qatar (1-0) last Thursday in Doha. "Thank God I made my first international appearances. I'm grateful to Mr. Qalenoee for giving me the opportunity to showcase my skills. The manager told me and other newcomers to play as if it is a league game," said Mohebbi, who bagged nine goals and 10 assists in 37 games across all competitions for Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan in the newly-finished campaign. Mohebbi also credited senior players Taremi and Saeid Ezaatollahi for helping him "settle in quickly with the team."



Iranian winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi celebrates during a 3-0 victory over North Korea at the World Cup Asian qualifiers at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on June 10, 2025. ● FARSNEWS

AVC Women's Volleyball Nations Cup:

Winning streak snapped as Iran undone by Kazakhstan

Sports Desk

Iran was left heartbroken after failing to complete yet another comeback at the AVC Women's Volleyball Nations Cup, suffering a 3-1 (25-14, 25-18, 22-25, 26-24) defeat against Kazakhstan in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Wednesday. Trailing by two sets, Iranian girls rallied with a much-improved performance in the third set and then stormed to a 7-0 lead in the fourth – appearing poised to force a decider, before Kazakhstan mounted a late comeback to preserve its perfect record in the Vietnamese capital. The defeat ended a three-game winning run for Iran, which had beaten Indonesia and the Philippines in two five-set thrillers either side of a 3-1 win against

the New Zealand earlier in the competition. Opposite-spiker Tatyana Nikitina topped the scoring chart for Kazakhstan with 15 points, followed by middle-blocker Saniya Balagazinova, who contributed with 11. Outside-hitter Masoumeh Qadami, meanwhile, chipped in 15 points for Iran, with Elaheh Poursaleh (13 points) and Sepinoud Dastbarjan (11) also finishing in double figures. "I think the lack of confidence cost us in the first two sets, but once we found the belief, we showed our true quality, and matched Kazakhstan point for point," Dastbarjan said after the game. Later in the day, the Philippines came out victorious in straight sets (25-17, 25-21, 25-18) against

the New Zealand to into second place in the Pool B table behind Kazakhstan. Iranian girls will still have the chance to join Kazakhstan, which will play the Philippines today, in progressing to semifinals with a victory over Mongolia in their final outing in the group phase. "The Kazakhstan team had a height advantage, which made the difference today as our players struggled in the first two sets," Iran head coach Lee Do-hee said after the game. The South Korean still shrugged off the defeat, saying: "We simply weren't well-prepared for this game. I'll tell my players that the match against Mongolia is even more crucial, so I don't consider today's defeat a major setback."



● AVC

Majidi extends Al Bataeh deal until 2027

Sports Desk

Iranian Farhad Majidi will stay on as Al Bataeh head coach until 2027 after signing a two-extension to his contract with the Emirati top-flight club on Tuesday. The former Esteghlal manager, who had been without a job since parting ways with Ittihad Kalba in March 2024, made an impressive return to a managerial role at the UAE ADNOC Pro League with Al Bataeh midway through the newly-finished campaign. The 48-year-old Iranian took charge in January and steered the relegation-threatened club to five victories – including massive wins against Sharjah and Al Wahda – and four draws in 15 games as Al Bataeh finished 11 points clear of the drop zone. Al Bataeh had managed two wins in 12 outings, suffering eight defeats, was just a couple of points above the bottom two before Majidi replaced Croatian Goran Tomic on the bench. In his previous spell in the UAE Pro League, Majidi led Kalba to 17 wins in 51 outings in all competitions across two



Iranian head coach Farhad Majidi (L) poses with an Al Bataeh shirt after signing a two-year extension with the Emirati club in Sharjah, UAE, on June 10, 2025. ● albataehfc.ae

seasons, steering his team to an all-time best finish (eighth) in the table in the 2022/2023 campaign. Widely regarded as an Esteghlal legend, Majidi was

also in charge of the Tehran Blues' bench when they went a whole season without a single defeat to lift a first Persian Gulf Pro League trophy in nine years in 2022.

Basketball Champions League Asia: Tabiat crashes out after OT loss to Utsunomiya

Sports Desk

Iranian club Tabiat's debut campaign at the Basketball Champions League Asia came to an end after a 94-93 loss to Utsunomiya Brex in the second overtime in Wednesday's last-eight clash at

Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena. American guard D. J. Newbill registered a game-high 29 points, including five three pointers, as well as 10 assists to play the biggest part in the victory for the Japanese side, with Makoto Hiejima (18), Finn Delany (15), and Isaac

Fotu (11) also finishing in double figures. Croatian center Ivan Buva had a double-double (27 points, and 15 rebounds) for Tabiat, followed by Sina Vahedi (19 points), Stedmon Lemon (18), and Arman Zangeneh (15).