Leader of the Revolution Meets Olympic and Paralympic Medallists and Delegation Members - 17 /Sep/ 2024

This morning (17th September 2024), the Leader of the Islamic Revolution met with medallists and other members of delegations that had been sent to the Olympics and Paralympics. He highlighted the exceptional nature of their abilities, manifesting the "national, political, and religious identity" of the Iranian nation as the most outstanding result of their participation in these competitions. He also talked about the nation's joy, pride, and sense of honour in witnessing the athletes' performances. He said, "Identifying talent in a timely manner, looking after the lives of athletes, and paying attention to both competitive and recreational sports simultaneously will sustain and accelerate progress in sports.

Expressing great pleasure at meeting a group of the country's most beloved and honourable progeny, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "You have made the nation happy with your medals and conduct. I sincerely thank you, the coaches, and all those involved".

He saw it as correct and necessary to take sports seriously. Referring to the Minister of Sports' comprehensive remarks in the meeting about the socio-psychological impact and hope-inspiring nature of sports, he said, "Sports also has a fundamental impact on public diplomacy and uplifts the country overall."

While discussing a few points, the Leader of the Revolution described international competitions as a stage for showcasing nations' spiritual strength and confidence alongside physical power and athletic skill. He said, "In addition to demonstrating your professional and athletic abilities, you highlighted the nation's confidence in the face of adversity through meaningful actions such as dedicating medals to the children of Palestine and Gaza, showing modesty and decorum, naming the delegation after the Imams (peace be upon them), and, as is commonly done, taking selfies with the Palestinian flag. You showcased and honoured your spiritual capabilities and national, religious, and Islamic identity". He added, "I place great importance on each of these highly valuable actions and will explain their deep meaning to the people."

Ayatollah Khamenei talked about the continuous efforts of the enemy to distort the 'identity, truth, and beliefs' of the Iranian nation; he said, "They claim that religious sentiments in Iran have weakened, but when our champion kisses the Qur'an and prostrates gratitude in front of what may be hundreds of millions of viewers, the truth and identity of the Iranian nation, his adherence to beliefs, and the pursuit of national greatness are highlighted. Such striking signs were evident in your performance."

The Leader of the Revolution appreciated Iranian athletes' national and international sense of responsibility in international competitions; he said, "Your dignified behaviour, measured actions, and the rationality governing your performance demonstrate a very valuable sense of additional responsibility toward the nation and the country."

The Leader of the Revolution showed that the medals the athletes won created hope in society. He said, " Some people become despondent over a minor physical incident, but when a young athlete in a wheelchair demonstrates strength in the Paralympics, it fills everyone's hearts with hope."

He talked about the two-faced and biased policies of the countries governing international sports during this period of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. He said, "While one country is banned from participating in the competitions because of a war, the Zionist regime, despite having killed 41,000 people, including thousands of children, over nearly a year, is not banned from these events."

The Leader of the Revolution added, "These two-faced and biased policies, as we have repeatedly stated, have demonstrated that, contrary to the claim of sports being apolitical, the greatest acts of political bias are carried out in sports."

Ayatollah Khamenei called on the champion athletes to maintain their honour outside the sports arenas, saying, "Your behaviour serves as a model for many people and the youth; therefore, just as you showcased your respect for religion, ethics, and religious, political, and social responsibilities on the international stage, you should also uphold these important responsibilities in your work and daily life."

He made several recommendations to officials regarding the government's sports sector responsibilities.

The Leader of the Revolution advised the officials to plan for scouting talent and the timely discovery of athletic talent from school age, and said, "The next recommendation is to pay special attention to high-medal sports such as wrestling, as well as to prominent Iranian sports and disciplines like traditional wrestling and polo."

He emphasised the importance of creating opportunities on the international stage to showcase traditional Iranian wrestling and sports, which embody a unique order, meaning, and significance. He said, "The next recommendation is not to neglect athletes who, due to their national or religious ideals, refuse to compete against the Zionist competitors and incur the costs for doing so. Paying attention to these athletes is an important responsibility of sports officials."

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasised the government's need to address the livelihood and employment of athletes and meet their sports needs as much as possible. He also deemed the development of recreational sports as essential. He said, "I support giving full attention to competitive sports, but we should not neglect recreational sports, as sports reduce many of the country's costs, both physical and moral."

In his final recommendation, he mentioned that it was valuable and necessary to support and make full use of the capacities of Iranian coaches. He said, "I am pleased that the country's sports are progressing, and this path must continue." At the beginning of the meeting, Mr Donyamali, the Minister of Sports and Youth, reported on the achievements of the Iranian athletes sent to the Paris Olympics and Paralympic Games, saying, "In total, the Iranian flag was raised 37 times at competition venues."

The Minister of Sports also provided a report on the ministry's programs and activities to improve the state of sports in the country and support athletes.

Among the attendees at the meeting were Ms Sarah Javanmardi, who has won several gold medals in shooting at multiple Paralympic Games, Mr Arien Salehi, who won a gold medal in Taekwondo at the Paris Olympics, and Mr Rouhollah Rostami, the gold medallist in weightlifting at the Paralympics who represented the athletes. They expressed gratitude for the Leader of the Revolution's prayers, congratulatory messages, and support. They also reminded the officials of the spiritual honours of our champions in these competitions. They requested that more attention be paid to the livelihood and employment of the champions to ensure the continuation of sports successes.