

# Iranian sports community bids farewell to Leader, minister reaffirms commitment to his vision

## Sports Desk

Thousands of members of Iran's sports community joined mourners at Tehran's Grand Imam Khomeini Mosalla to pay their respects during the farewell ceremony for the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, with Sports and Youth Minister Ahmad Donyamali saying the country's athletes remain committed to pursuing the path and vision laid out by the late Leader.

The ceremony drew huge crowds from across the country, with mourners filling the vast prayer grounds and surrounding streets despite the intense summer heat. Athletes, coaches, federation officials, referees and sports administrators stood alongside other segments of Iranian society to bid farewell to the leader they described as a steadfast supporter of the nation's sporting community.

Donyamali, who attended the ceremony on Sunday with senior officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth, said the Iranian sports community regarded it as its duty to continue implementing the guidance the late Leader had repeatedly outlined for the country's sporting movement.

"The sports community has pledged to move forward on the path of our martyred Leader," Donyamali said. "He always told



Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali (c) is seen during the farewell ceremony for the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, in Tehran, Iran, on July 5, 2026.  
● IRNA

us that a strong Iran requires strong sports, and we have made that principle our guiding commitment. We are determined to translate his directives into action and continue along the course he defined."

The minister said the grief displayed by millions of Iranians would ultimately strengthen the nation.

"Those who committed this crime should know that the tears shed by the Iranian people for their Leader will soon become

roaring rivers that will sweep away the foundations of hollow superpowers," he said. "These tears will, by God's grace, be transformed into strength."

Donyamali added that those responsible for the assassination would "pay a heavy price," saying the Iranian people would remain united in the wake of the tragedy. Reflecting on the late Leader's relationship with athletes, the minister said Ayatollah Khamenei had always shown special affection for Iran's champions and

genuine affection. Today, his absence is deeply felt by all of us."

According to the minister, the close bond between the Leader and Iran's sporting community was reflected in the gestures of many of the country's elite athletes, who frequently dedicated their victories and medals to him. "Many of our champions presented their Olympic, world and continental medals to him during meetings," Donyamali said. "That demonstrated the deep love and respect they had for him. They regarded him like a father because of the care and encouragement he consistently showed them."

He added that Iranian athletes would honor the late Leader's memory by striving for further international success.

"We will continue to bring pride to the country through our achievements in international competitions," Donyamali said. "By winning medals and representing Iran with distinction, we will keep alive the vision that a strong Iran is built through strong sports."

The farewell ceremony also highlighted the scale of participation from Iran's sporting establishment. Federation presidents, national team coaches, Olympic and world medalists, veteran athletes and officials from across the country's sports organizations attended the event, many visibly emotional as they joined mourners paying their final respects.

Heavy crowds packed the venue throughout the ceremony, while many participants walked long distances to reach the Mosalla amid the congestion created by the large turnout. The presence of the sports community formed part of what organizers described as one of the largest public gatherings held in recent years.

Beyond attending the ceremony itself, sports organizations also contributed to services for mourners. Volunteers from the sports community established hospitality stations along routes leading to the venue, while several sports facilities in Tehran were prepared to accommodate visitors who had traveled from other parts of the country to participate in the farewell events.

Officials attending the ceremony also stressed their determination to pursue further success in upcoming international competitions, including the Asian Games in Nagoya, saying strong performances on the sporting stage would reflect the resilience and unity of the Iranian nation.

For many of those present, the ceremony represented not only a farewell to a leader they said had consistently encouraged Iranian athletes, but also a renewed commitment by the country's sports community to continue pursuing excellence while remaining faithful to the principles they said he championed.

## Asian U20 Wrestling Championships: Iran federation to review team's performance after runner-up finish in freestyle

### Sports Desk

The Iranian Wrestling Federation (IAWF) said it will carry out a comprehensive review of the national team's performance after missing out on the freestyle title at the Asian U20 Championships in Pattaya, Thailand.

Iran collected eight medals, including three golds, to finish runner-up in the team standings with 164 points – six behind Kazakhstan – failing to secure the freestyle crown for the first time since the revamped event, which also features the U15 age category, was introduced in 2024.

Sobhan Esmi (79kg), Abolfazl Shamsipour (86kg), and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad (125kg) claimed

gold medals for Iran, while Amirreza Taimourizad and Mohammad-Mahdi Mamivand settled for silver in the 65kg and 74kg divisions, respectively.

Ali-Asghar Soltani (61kg), Sajjad Pirdayeh (70kg), and Amirhossein Khakpa (92kg), meanwhile, added three bronze medals to Iran's haul across the 10 weight classes. The overall outcome, however, was deemed a failure by the federation, which vowed to make major changes to the squad ahead of the upcoming U20 World Championships, scheduled to begin on August 16 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

While acknowledging that a runner-up finish "would be considered a respectable achievement

in many sports," the federation stressed that its objective "is to win the continental title at every age level."

In a statement released on Sunday, the federation noted that the team competed without four of its key wrestlers but insisted that its technical assessment had identified several factors behind the failure to retain the Asian crown. According to the statement, "frequent changes to the team's strength and conditioning coach, overly cautious performances by some wrestlers, and the appointment of several coaches who did not meet the standards expected of the national team" were among the main reasons for the disappointing result.



Iran's Sobhan Esmi (red) is seen in action during the freestyle 79kg final at the Asian U20 Wrestling Championships in Pattaya, Thailand, on July 4, 2026.  
● IAWFIR

The federation said it had repeatedly warned the coaching staff about those issues before the team departed for Thailand. Nevertheless, it added that the federation itself also accepts responsibility, emphasizing that its duty is to achieve the best possible results at every international event.

It announced that the performances of the coaching staff and all team members "will be thoroughly reviewed" in the coming days, with the coaches required to explain their decisions and overall performance. The federation also confirmed that any nec-

essary changes to the coaching staff and the squad for the World Championships would be made "without hesitation."

The statement further warned that wrestlers whose performances fell well below expectations would be excluded from national team training camps until further notice and, by federation decision, would not be sent to any international tournaments for the next year.

Describing the Asian Championships primarily as a preparation event for the season's main objective, the federation reiterated

that its ultimate goal is success at the U20 World Championships.

The federation concluded by pledging greater planning, supervision, and accountability as it seeks to address weaknesses and prepare the national team to challenge for the world title, stressing that all decisions will be made solely in the interests of Iranian wrestling.



Iranian national basketball team players and coaching staff celebrate a victory over Syria in the FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers in Amman, Jordan, on July 5, 2026.  
● FIBA

## FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers:

# Iran completes Syria sweep to win first-round group

### Sports Desk

Iran claimed a second victory over Syria in seven days, winning 73-52 in Amman on Sunday to top first-round Group C in the FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers. Having beaten Jordan 67-49 on Thursday, Iran never trailed and led for 39:21, controlling the game from start to finish to conclude the first round of the qualifiers with a 5-1 record. Forward Arsalan Kazemi was in-

strumental with his all-round display, collecting 11 rebounds, four points, and two steals in 23:34. He finished with an efficiency rating of 15 and a game-high plus-24, helping Iran dominate the boards and repeatedly turn defensive stops into scoring opportunities. Matin Aqajanzpour led Iran in scoring with 13 points while adding eight rebounds and an assist. Mohammad Mahdi Heidari contributed 12 points, shooting 4-of-7 from the field, including

two three-pointers, while also recording two rebounds, an assist, a steal, and a block. Syria relied heavily on Donte Lamont McGill, who finished with 15 points, three rebounds, and an assist, but the hosts were unable to mount a serious comeback. The decisive stretch came in the third quarter when Iran produced an 11-0 run in less than three minutes to increase its lead to 49-24. Mobin Sheikhi scored five points during the burst on

perfect shooting to put the result beyond doubt.

Iran will resume qualification in final-round Group E, which also features Asian champion Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Jordan, and Syria, starting with a home game against New Zealand on August 27.

The top three teams from each of the two groups, along with the best fourth-placed finisher, will qualify for next year's FIBA World Cup in Qatar.