

Unfazed by wartime, Iranian volleyball girls move ahead with international meets

Sports Desk

The wartime situation might have made a massive impact on Iranian sport over the past 10 weeks, but the circumstances have barely kept the women's national volleyball team from pressing forward with an unprecedented preparatory program ahead of a congested international calendar in the coming months.

With a first participation at the Asian Games since 1974 on the horizon in September, the team embarked on a long journey on April 21 from Sari, traveling overland to Türkiye before flying to Bangkok to take part in the AVC Women's Champions League under the name Mehregan Noor Club, joining up with South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee. Lee had left the country days after the United States and Israel launched a military campaign against Iran on February 28.

The team's campaign in the Thai capital ended after only one game – a straight-set loss to the host's Nakhon Ratchasima, which went on to finish runner-up in the tournament.

Iran has benefited from the FIVB's development program over the past two years, hiring Lee as part of a generational overhaul in a bid to qualify for the 2028 Volleyball Nations League.

Following that tournament in



Iranian national team players, branded as Mehregan Noor Club, celebrate a point during a defeat against Thailand's Nakhon Ratchasima at the AVC Women's Champions League in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 26, 2026.

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Bangkok, Iranian federation president Milad Taghavi held talks with Ramon Suzara, president of the Asian Volleyball Confederation, and FIVB president Fabio Azevedo, securing FIVB's financial support to use the international governing body's training facilities in Thailand.

The national team, as a result, extended its stay in Bangkok for

a 20-day training camp, as well as several friendly games, before leaving for Nepal for the CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship, a tournament that carries significant importance for the country in terms of FIVB ranking points.

The Iranian girls have fond memories of the tournament, as they enjoyed a milestone campaign at

the event last year in Tashkent, defeating Uzbekistan in straight sets in the final to capture a maiden international gold medal for Iranian women's volleyball since the first national team was established in 1963.

International appearances will come thick and fast for Team Melli, which will follow the CAVA tournament with the AVC Women's Nations Cup – starting June 6 in Candon, Philippines – where Iran has been drawn against defending champion Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Lebanon in Pool B.

The event marks Iran's third participation in the tournament, following last year's sixth-place finish in Hanoi, Vietnam, and a fifth-place finish in the 2023 edi-

tion in Gresik, Indonesia. The preliminary round will feature 30 matches across June 6-9 and June 11-12, with teams competing in a round-robin format within their respective pools. A rest day is scheduled for June 10.

The top teams from each pool will advance to the knockout stage, beginning June 13, which includes the semifinals and classification matches. The tournament will culminate on June 14 with finals for all ranking positions, including the gold medal match.

Looking to build on a decent run of results last year – which also included a bronze medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November – Iran will play in a couple of rematches from the 2025 edition. That campaign saw the team beat Indonesia in a five-set thriller in the pool phase before falling in four sets in the classification match. Lee's side also faced Kazakhstan in Hanoi, suffering a 3-1 loss.

The national squad – featuring Shabnam Alikhani, Mahsa Kadkhoda, Sepinood Dastbarjan, Reyhaneh Karimi, Elaheh Poursaleh, Zahra Karimi, Fatemeh Khalili, Zahra Salehi, Masoumeh Qadami, Negar Hashemi, Hasti Vahedi, and Negar Abbasi – is expected to return home on June 14 after the conclusion of its campaign in the Philippines.



● MOHAMMAD-JAVAD AMINI/volleyball.ir

CAVA U18 Beach Volleyball Championship: Iranian boys impress with silver, bronze medals

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Iranian teams secured silver and bronze medals at the CAVA U18 Beach Volleyball Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Sunday.

The pair of Amirreza Jamshidi and Amin Vakili, which had beaten Sina Al-e Yassin and Vahab Owanaq 2-0 (23-21, 24-22) in a thrilling all-Iranian semifinal, had to settle for runner-up finish in

the men's event – featuring seven Central Asian teams – after a straight-set loss (21-14, 24-22) to Kazakhstan Team A in the final showpiece.

The Iranian duo had made a clean sweep of three victories to finish atop the table in its group. Al-e Yassin and Owanaq, meanwhile, ended their campaign with a consolation bronze, thanks to an emphatic 2-0 victory (21-4, 21-8) over the other Kazakhstani pair

in the tournament. Sunday's feats marked the latest success for the Iranian beach volleyball in less than a week. Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi had won an impressive silver medal at the Asian Beach Games, failing 2-0 (21-15, 21-12) to formidable Qatari duo Cherif Samba and Ahmed Tijan – bronze medalists at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics – in the final last Wednesday in Sanya, China.

IWF World Junior Championships: Iranian weightlifters depart for Egypt after visa delay resolved

Sports Desk

The Iranian eight-man weightlifting squad finally departed for Egypt on Monday morning after a visa delay threatened to derail their participation in the IWF World Junior Championships, which began in Ismailia on Saturday.

While the team had been stuck in limbo in recent weeks, the Iranian federation worked hard to secure entry visas for its members amid the ongoing wartime situation in the country. The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) also reportedly intervened on Iran's behalf, pressing for the team's participation.

The visas were finally issued in the early hours of Monday,

allowing the contingent to travel immediately.

Before the recent military conflict disrupted domestic sports programs, the Iranian squad – coached by former world and Olympic champion Sohrab Moradi – had shown impressive form in training. However, the outbreak of hostilities forced the closure of national team camps.

The coaching staff says the young Iranians have posted notable records during their preparation period and will be highly regarded as serious medal contenders in the Egyptian city.

The Iranians will get their campaign underway on Wednesday, with Amir-Mohammad Rahmati and Mohammad-Amin Dadvand vy-

ing for success in the men's -88kg contest.

Hamidreza Zarei – a clean and jerk gold medalist at last year's competition in Lima, Peru – will be joined by fellow Iranian Mohammad-Amin Habibi in the -94kg event on Thursday.

The final day of the showcase will see reigning world junior silver medalist Abolfazl Zare and Farhad Qolizadeh compete in the -110kg class, before Hamidreza Mohammadi-Tanha and Taha Nemati-Moqaddam conclude the Iranians' run in the tournament.

Tanha and Nemati dominated the superheavyweight class last year, completing an all-Iranian one-two, with the former claiming a clean sweep of golds.

Two Iranians among top 30 in FIDE rankings

Sports Desk

Two Iranian grandmasters have made it into the top 30 of the latest FIDE men's rankings for May, released by the sport's international governing body.

Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei ranks 28th in the men's standard category – and 12th in Asia – with a rating of 2714. Fellow Iranian Parham Maqsoudlou sits 30th globally and 14th in Asia on 2710.

Norwegian chess sensation Magnus Carlsen remains atop the list with a 2840 rating, followed by Americans Hikaru Nakamura (2792) and Fabiano Caruana (2788). Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov (2780) and Javokhir Sindarov (2776) are the highest-ranked Asian players, placing fourth and fifth, respectively. In the standard junior category, Iranian grandmaster Bardia Daneshvar is 17th with a 2596 rating, while Sina Movahed is 22nd on 2575. Daneshvar also ranks seventh in the junior rapid division with a



Iranian grandmaster Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei stood 28th in the men's standard category of May's FIDE rankings.

● FIDE

2546 rating and stands 13th in junior blitz. Tabatabaei, Maqsoudlou, and Daneshvar lead the Iranian men's rankings, followed by Pouya Idani and Movahed. Mahdi Gholami, Amirreza Pourramezanali, Reza Mahdavi, Arash Tahbaz, Arian Gholami, Seyyed Khalil Mousavi, and Artin Sharif round out the top 10. In the women's junior category,

Melika Mohammadi is 14th globally – and top-ranked in Iran – with a 2342 rating. Sara Davari follows in 38th place on 2250. Mohammadi, Mobina Alinasab, Davari, Anahita Zahedifar, Mitra Asgharzadeh, Tannaz Azali, Dorsa Mohammad-Ebrahimkhan, Rosha Akbari, Rezvaneh Haddadi, and Maryam Mohammadi are the top 10 players, respectively, in the Iranian women's rankings.