

World Taekwondo Championships: Time has come for Iranian girls to hit milestone, head coach Saei says

Sports Desk

Head coach Mahrouz Saei believes the Iranian women's team is ready to make history by securing its first-ever podium finish at the upcoming World Championships.

The 27th edition of the sport's flagship international event will kick off on Friday in Wuxi, China, where Iran will be represented by seven contestants in the women's division.

Iran's best-ever result in the women's competition – since its inception in 1987 – came at the previous edition in Baku two years ago, when Nahid Kiani claimed a historic gold medal in the -53kg class to help the country finish fifth in the team table.

"Fortunately, the girls are in excellent condition, both physically and mentally, and have reached their peak form. We have no injury concerns, and are fully prepared to succeed at the World Championships," Saei told IRNA.

When Saei replaced former coach Minou Maddah in September, her appointment was met with criticism from many in the country, who believed the decision was driven by nepotism on the part of her older brother and the chairman of the Iranian federation, Hadi Saei – a taekwondo legend with double Olympic golds and a bronze.

That is what makes the event in Wuxi, along with the upcoming



● IRNA

Islamic Solidarity Games, even more special for Saei, who will be eager to showcase her coaching credentials and prove her doubters wrong.

"I've carried a great deal of mental pressure, but my focus never wavered from the team's success. I didn't let myself be distracted then, and I won't now. God willing, with the girls' hard work, we will achieve what we rightfully

deserve," added Saei, who served as a number two to Maddah at last year's Olympic Games and was in Ne'matzadeh's corner through her bronze-winning campaign in Paris.

"Success in Wuxi is certainly of great importance to me. Over the last eight months, we have prepared a very strong team, which features world and Olympic medalists.

When asked about the high expectations of her team, Saei said, "I'm fully aware of that. In Baku, we finished fifth, thanks to Nahid's gold. I don't want to put any extra pressure on the girls; our team's potential is high, and perhaps the time has come for us to finish on the podium.

"The team is in every way ready to compete for glory. I have a positive outlook and am hopeful we

will achieve our target. I believe we can return with at least two medals, though the potential for even more is there.

For all the success that Iranian women have enjoyed across various international events in recent years, Saei remains mindful of the different level of the challenge awaiting in Wuxi, which marks the first step on the road to securing a spot at the 2028

Los Angeles Olympics.

"In some weight categories, each contestant will have to face six or seven opponents in a single day to reach the final, which is quite a challenge. But the girls are used to it.

"Since the domestic Super League switched to a Grand Prix format, they've adapted to competing multiple times in a day. We anticipated this and simulated this exact scenario in training camps with grueling sessions to ensure our girls are ready to handle the intense workload at the world event," Saei said.

While Kiani will aim to capture a second successive world gold on the opening day of the competition, former world junior champion Mobina Ne'matzadeh, 20, will look to build on her Olympic success as she chases a medal on her senior debut at the World Championships.

Mo'menzadeh, meanwhile, is set to compete at the World Championships for a third time, seeking to add to the silver medal she won in Manchester in 2019.

Having won her second Asian silver medal last year, Iranian captain Melika Mirhosseini will fancy her chances of a strong showing in Wuxi, while debutants Kowsar Asaseh and Nastaran Valizadeh, along with 21-year-old Saeideh Nasiri, head to the event fresh off impressive performances at international tournaments.

Asian Rowing Championships: Mojallal grabs gold as Iran finishes with five medals



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Iran's Fatemeh Mojallal capped off a decent campaign for the country at the Asian Rowing Championships in Haiphong, Vietnam, capturing the gold medal in the women's single sculls contest on Sunday.

A silver medalist in the category last year, the Iranian girl clocked 8:31.11 minutes in the final to take her individual haul in Haiphong to two medals – following her bronze-winning campaign alongside Mahsa Javer in the double sculls event on the preceding day.

The physical toll of the final, however, forced Mojallal to pull out of the quadruple sculls showdown, prompting the Iranian team – last year's silver medalist – to withdraw from the race.

Elsewhere, Zeinab Norouzi fell short of defending her title in the women's lightweight single sculls category, finishing

the final race in 8:224.75 minutes to settle for a silver medal behind her rival from Hong Kong, with the Kazakhstani contestant taking the bronze medal.

This was also a second medal in the competition for Norouzi, who teamed up with Kimia Zarei to secure the ultimate prize in the lightweight double sculls event on Saturday.

The Iranian pair clocked 7:30.22 minutes to outpace opponents from India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and the host country – a second Asian gold for the female duo following last year's triumph in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Iran's single medal in the men's competition came at Saturday's lightweight double sculls showdown, where Amirhossein Mohammadpour and Amirreza Abdali crossed the finish line in 6:43.24 minutes and settled for the bronze behind gold-winning Indian pair and Uzbekistan.

2025 Asian Youth Games: Iran's 'Ambassadors of Hope' aiming for record haul in Manama

Sports Desk

Iranian young guns will be seeking their most successful campaign yet at the 2025 Asian Youth Games in Manama, Bahrain.

The third edition of the multi-sport event will officially kick off with the opening ceremony on Wednesday, though the Iranians were already in action in handball, volleyball, kurash, and pencak silat on Sunday.

Under the motto 'Ambassadors of Hope', the Iranian delegation will feature 400 male and female athletes competing across 24 sporting events – including volleyball, handball, mixed martial arts, kabaddi, weightlifting, taekwondo, 3x3 basketball, athletics, futsal, muaythai, judo, cycling, pencak silat, and kurash. The Iranians will also compete in table tennis, beach volleyball, freestyle and beach wrestling, esports, boxing, aquatics, triathlon, and golf on the men's side, while badminton represents the women's lineup in that discipline.

Iran has participated in the two previous editions of the Games with mixed results.

In the inaugural Games in Singapore in 2009, Iran competed in nine sports with 54 athletes and ranked 11th overall, earning one gold, three silvers, and two bronze medals, accounting for 2.2 percent of the total medals awarded.

The country's medal-winning sports were athletics (one gold, double silvers, one bronze), 3x3 basketball (silver), and football (bronze). China and South Korea dominated the medal table that year, claiming nearly half of all gold medals combined. At the second edition in Nanjing in 2013, Iran increased its participation to 79 athletes across 17 sports but finished

20th in the standings with six silver and two bronze medals, representing 2.04 percent of the overall medal share.

Medals came in athletics (three silvers, one bronze), football (silver), shooting (silver), taekwondo (silver), and judo (bronze). Once again, China and South Korea topped the charts, taking home a combined 58 percent of all gold medals.

Now, as the 2025 Bahrain Asian Youth Games is around the corner, Iran enters the competition determined to build on past experience and improve its conti-

mental standing. With representation in more sports than ever before, the 'Ambassadors of Hope' aim to deliver their best performance yet and, potentially, set new national records in the medal count.



The Iranian volleyball under-19 team is seen in a training session, ahead of leaving for the 2025 Asian Youth Games, in Tehran, Iran, on October 15, 2025.

● MASOUD AKBARI/volleyball.ir

