



Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games:

Nemati wins kumite gold, Iran crashes out in men's football

Sports Desk

It was a day of mixed fortunes for the Iranian delegation at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games as Mahmoud Nemati claimed a second karate gold for the country while the U23 team crashed out in the group stage of the men's football event following a 4-1 defeat against North Korea.

A day after Morteza Nemati triumphed in the men's kumite -75kg class, reigning Asian champion Mahmoud replicated his elder brother's success by winning the top prize in the +84kg category.

Nemati began his campaign with a 5-0 win against Vatthana Xayasan of Laos and then defeated Nepal's Tenzing Sherpa by the same scoreline to set up a final clash with world bronze medalist Sanad Sufyani of Saudi Arabia in a repeat of the final showdown at June's Asian Championships in Bali, where the Iranian had emerged victorious.

Nemati overcame a two-point deficit in the early stages of the contest to secure a 6-3 victory over his familiar foe, rounding out an impressive run for the Iranian karate squad, which also featured three silver medals on the previous day at the Toyohashi Gymnasium.

Ali-Asghar Asiabari set-

led for a runner-up finish in the men's -84kg, following a 9-1 loss to high-profile Jordanian Mohammad Al-Jafari – the reigning Asian champion and bronze medalist at the 2025 World Championships.



Iranian karateka Mahmoud Nemati celebrates after winning the men's kumite +84kg gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games on September 23, 2026.

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In the women's competition, meanwhile, 20-year-old prodigy Fatemeh-Zahra Saeidabadi fell to a controversial 6-4 loss to Malaysia's Adeola Fay Robert in the -55kg final, though it still provided Iran women's head coach

Zangeneh with some consolation after world champion Atousa Golshadnejad crashed out in the first round of the -68kg class. The Iranian trio of Fatemeh Sadeqi, Zeynab Hosseini and Sepideh Amini also won silver in the women's

tee himself a place on the podium. Fotouhi bowed out in the quarterfinals after losing to his compatriot in an all-Iranian clash. Pakdaman advanced from the group stage with four wins and one loss before beating an Uzbek fencer

peared to be well on its way to a place in the quarterfinals when North Korea's Ri Song Hung scored an own goal to put Iran U23 in front with 17 minutes played at the Wave Stadium Kariya. The game, however, turned

draw against the UAE in the simultaneous fixture to finish atop the group with five points, while the Iranian team was sent packing.

Beach volleyball

The pair of Abbas Pourasgari and Alireza Aqa-

Iranian team of Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi in securing a place in the knockout stage.

Pourasgari and Aqajani will conclude the group stage against the Thai duo on Saturday in what will be a top-spot decider in Pool F. Khakizadeh and Qalenovi will also look to claim the top spot in Pool H when they take on the host pair of Kota Kurosawa and Taito Mizumachi today at the Hekinan Ryokuchi Beach Court.

3x3 basketball

Iran's women's 3x3 basketball team continued its perfect run in Pool B, defeating Chinese Taipei 14-10 to advance to the quarterfinals.

Shamim Nouri contributed seven points and eight rebounds, with Mahla Abedi adding six points and seven rebounds, as the Iranian trio claimed a third successive victory, having beaten Uzbekistan (19-5) and Japan (18-16) earlier.

Elsewhere at the multi-sport event, Iran claimed a first victory in four outings in men's handball, defeating Kazakhstan 28-23 to finish fourth in Group B with three points and advance to the quarterfinals. In kabaddi, Iran's women's team fell 37-23 to India to finish runner-up to its formidable opponent in Group A, while the men's team defeated Malaysia 67-33.

team kata event, courtesy of a 5-0 defeat to world champion Vietnam in the final.

Sabre bronze

There was further success for Iran in fencing as the country's sabre captain Ali Pakdaman secured the bronze medal in the men's individual event.

Pakdaman and fellow Iranian fencer Mohammad Fotouhi competed in the individual sabre event, with Pakdaman reaching the semifinals to guaran-

tee himself a place on the podium. Fotouhi bowed out in the quarterfinals after losing to his compatriot in an all-Iranian clash. Pakdaman advanced from the group stage with four wins and one loss before beating an Uzbek fencer

Football humiliation

Having beaten the UAE 3-1 in its Group B opener before a goalless draw against China, head coach Hossein Abdi's side ap-

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Iran U23 head coach Hossein Abdi looks dejected after a 4-1 defeat against North Korea in the men's football group stage at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games on September 23, 2026.

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jani claimed a second successive victory in the preliminary phase of the men's beach volleyball event on Tuesday, defeating Oman's Ahmed Al-Housni and Khalfan Al Mamari 2-0 (21-12, 21-13) to join their fellow

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Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, said the country would withdraw from the upcoming U23 World Championships in Las Vegas if even one Iranian wrestler is denied an entry visa by the United States.

The 10th edition of the annual showpiece will kick off on October 12 at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, where Iran – represented by 20 wrestlers – will look to repeat the 2024 freestyle team title, having finished runner-up to the United States last year, while chasing a fifth Greco-Roman crown – and third in a row – in seven years.

Iranian sport has struggled with entry visa complications for international tournaments in recent years, especially since a military conflict between Iran and a US-Israeli coalition began on February 28. The Iranian wrestling squad missed out on the 2023 U23 Worlds in Ti-

rana, Albania, due to the same issue, while members of the national team's support staff were prevented from entering the United States for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in June. In the latest development, Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team had to withdraw from the IWBF World Championships in Ottawa earlier in the month after host Canada refused to issue entry visas to head coach Behrouz Soltani and his assistant, Mohammadreza Dastyar. Dabir said some obstacles had emerged over the issuance of US visas for members of Iran's delegation, adding that he had decided not to apply for a visa himself because he expected his application to be rejected. "We have decided that I will not take action to obtain a visa because they



probably will not issue one to me. We are waiting for visas to be issued for the other members," Dabir said. "As I said before, if a visa is not issued to the mem-

bers of the team, especially the wrestlers, even one person, we will definitely send neither the freestyle team nor the Greco-Roman team. We have made it clear [to United World Wres-

ting] and are firmly committed to this decision." Despite the uncertainty over Iran's participation, Dabir said the wrestlers had been working hard in preparation for the event

in recent weeks.

"These boys have worked hard and are ready to compete," said the former world and Olympic champion.

"If the United States wants to win the freestyle competition by any means, then the way to do it is to deny visas to some of our boys," Dabir said.

"I hope that if the competition is to be held fairly, visas will be issued to all members of our team."

Las Vegas has also been named the host city of the 2027 Senior World Championships, which will serve as part of the qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Dabir had hinted back in May at launching a petition to strip the United States of hosting next year's event should Iranian wrestlers be denied en-

try visas for the upcoming U23 Worlds.

"I told Mr. [Nenad] Lalović that Iran, the United States, and Russia are title rivals, and if the US doesn't want to grant us visas this year, they will do the same again to Iranian and Russian wrestlers for the 2027 Senior Worlds, leaving the Americans with an easy path to secure Olympic berths while we chase quotas in other tournaments," Dabir had said of his conversation with the Serbian head of the sport's international governing body.

"If that's the case, we should submit a petition to change the 2027 host, just like the 2026 event was moved from Bahrain. We are seriously pursuing this. If our U23 team doesn't receive full visas, I will be among those speaking with other federations to collect signatures to move the 2027 Worlds to another country. That event has Olympic quotas, and we cannot afford to jeopardize our young athletes' careers."