

Bahrain set for Asian Cup draw

Kingdom's senior men's national football team to learn of group stage opponents today for continental football showcase

● Draw set to be held at Katara Opera House starting at 2pm, Bahrain time

● Bahrain among 24 national teams to be divided into six groups of four

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team will today learn of their group stage opponents for the next AFC Asian Cup, which will be held in January of next year in Doha.

The draw for the prestigious Asian Football Confederation (AFC) showcase takes place today at the Qatari capital at 2pm, Bahrain time.

Bahrain are in pot three for the draw. As with the previous editions of Asia's crown jewel, Qatar have been allocated the



Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa at the AFC Executive Committee meeting alongside FIFA president Gianni Infantino

first position in pot one to ensure that the host nation commences the tournament with the opening match, scheduled for January 12, 2024.

Joining the hosts and defending champions in pot one are the teams ranked from second to sixth in Asia in the latest FIFA World Ranking, namely four-time winners Japan, three-time

champions Iran, two-time winners South Korea, 2015 champions Australia, and Saudi Arabia, who will be aiming to claim their fourth continental crown.

Pot two will comprise 2007 champions Iraq, 2019 hosts the UAE, Oman, 2011 semi-finalists Uzbekistan, two-time runners up China, and Jordan.

Meanwhile, joining Bahrain

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SHAIKH SALMAN BIN EBRAHIM AL KHALIFA

in pot three are Syria, Palestine, Vietnam, Kyrgyz Republic and Lebanon. India, debutants Tajikistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Indonesia will complete the line-up in pot four.

The tournament's 24 participating national teams will be divided into six groups of four teams each, with the top two and four best third-placed teams advancing into the final 16 of the competition before the Asian champions are crowned on February 10.

Speaking ahead of today's draw, AFC president Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain underlined his confidence yesterday in Qatar's ability to deliver a true celebration of Asian football.

“As we all witnessed just less than six months ago at the FIFA World Cup, Qatar is amongst the best sporting destinations, not only in Asia, but across the globe, and we are confident that we will experience a memorable spectacle befitting the ever-growing stature of the AFC Asian Cup,” Shaikh Salman said as he

chaired the first AFC Executive Committee meeting for the term 2023-2027.

“For the first time in history, Asia's crown jewel will be staged in FIFA World Cup stadiums, and we know that our teams and players are eager to showcase their talent in some of the world's finest sporting arenas,” Shaikh Salman continued.

“The AFC has reiterated our ambitions to stage world-class competitions for our teams, players and match officials, and we must express our utmost gratitude to the local organising committee, the Qatar Football Association and the Qatari Government for sharing our Vision and Mission for Asian football.”



The AFC Asian Cup trophy

Title-deciding fixtures scheduled by BFA

● Manama to face Al Ahli on Sunday, leaders Al Khaldiya to take on Bahrain Club on Thursday next week

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Football Association announced yesterday the dates for the remaining fixtures in the 2022/2023 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

Three games are still to be played, and they will decide this season's champions as well as the play-off match-ups to avoid relegation.

Al Khaldiya and Manama are currently the two remaining

Standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Al Khaldiya	21	12	5	4	22	41
Muharraq	22	10	10	2	22	40
Manama	21	11	7	3	19	40
Riffa	22	11	6	5	18	39
Sitra	22	10	8	4	10	38
Al Ahli	21	7	9	5	1	30
Al Shabab	22	7	6	9	-4	27
Hidd	22	7	6	9	-9	27
East Riffa	21	4	9	8	-6	21
Al Hala	21	5	6	10	-10	21
Bahrain Club	21	4	6	11	-10	18
Budaiya*	22	1	2	19	-53	-1

(*Budaiya deducted six points due to a decision by the Bahrain Football Association)

teams who still have a shot at clinching the title. Manama will be playing Al Ahli in their final game, scheduled for Sunday night. Khaldiya, on the other

hand, will take on Bahrain Club on Thursday next week.

Khaldiya currently have a one-point lead over Manama on the league standings and anything short of a win for Manama will gift the title to Khaldiya.

The third remaining fixture is between East Riffa and Al Hala, who are both trying to avoid relegation, along with Bahrain Club.

East Riffa and Hala are presently tied on the table with 21 points apiece, with East Riffa ninth and Hala 10th, respectively, on goal difference. Bahrain Club are on 18 points in 11th place.

Whichever team finishes ninth and 10th will take to the pitch in relegation play-offs against the third and fourth-ranked clubs from Bahrain's

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KNOW WHAT

Whichever team finishes ninth and 10th will take to the pitch in relegation play-offs against the third and fourth-ranked clubs from Bahrain's second division.

The 11th-ranked side will join bottom team Budaiya in the lower-tier league next season.

Argentina's Etcheverry lines up Djokovic clash at Italian Open



Tomas Martin Etcheverry in action (file photo)

AFF | Rome

Novak Djokovic's will begin his bid to retain the Italian Open title against Tomas Etcheverry after the Argentine beat Luca van Assche in the first round yesterday.

World number 61, Etcheverry beat Frenchman Van Assche in straight sets, 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, in Rome to reach the second round, when the top seeds join the fray.

Djokovic comes into the clay court tournament he has won six times recovering from an elbow injury and set to lose top spot in the world rankings to young gun Carlos Alcaraz.

Spaniard Alcaraz just needs to play a match in the Italian capital to become world number one ahead of the French Open which starts later this month.

Djokovic won his record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam at the Australian Open in January but missed the American section of the hard-court swing in March.

The 35-year-old has been unconvincing since the start of the European clay-court

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season, being eliminated in the last 16 at the Monte Carlo Masters, in the quarter-finals at Banja Luka and then pulling out of Madrid.

Veteran Stan Wawrinka will face 25th seed Grigor Dimitrov in the last 64, the three-time Grand Slam winner easing past Ilya Ivashka 6-4, 6-2.

Later Andy Murray takes on local hero Fabio Fognini after winning his first title since 2019 at the weekend.

Briton Murray, who has won three Grand Slams, claimed the honours at the Aix-en-Provence Challenger tournament in France on Sunday.

The 35-year-old is now ranked 42 in the world and is gunning for a seeded spot at Wimbledon in July.

Muharraq set for Ettihad semis clash

● Game one of best-of-three Golden Square series between Muharraq and Ettihad tips off tonight in Zain Bahrain Basketball League

TDT | Manama

The Golden Square semi-finals of the 2022/2023 Zain Bahrain Basketball League get underway tonight.

Game one of the exciting best-of-three match-up between Muharraq and Al Ettihad is scheduled for a 7pm tip-off at the Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town.

Game two will then be played on Wednesday next week and game three, if needed, will be held on Saturday.

The other Golden Square clash will be between heated rivals Manama and Al Ahli. Manama are the league's defending



Muharraq skipper Bader Abdulla Malabes...set for key role

champions and will have to go through their long-time nemesis in their hopes to retain their crown.

Game one is scheduled for Thursday next week, after which game two will be held on May 25. Game three, if needed, will take place May 28.

Meanwhile, Manama and Ahli are set for another epic clash when they face off tomorrow in game three of the Golden Square semis in the Khalifa bin Salman Cup.

The thrilling rubber-match will be held at 7pm at the Khalifa Sports City Arena and will determine the other finalists for the prestigious tournament.

Manama won game one 90-88 but then Ahli forced the decider after taking game two 81-68.

Muharraq have already booked their tickets to the final after sweeping past Sitra in their Golden Square series.

The Khalifa bin Salman Cup final has yet to be scheduled by the BBA.