

Asian Beach Games: Iran off the mark as Ajami wins shot put gold

Sports Desk

Hassan Ajami claimed the first medal for Iran at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, grabbing gold in the men's shot put event on Sunday.

The 27-year-old Iranian saved his best for last on Phoenix Island, registering a personal-best 20.17m with his sixth and final attempt to secure the top prize. China's Chen Chengyu settled for silver with 19.95m, while his compatriot Zhang Haochen took bronze with 19.69m. Mehran Khorand was the other Iranian in the men's shot put final but missed out on the podium, finishing fifth with a best effort of 17.63m.

Dominant duos

There was further success for the country on the sixth day of the multi-sport event as both Iranian pairs advanced to the men's beach volleyball quarterfinals. The team of Alireza Aqajani and Abbas Pourasgari continued its emphatic run with a straight-sets victory over Japan's Kosuke

Fukushima and Nassim Malki. The Iranian pair won the first set 21-15 before closing out with a 21-17 win in the second – a fifth successive victory for the duo, which is yet to drop a set in Sanya.

Standing between the two Iranians and a last-four place today will be Oman's Mazin Al Hashimi and Hood Rashid Al Jalaboubi, who defeated Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Yakovlev and Abdulmajid Mokhammad 2-0 (21-15, 21-19) later on Sunday to progress. Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi, meanwhile, secured the country's second last-eight spot later, thanks to a 2-0 win (21-18, 21-15) against China's Wang Yanwei and Wu Jiabin.

Elsewhere, the Iranian men's beach handball team secured back-to-back victories on Sunday to maintain its perfect run at the Games. Iran began the day with a 2-0 win against Hong Kong – winning the first period 13-8, followed by a 20-6 triumph in the second – and then defeated Bahrain 18-16 in both periods to sit firmly atop Group A with four

victories ahead of today's final group game against China.

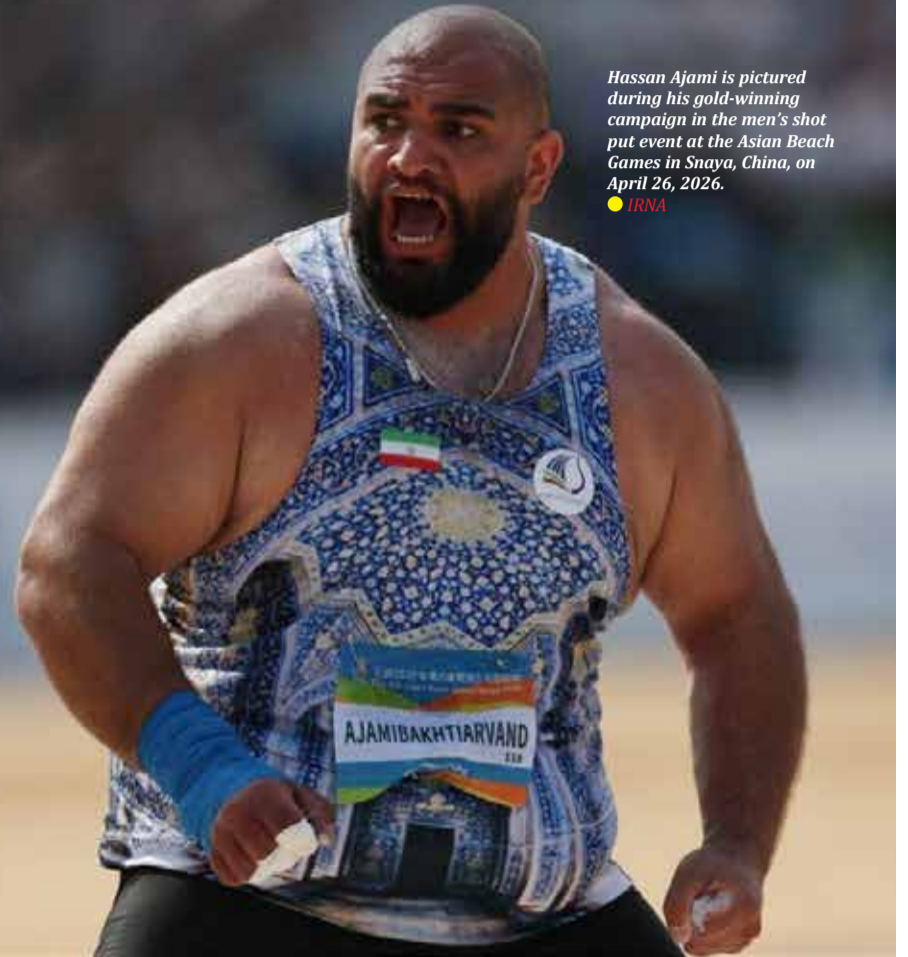
In beach soccer, late drama saw Iran defeat Saudi Arabia 2-1 to clinch a semifinal spot as Group A winner. After a goalless scoreline in the first two periods, Ali Mirshekari broke the deadlock for Iran in the 25th minute, only to see his goal canceled out seconds later by Ahmed Alhamami. However, Reza Dayeri's 27th-minute winner secured a third victory in Sanya for Ali Naderi's men, who had earlier beaten the United Arab Emirates (5-2) and Thailand (13-1).

The Iranian kabaddi team, meanwhile, advanced to the men's final after a victory over Sri Lanka. Having beaten Syria 53-31 to finish top of Group A earlier on Sunday, Iran overcame the South Asian opponent 42-29 to set up a final date with India today.

In men's water polo, Iran beat South Korea in straight sets (4-3, 3-2, 5-2) to secure its second victory of the round-robin competition, following a 3-1 win against Hong Kong the previous day.

Hassan Ajami is pictured during his gold-winning campaign in the men's shot put event at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, on April 26, 2026.

● IRNA



Tough road ahead for Mirzazadeh as Kayaalp rivalry looms large



Sports Desk

Iran's Greco-Roman sensation Amin Mirzazadeh will face a daunting task to defend his superheavyweight title at the Wrestling World Championships, with an anticipated rivalry with Rıza Kayaalp is set to resume in October's showpiece.

Few expected Turkish great Kayaalp – winner of a remarkable 13 world and Olympic medals – to make an emphatic return to action, after serving an 18-month doping ban, at the European Championships in Tirana last week.

However, the 36-year-old outclassed Hungarian world silver medalist Dárisz Vitek 7-1 to cap off his campaign with the 13th continental gold of his illustrious career, overtaking legendary Russian Aleksandr Karelin as the most decorated wrestler in the history of the competition.

Should two-time world champion Mirzazadeh – bronze medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics – and Kayaalp go head-to-head at the

world event again, it will mark a fourth 130kg showdown between the two in five years, with the Turkish holding a 2-1 lead in the previous meeting.

Their first major encounter was in the bronze medal match at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, which Kayaalp won 7-2 to add the third Olympic medal to his personal haul. They met again in the final of the 2022 World Championships, where the Turkish wrestler once again got the better of his Iranian opponent, winning on criteria (1-1). Mirzazadeh, however, turned the tables at the 2023 World Championships. In a closely contested 130kg final, Mirzazadeh rallied from behind late in the bout to make it 2-2 and secure a criteria victory.

As the 2026 World Championships approach, a potential rematch between the two heavyweights looms larger than ever. Yet Mirzazadeh's journey to that contest – and to repeating past successes – remains complex and arduous as he must first overcome young compatriot Fardin Hedayati in the

domestic trials before navigating a field of formidable international opponents, including Kayaalp.

Reigning two-time world under-23 champion Hedayati made his senior international breakthrough in style at the 2024 Ranking Series event in Budapest. The Iranian prodigy, who outmuscled Kayaalp in the quarterfinals before defeating Georgian Olympic silver winner Iakobi Kajaia in the final showpiece, will have every reason to fancy his chances of going all the way on a potential debut at the Senior Worlds.

With two world titles and an Olympic bronze already to his name, Mirzazadeh is determined to continue his winning trajectory, though the scale of the task ahead looks much greater this time around.



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Amin Mirzazadeh (l) is seen in action against Türkiye's Rıza Kayaalp in the 130kg final at the 2023 World Championships in Belgrade.

● UWW

Iran's Taremi among '48 players to watch' at World Cup

Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Mahdi Taremi has been named among the 48 players to watch at the upcoming FIFA World Cup – co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada – by Fox Sports.

"Taremi stands out for Team Melli. The talented striker is Iran's captain and best player, having played across several prominent European teams. A key factor for Greek power Olympiacos, Taremi was a UEFA Champions League runner-up with Inter Milan last season," the American website wrote of the Iranian, who

bagged 94 goals and 65 assists in a combined 225 appearances with Porto and Inter before joining Olympiacos last summer.

Having made 20 appearances in the current Greek Super League season, the Olympiacos forward has recorded 10 goals and two assists, while also winning four penalties. Additionally, he has netted three goals in the domestic cup, one in the Super Cup, and two in the UEFA Champions League.

However, on his return from international duty in March – where he was on the score-sheet during a 2-1 friendly defeat against Nigeria before

finding the net twice in a 5-0 win over Costa Rica – the Iranian talisman has struggled for game time with his club.

He was substituted during a 1-0 loss to archrival AEK Athens in the league and was then left on the bench for the entire match in a 2-0 win against Panathinaikos last time out.

Unhappy with the situation, and frustrated by its repetition several times throughout the season, the Iranian star may now be considering a departure after only one season with the club, according to reports in the Greek media. A decent performance in the World Cup could bolster his case for an-

other high-profile transfer in the summer.

Iran will kick off its Group G campaign in the United States against New Zealand at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, on June 15, before facing European heavyweight Belgium at the same venue six days later.

The team will then travel to Seattle, Washington, to face Egypt in its final group game at Lumen Field on June 26.

With eight third-placed teams across the 12 groups advancing to the round of 32, Iran will fancy its chances of securing its first-ever knockout spot at the seventh attempt.



● olympiacos.org