

Iran learns Asian volleyball schedule for 2026



Iranian middle-blocker Zahra Karimi serves the ball during a 3-0 victory over Afghanistan at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2025.
● volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Iranian men's and women's national teams have learned their schedules for the upcoming continental season after the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) unveiled its 2026 calendar and host cities on Saturday. The most anticipated event for Iranian volleyball will be the AVC Men's Asian Championship, which begins on September 4 in Fukuoka, Japan. Team Melli will be chasing its fifth title — and its third in four editions — at the continent's flagship tournament. As if Roberto Piazza's men needed additional motivation to make amends for their final setback against Japan on home soil in the previous edition, an Olympic berth will also be up for grabs in Fukuoka, with the champion earning a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

Meanwhile, the Iranian women's national team, fresh off a historic gold medal at the CAVA Championship and a bronze medal at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, will compete in the AVC Women's Championship, which will kick off in Tianjin, China. Iran, which qualified for the competition thanks to its CAVA triumph, will be looking to improve on its 10th-place finish at the previous Asian showpiece in Thailand in 2023. Both Iranian men's and women's teams will also take part in the volleyball competition at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in September, with Piazza's side aiming for a fourth successive gold medal at the multi-sport event. In age-group tournaments, record seven-time champion Iran — having fallen short against Japan and China in the 2022 and 2024 finals, respectively — will

bid for its first Asian Boys' U18 Championship title since 2014 when the tournament gets underway in Manama, Bahrain, on July 12. South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's side, meanwhile, will look to build on its gold-medal campaign at last October's Asian Youth Games when the AVC Girls' U18 Championship is staged in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, from July 1. Iran achieved its best result in eight appearances at the event in the 2024 edition, finishing sixth after a straight-sets defeat against South Korea in its final match in Thailand. The continental season will begin with the AVC Women's Champions League in Goyang, South Korea, from April 26 to 30, followed by the Men's Champions League, which will get underway in Pontianak, Indonesia, on May 13.

FIDE World U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships:

Iran's Kakavand, Akbari win blitz golds in Antalya

Sports Desk

Iranian chess prodigies Ramtin Kakavand and Rosh Akbari captured two blitz gold medals in different age categories at the FIDE U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships in Antalya, Türkiye. Iranian FIDE Master Kakavand collected eight points from nine rounds to clinch the boys' under-15 open title, edging Suleyman Akhmet on tiebreaks after both finished level on points. Kakavand's victory over the Kazakhstani Candidate Master in the fourth round proved decisive. In the girls' under-15 category, Women FIDE Master Akbari defeated host representative Latife Yade Gunasti in her fi-

nal game to top the 18-player standings with 7.5 points from a possible nine. Kazakhstan's Asiya Assylkhan, also on 7.5 points, and Slovenian Candidate Master Anja Beber, who tallied 6.5 points, finished second and third, respectively. Akbari won seven of her games and drew against Assylkhan, with her only loss coming against Uzbekistan's FIDE Master Rukiya Olimova in the seventh round. The blitz competitions were held in open and girls' sections across five age groups — U9, U11, U13, U15 and U17. A total of 310 players, including 98 titled players and two grandmasters, registered for the blitz events.



Iran's Ramtin Kakavand (L) and Rosh Akbari are pictured during the FIDE World U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships in Antalya, Türkiye.
● FIDE



AFC Champions League Elite:

Tractor aiming to secure knockout spot against Al Duhail



Tractor will confirm its last-16 spot with victory against Al Duhail SC when the sides meet in the AFC Champions League Elite today at Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium. Iranian top-flight champion Tractor ended Matchday Five third in the West Zone standings with 11 points, four ahead of sixth-placed Al Duhail of Qatar. Having opened its campaign with two draws, a three-match winning run means Tractor is within touching distance of the round of 16 and Dragan Skocic's men will aim to maximize home ground advantage against Al Duhail. Defensive resilience has been the back bone of Tractor's campaign, with the Skocic's side having kept four clean sheets, but the Iranian outfit is winless in its last two meetings with Al Duhail. Al Duhail kept its hopes alive with a stunning 4-2 win against Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad Club on Matchday Five but will face a stiff test against a confident Tractor. The Qatari club's away form on the continent has been poor, with three defeats in its last four matches and walking away empty handed will leave Djamel Belmadi's team in a perilous position. Tractor will step into the contest fresh off a dramatic shootout victory over domestic foe Persepolis in the Iranian Hazfi Cup on Thursday, while Al Duhail — eighth in the QSL 12-team table — suffered a 2-0 away defeat against Al Shahaniya in the Qatari Stars Cup last Sunday.

Tractor players celebrate their goal during a shootout victory over Persepolis in the Iranian Hazfi Cup in Tabriz, Iran, on December 18, 2025.
● FFIRI

Iranian weightlifter Nasiri stands fourth in IWF Annual World Ranking

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Alireza Nasiri finished the 2025 season in fourth place in the IWF Annual World Ranking, thanks to his double-medal campaign at October's World Championships. The 19-year-old prodigy placed seventh in the snatch in the men's 110kg division in Førde, Norway, despite setting a new Asian junior record of 184kg. He then delivered a stronger performance in the clean and jerk,

setting a new world junior record of 231kg with his third attempt to claim the silver medal, before securing another silver in the total with 415kg. Armenia's Varazdat Lalyan, who completed a clean sweep of three world titles in the +110kg class, topped the rankings with a total of 461kg. Bahrain's Gor Minasyan — runner-up to Lalyan in all super-heavyweight categories in Førde — finished second with 447kg.

Uzbekistan's Akbar Djuraev, winner of three gold medals in the 110kg category in Førde, ranked third with 428kg, a new world record in his weight class. Djuraev's compatriot Ruslan Nurudinov (414kg), American Aaron Andrew Williams (411kg), Colombia's Rafael Cerro (410kg), South Korea's Song Yeong-hwan (410kg), Armenia's Garik Karapetyan (407kg) and Colombia's Santiago Sanchez Cossio (407kg) rounded out the top 10 in the senior men's rankings.



Iranian weightlifter Alireza Nasiri makes a snatch lift during the men's 110kg event at the IWF World Championships in Førde, Norway, on October 10, 2025.
● MNA