

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iran finishes sixth with 26 golds

Sports Desk

Iran's 166-strong delegation collected 102 medals, including 26 golds, to finish sixth in the overall medal table at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan – the country's lowest finish since the multi-sport event was first held in 2010.

The gold medal tally also marked an all-time low for Iran across the five editions of the Games. Iran claimed 44 golds to finish runner-up in Hangzhou in 2022, having achieved its best result in Jakarta in 2018, where it won 51 golds to finish third. The previous low came at the inaugural edition in Guangzhou in 2010, when Iran won 27 golds.

The modest outcome, however, came against a backdrop of challenging circumstances, with Iran sending its second-smallest delegation in the Games' history after fielding more than 200 athletes in each of the previous three editions. Iranian athletes also had to contend with disrupt-



Iranian sprinter Alireza Zare' celebrates after winning the men's 200m T35 gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan on October 23, 2026. ● VARZESH3

ed preparations amid wartime conditions in the country ahead of the continental showpiece. Iranian swimmer Mohammad-Hossein Karimi won the country's final medal at the Games, taking bronze in the men's 100m butterfly S12 final on Friday. Earlier on the penultimate day of competition,

Alireza Zare' and Sadeq Beit-Sayyah rounded off Iran's medal-laden para athletics campaign, which proved to be the country's most productive sport at the Games, yielding 14 golds, 20 silvers and 16 bronzes. Zare' clocked an Asian record of 24.83 seconds to win gold in the men's 200m T35 final, taking his personal tally in Nagoya to two golds after also claiming the 100m title. Beit-Sayyah, meanwhile, won gold in the men's F40/F41 javelin throw with a best effort of 45.78m. It was his second

medal at Paloma Mizuho Stadium, following a bronze in the shot put on Wednesday. Elsewhere, Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team settled for silver after losing 55-47 to hosts Japan in the final, while the women's sitting volleyball team also finished runner-up, falling to China in straight sets (25-22, 25-20, 25-12). Abolfazl Zarifpour won Iran's fourth gold medal in para swimming – the delegation's second-most productive sport, with 16 medals – after clocking 1:04.26 in the men's

100m backstroke S9 final. He added the title to his silver in the 50m freestyle S9 and bronze in the 100m freestyle S9. Zarifpour's compatriot Sina Zeighaminejad was the delegation's most successful athlete, winning three gold medals in the men's 100m freestyle S10, 100m backstroke SB9 and 50m freestyle S10 events, as well as bronze in the 200m individual medley SM10. Elham Salehi, meanwhile, accounted for most gold medals among the 62 Iranian female athletes at the Games, claiming the top

prize in the javelin throw F52/F53/F54 and shot put F53/F54 contests. Iran's para taekwondo team also contributed to the medal haul, collecting four golds, one silver and six bronzes. Para powerlifting yielded eight medals, although the results fell short of expectations for one of the sport's global powerhouses. Iran managed just one gold, won by Ahmad Aminzadeh in the men's +107kg category, while reigning Paralympic champions Aliakbar Gharibshahi and Rouhollah Rostami settled for

silver in their respective divisions. China, as expected, dominated the overall standings with 435 medals, including 207 golds, followed by Japan with 64 golds and Uzbekistan with 45. India and South Korea also finished ahead of Iran, winning 30 and 29 gold medals, respectively.



Iran's Mahdi Abbasi (47) is seen in action against Japan in the men's wheelchair basketball final at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan on October 23, 2026. ● VARZESH3



Wrestling World Championships:

Qassempour faces grueling path to 86kg glory

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestler Kamran Qassempour faces a challenging path to gold when the freestyle 86kg competition gets underway at the World Championships on Friday in Astana, Kazakhstan, where a strong field includes four-time world champion Kyle Dake, Olympic champion Magomed Ramazanov and rising Russian star Ibragim Kadiev.

Qassempour will be one of Iran's leading contenders. He won back-to-back world titles at 92kg in 2021 and 2022 before claiming bronze at 86kg at last year's edition in Zagreb.

His return to the 86kg category presents a different challenge, particularly against opponents with extensive experience at the weight. However, his technical ability and record at the highest level make him a serious contender for the title. The Iranian will have to negotiate a demanding field featuring wrestlers with different strengths and ambitions, from established champions seeking further international success to younger competitors eager to translate their achievements at age-group level into senior medals. American veteran Dake is among the biggest names

in the division. He has won four senior world titles across the 74kg and 79kg categories and is now targeting a world championship crown at 86kg.



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Success in Astana would see Dake become a world champion in a third weight class, adding another significant achievement to an already decorated career. Moving up to a division featuring physically different opponents, however, presents a fresh challenge even for a wrestler with his experience. His ability to manage high-pressure bouts and his extensive experience in major international competitions nevertheless place him among the

leading contenders. Arsenii Dzhiyev of Azerbaijan is another major threat to Qassempour's ambitions. Dzhiyev won bronze at the 2025 senior World Champion-

closely contested bouts. Bulgaria's Ramazanov, meanwhile, arrives with the distinction of being the reigning Olympic champion at 86kg. He won gold at the Paris

the most anticipated potential matchups in the division. Kadiev is another wrestler to watch. The Russian won consecutive world junior titles in 2023 and 2024, at 79kg and 86kg, respectively. Although he has yet to win a senior world medal, his junior success underlines his technical potential.

The championships will provide a significant test of his ability to carry that form into the senior ranks against established competitors such as Qassempour, Dake and Ramazanov. The 86kg competition promises to be compelling not only because of the quality of its contenders but also because of their differing ambitions. Qassempour is seeking another world title after returning to 86kg, Dake is pursuing a championship in a third weight class, Dzhiyev will look to build on his recent international success, Ramazanov aims to add a world crown to his Olympic gold, and Kadiev hopes to make his mark among the senior elite. For Qassempour, the challenge will be to adapt to the demands of the weight class and overcome a formidable group of rivals in his bid to return to the top of the world podium.

Asian Table Tennis Championships:
Iranian pair secures
2027 World Ch'ships berth

Sports Desk

Iran secured a place at the 2027 World Table Tennis Championships after Benjamin Faraji and Arian Ghafari teamed up to defeat the Saudi pair 3-2 in the men's doubles at the Asian Table Tennis Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Iranian pair bounced back from a last-16 defeat to the Philippines to claim the victory needed to secure a place at next year's global event. Meanwhile, Noshad and Nima Alamiyan withdrew from the doubles competition after the former fell ill with a severe cold. The decision was made by the coaching staff to protect the health of the Iranian international.

Faraji also made progress in the men's singles, defeating Japan's Hiroto Shinozuka, the world No. 20, 3-1 to reach the round of 16, before falling in straight games to South Korea's Park Gang-hyeon on Saturday.

A bronze medalist at the Asian Games last month, Noshad Alamiyan had earlier reached the round of 32 in the men's singles, before suffering a 3-0 setback against Kuo Guan-Hong of the Chinese Taipei. In the women's competition, Mahshid Ashtari opened her campaign with a 3-0 win over Saudi Arabia's Nihal Al-Qahatani before recording another straight-games victory against Singapore's Ser Lin Qian. The two wins sent the Iranian through to the round of 32 without dropping a game, though she also had her campaign brought to an end with a 3-0 setback against Wang Yidi of China on Friday. Reports from the tournament indicated that several players had experienced respiratory illnesses. Japanese player Shunsuke Togami was among those reported to have withdrawn, although the medical reasons for other players' withdrawals had yet to be officially confirmed.

