

Iran 7th in FIFA Futsal Ranking



TEHRAN – Iran's futsal team is seventh in the world ranking list. 2024 FIFA Futsal World Cup champion Brazil remained top, followed by Spain, runner-up Argentina and Portugal.

Russia and Kazakhstan are fifth and sixth. Team Melli sits seventh in the list. Japan is the second-best Asian team, sitting in the 14th place.

Iran Invited to Brazil Futsal Tournament

Ehsan Osouli, member of the Iranian football federation's board of directors, said that Team Melli has been invited to Brazil to participate in a tournament. According to him, Iran, Colombia, Afghanistan as well as host Brazil will compete in a four-team competition. The tournament will be held in the next two months. The Iran futsal team is headed by Vahid Shamsaei.

List of Candidates for FFIRI Presidency Finalized



TEHRAN – Five people have been nominated for leadership of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI). The applicants include the current head of the federation Mehdi Taj, former president of the Iran Football League Organization Heydar Baharvand, two former presidents of the football federation, namely Ali Kafashian and Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem, and ex-general manager of Persepolis football club Amir Abedini. The FFIRI's elective general assembly will be held on March 1. In the last elective assembly in August 2022, Mehdi Taj was elected as the head of the federation. He replaced Azizi Khadem, who had been removed from the job in February 2022.

Real Madrid Outclass Mallorca to Set Up Clasico Super Cup Final

JEDDAH (Reuters) - Real Madrid will chase a record-equating 14th Spanish Super Cup title in the final against Barcelona after second-half goals by Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo helped them to a 3-0 win over Mallorca in the semifinals on Thursday. England midfielder Bellingham broke the deadlock after the hour mark with a low shot into the middle of the goal before Mallorca defender Martin Valjent's own goal doubled the lead in stoppage time followed by a Rodrygo strike from close range.



Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #11 Rodrygo attempts a shot during the Spanish Super Cup semifinal football match.

Spanish champions Real will play Barcelona for the trophy on Sunday after goals by

Gavi and Lamine Yamal earned Barca a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday. Barcelona and Real will meet in the competition's final for third consecutive time, with Carlo Ancelotti's side prevailing last year while Barca last lifted the trophy in 2023. Barcelona hold the record of 14 titles with Real on 13. Last year's Copa del Rey finalists Mallorca defended well against Real and the game was goalless at the break after early attempts by Lucas Vazquez and Bellingham forced Mallorca keeper Dominik Greif into saves.

Handballers Beat Iraqi Team



TEHRAN – Iran's national handball team defeated Iraq 37-24 in a friendly match in Tehran on Thursday. Iran had played two friendly matches with Iraq in Baghdad in November. Team Melli, headed by Spanish coach Rafael Guijosa Castillo, will meet the Iraqi team again on Saturday. Guijosa, 55, experiences his second stint in the Iran national team. He helped Team Melli win a bronze medal in the Asian championship in Bahrain in 2014.

Rockets Beat Grizzlies 119-115 in Morant's Return



MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Alperen Sengun had 32 points and 14 rebounds, and the Houston Rockets held on to beat the Memphis Grizzlies 119-115 on Thursday night in a showdown between two of the top teams in the Western Conference. Jalen Green finished with 27 points and Fred VanVleet scored 22 as the Rockets won their third straight and solidified their hold on second place in the Western Conference, moving 1 1/2 games ahead

of Memphis. Ja Morant scored 27 points in his return from a five-game absence with a shoulder injury, and Jaren Jackson Jr. added 21 points, eight rebounds and six blocks for Memphis. Desmond Bane had 16 points. Houston dominated the inside early, scoring 20 points in the paint before the halfway point of the first quarter. Memphis initially couldn't stop anything at the rim. Houston opened a 17-point lead before taking a 68-63 advantage at the break.

Barcelona Into Super Cup Final With 2-0 Win Over Bilbao



JEDDAH (Reuters) - Goals from Gavi and Lamine Yamal earned Barcelona a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup semifinal in Jeddah to reach their third successive final. Gavi opened the scoring in the 17th minute and Yamal doubled Barca's lead seven minutes after the break. Barcelona, the most successful Super Cup side with 14 trophies, will face the winners of Thursday's semifinal between holders Real Madrid and Mallorca in the final on Sunday. The earliest chances fell to Barcelona's Raphinha, who first acrobatically volleyed over and then struck a powerful free kick which keeper Unai Simon parried away, but Barca were soon rewarded for their early onslaught. Pedri played a pass to Alejandro Balde wide in the area who pulled the ball back across to Gavi, and from just outside the six-yard box he slipped his shot through the legs of Simon. Barca could have doubled their lead but Raphinha hit his shot straight at the keeper when put through on a one-on-one by Yamal, and Athletic finally began to create opportunities of their own.

Lakers, Kings Postpone Games Amid Los Angeles Wildfires

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The Los Angeles Lakers postponed Friday's NBA fixture against the Charlotte Hornets amid ongoing wildfires in the region. NHL side Los Angeles Kings, who also play at the Crypto.com Arena, postponed their meeting with the Calgary Flames which was scheduled for 03:30 GMT on Thursday. Firefighters in Los Angeles are battling a number of blazes in city suburbs, as nearly 180,000 residents were forced to evacuate. "We're heartbroken for Los Angeles," said the Lakers in a statement as they looked to "focus on what matters most today". "Our thoughts are with all those impacted by this unimaginable situation. And our gratitude is with the first responders and all of you who come together when



we need each other the most. We're with you, LA." The Lakers were due to host the Hornets at 03:30 GMT on Friday and the NBA said the date for the rescheduled game will be announced at a later time. "The entire NBA family sends its thoughts and support to the community of Los Angeles during this challenging time," the NBA added. "Our hearts are with our entire Los Angeles community," the Kings said in a statement on Wednesday. "We appreciate the hard working first responders who are dili-

gently working to contain the fire and protect our community." Meanwhile, basketball star Kawhi Leonard, who plays for the Lakers' city rivals the LA Clippers, is reportedly, external set to step away from the team to be with his family after they were evacuated from the area. NFL franchise Los Angeles Rams, though, said their play-off game against the Minnesota Vikings at SoFi Stadium is still expected to take place on Monday. "The safety of the Los Angeles community is our top priority, and our thoughts are with everyone affected by the fires in the area," added the Rams. In a statement, the league said: "The NFL continues to closely monitor developments in the area and will remain in contact with both clubs and the NFLPA [National Football League Players Association]."