

AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers:

Iran into finals after comeback win against Vietnam

Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to defeat hosts Vietnam 3-1 in the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers in Viet Tri on Sunday, securing a place in next year's finals in China. The victory saw Qassem Haddadifar's side finish second in Group C with six points and qualify as one of the seven best runners-up across the eight groups. Three goals inside six second-half minutes helped North Korea defeat Palestine 4-0 earlier in the day to complete a clean sweep of three wins and secure top spot in the group. Having been stunned by two stoppage-time goals in a 2-1 loss to North Korea last time out, Iran looked destined to miss out on the finals when Vietnam took the lead in the 41st minute. Nguyen Quoc Khanh was played in on goal by Dau Hong Phong and beat Iranian goalkeeper Amirmahdi Maqsoudi with a shot at the near post. Arian Maali drew Iran level five

minutes after the break, finishing off Amirmohammad Karimi's long throw deep into the penalty area, before two spot kicks from Mahan Beheshti and Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar in the 63rd and 95th minutes completed Iran's fight-back. "From the first day we entered the competition, our goal was to get the job done in the first two matches, and we would have done so had it not been for the referee's mistake in ruling out our second goal against North Korea," said Haddadifar, whose team had opened its campaign with a 2-1 victory over Palestine. "Vietnam are a very good team with fast and technically gifted players, and they caused us problems with long balls and aerial play, but our substitutions helped us deal with the issue in the second half," added the Iranian. Haddadifar also pointed to his team's limited preparation amid the wartime conditions in the country in recent months. "Given the circumstances in our



country, the Iran U20 team was formed only about two months ago, and I feel many good players were left out of the squad. We had to quickly put together a team for the competition, while we also had fewer training camps

than our rivals.

"Thankfully, we were able to bring these quality players together and develop a good understanding and harmony within the team. I am truly grateful to my players and coaching staff

for their efforts over the past two months.

"The players behaved very professionally and worked incredibly hard. They have a bright future ahead of them, and I hope they go on to achieve what they



Iranian players celebrate a goal during a 3-1 victory over Vietnam in the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers in Viet Tri, Vietnam, on September 6, 2026.

● AFC

deserve."

Iran are four-time champions of the U20 Asian Cup, with all four titles coming in the 1970s. The team's best result in the more recent history of the competition, however, came in 2016, when it reached the semifinals before being eliminated by Saudi Arabia. Iran and North Korea will be joined by hosts China, as well as South Korea, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Japan, Indonesia, Lebanon, Oman, Jordan, India, Thailand and Malaysia in next March's finals.

The tournament will also serve as the qualification pathway for the 2027 FIFA U20 World Cup, with the four semifinalists securing places in the global showpiece in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

Iran names men's volleyball roster for Asian Games



Looking to secure a fourth successive men's volleyball gold at the showpiece, Iran has been drawn alongside Indonesia, Thailand and Kyrgyzstan in Pool B of the 16-team event. The Iranian team is currently in Fukuoka, Japan, for the crunch AVC Men's Continental Championship, where the champion will qualify for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. Piazza's side has enjoyed a flying start to the competition, beating New Zealand and India in straight sets to sit atop Pool B ahead of Wednesday's final group game against China. Veteran libero Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Esmail Hajikalateh, Arshia Behnejad, Ilshan Davoudipour, Ali Hajipour, Morteza Sharifi, Ali Haqparast, Mobin Nasari, Mohammad Valizadeh, Seyyed Issa Nasser and Yousef Kazemi in the Iranian roster.

● PAVAM SANI/RIYU

Sports Desk

Iran's men's volleyball head coach Roberto Piazza has named a 12-man squad for the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games. The 20th edition of the continental multi-sport event

will open at Paloma Mizuho Stadium on September 19, with the indoor volleyball competition getting underway three days before the opening ceremony. Star opposite and captain Amin Esmailnejad is joined by Pouria Hos-

seinkhanzadeh, Hossein Hajikalateh, Arshia Behnejad, Ilshan Davoudipour, Ali Hajipour, Morteza Sharifi, Ali Haqparast, Mobin Nasari, Mohammad Valizadeh, Seyyed Issa Nasser and Yousef Kazemi in the Iranian roster.

Iran extends Youth Olympics delegation to 29 athletes

Sports Desk

Iran will send a 29-strong delegation of athletes competing in 14 sports to the 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, with no further quotas expected to be added to the country's roster ahead of the multi-sport event, which will open on Oct. 31 in the Senegalese capital. Iranian chief de mission Hamid Azizi said the 29 athletes include two recently allocated quotas

in judo and fencing. Iran's delegation will feature two team events and 12 individual sports. The girls' futsal team will make up the largest contingent, with 10 athletes, while two athletes will represent Iran in the boys' beach volleyball competition. Beach wrestling will have four Iranian competitors, while taekwondo will feature two participants – one girl and one boy. Badminton will also have two

representatives, with one athlete of each gender. Iran's remaining athletes will compete in swimming, wushu taolu, triathlon, table tennis, boxing, road cycling, athletics, judo and fencing. The individual quota breakdown is as follows: one boy in swimming, one boy in wushu taolu, one boy in triathlon, one boy in table tennis, one girl in boxing, one boy in road cycling, one boy in athletics, one boy in judo and one girl in fencing.

The Dakar Youth Olympic Games will mark Iran's fourth participation in as many editions since the event was first introduced at Singapore 2010, where the country secured two gold, two silver, and one bronze medal. At Nanjing 2014, Iran collected three gold and three bronze medals, before achieving its best performance to date with seven gold, three silver, and four bronze medals at Buenos Aires 2018.

IWBF Wheelchair Basketball World Championships:

Iran withdraws after coaches denied Canadian visas



● IWBF

Sports Desk

Iran's men's team has withdrawn from the upcoming IWBF Wheelchair Basketball World Championships after host Canada refused to issue entry visas to head coach Behrouz Soltani and his assistant, Mohammadreza Dastyar. The tournament gets underway on Wednesday in Ottawa, where the Iranian team had been drawn alongside hosts Canada, Germany and Morocco in Group D. "We had decided to send the national team and participate in the World Championships in Canada, but this is not possible without the coaching staff," Jalail Kouhpayehzadeh, president of the Iranian Sports Federation for the Disabled, told ISNA. "The competition starts on Wednesday, and there is no longer enough time for the visas to be issued. The visa process takes at least several days, and we may not have

enough time to arrive in Canada and take part in the competition."

Kouhpayehzadeh said the Iranian federation had been in regular contact with the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) over the visa issue, adding that the governing body and the tournament organizers had made efforts to accelerate the process. "We are in contact with the secretary-general of the world federation every day. They, together with the organizing body, have made considerable efforts to find different ways to speed up the visa process," he said. He also expressed confidence that Iran, bronze medalists at the previous edition, would not face sanctions for withdrawing from the tournament under the circumstances. "It is unlikely that the rules regarding fines or suspension will apply to Iran in

such a situation. We made every effort to send the team and followed the legal process for obtaining the visas. Certainly, they understand the situation." The withdrawal is a major blow to Iran's bid to secure a berth at the LA 2028 Paralympic Games, with the World Championships forming part of the qualification pathway. Kouhpayehzadeh highlighted the importance of the World Championships in determining the number of qualification places allocated to each continent for the 2028 Paralympics. "The World Championships determine the number of qualification spots allocated to each continent," Kouhpayehzadeh said. "Given the situation that has arisen, we will have to defeat all the Asian teams in the future in order to secure the Asian quota for the Paralympics."