

Bahrain kick off final qualifiers' lead-up

Senior men's national football team begin final training gathering ahead of their continental qualifiers for FIFA World Cup 2026

● **Bahrainis to kick off qualifiers against Yemen on Thursday in Abha, Saudi Arabia**

● **Head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi selected 26 of Kingdom's top names for matches**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team kicked off their local training gathering last night in the final lead-up to their continental qualifiers this coming week-and-a-half for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The Bahrainis are set to play against Yemen on Thursday at Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City in Abha, Saudi Arabia. They then go up against the UAE at the National Stadium in Riffa on 21 November.

Thursday's contest is scheduled for a 9pm kick-off, Bahrain time, while the Bahrainis' ensuing home match will get



Bahrain midfielder Mohammed Jassim Marhoon does drills during training last night

underway at 6.30pm.

The nationals have begun their final preparations under the supervision of head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi.

There are five rounds in the FIFA World Cup qualification format for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), which will have eight teams book their tickets to the global showcase, plus potentially another following an inter-confederation play-off.

Bahrain are directly in the

second round of qualifiers in Group H with the UAE, Yemen and Nepal.

There are 36 nations in this stage, divided into nine groups of four. The teams will play against each other on a home-and-away basis. The nine group winners and group runners-up advance to the third round. In addition to this, they will also automatically qualify for the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

After Bahrain's upcoming



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matches this month, the nationals only resume their qualification bid next year. They take on Nepal on 21 March, and then face off with the Nepalese again on 26 March. They then face Yemen on 6 June, before completing this stage against the UAE



Veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar during national team practice

on 11 June.

Pizzi has called up 26 of Bahrain's biggest names for the upcoming qualifiers. The team includes Ali Madan, Mohammed Marhoon, Abdulla Yusuf, Moses Atede, Mahdi Humaidan, Ahmed Bughamar, Mohammed Adel, Mohammed Al Hardan, Abdulkarim Al Fardan, Ali Hassan, Sayed Mahdi Baqer, Hussain Al Aker, Komail Al Aswad, Jassim Al Shaikh, Mohammed Abdulqayoom, Hazza Ali, Sayed Mo-

ammed Jaafar, Amine Hasan, Waleed Al Hayyam, Abdulla Al Khalasi, Mubarak Mohammed, Ebrahim Luthfallah, Abdulla Al Hashash, Ebrahim Al Khattal, Mohammed Abdulwahab and Ebrahim Al Wali.

Aside from FIFA World Cup qualification, Bahrain are also gearing up for the next edition of the AFC Asian Cup, to be held in Doha in January of next year. These are the national team's first official games under Pizzi.

Nuwaidrat keep quarters hopes alive in Khalifa bin Salman Cup

● **Imports Sameen Swint, Lamar Mallory combine for 63 points in 92-72 victory over Samaheej**

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Nuwaidrat kept their quarter-final hopes alive last night in this year's Khalifa bin Salman Cup basketball tournament.

Nuwaidrat claimed their place with a 92-72 preliminary round victory over Samaheej at the Zain Basketball Arena in Um Al Hassam.

Nuwaidrat extended a 22-17 lead at the end of the first quarter to 47-33 at the half and never looked back. They went up by



Nuwaidrat's Sameen Swint looks to dribble past Samaheej's Sayed Ali Mahmood during their game last night

as many as 22 points the rest of the way.

Imports Sameen Swint and Lamar Mallory combined for 63 points between them to spearhead the victors. Swint finished with a game-high 32 to go with 10 rebounds and four steals. Abbas Jameel Ebrahim had an impressive nine points and 10 assists in the win.

For Samaheej, Basel Adel scored 25 points as their top performer. Ahmed Adel Abbas chipped in with 11 in the loss.

They now take on the winner of the other contest in the preliminaries between Sitra and Isa Town. The victor of that game will book a berth in the final eight, where they join the seven already-qualified sides, including holders Manama, Muharraq, Al Ahli, Al Ettihad, Al Najma, Bahrain Club and Al Hala.

Najma lose to Saudi's Khaleej Club



Al Najma's Mohammed Habib Ahmed looks to score against Khaleej

● **Bahrain champions to face Kuwait SC for seventh place overall today in IHF Men's Super Globe in Dammam**

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Bahrain's Al Najma Club lost to Khaleej Club of Saudi Arabia 24-27 yesterday in the prestigious IHF Men's Super Globe, currently being held in Dammam.

It was the first game for the Bahrainis in their fifth-to-eighth classification bracket. They will now play Kuwait SC today at 1.15pm, Bahrain time, for seventh place overall to end the 12-club competition. The Kuwaitis lost to Al Ahly of Egypt 25-35 yesterday.

Najma trailed 10-14 at the half against Khaleej and never recovered and did well to outscore their opponents in the final 30 minutes. But their efforts came up short in the end for a tough defeat.

Mohammed Habib Ahmed was their leading scorer with seven goals, while Mahdi Saad had five and both Belal Basham and Hassan Madan each finished with three.

Mujtaba Al Salem paced Khaleej with five goals, while Shinnosuke Takuda had four. Najma are participating in the IHF Super Globe for the second time, following the 2018 edition when they finished seventh. They will be hoping to match that result with a win today.

The global competition, organised by the International Handball Federation (IHF), is in its 16th year. Najma are the only Bahraini participants.

Man Utd ease pressure on Ten Hag, Spurs stunned

AFP | London

Manchester United eased the pressure on under-fire boss Erik ten Hag with a nervy 1-0 win against Luton, while Premier League title challengers Tottenham crashed to an agonising 2-1 defeat at Wolves yesterday.

Rocked by Wednesday's devastating Champions League group stage loss in Copenhagen -- the latest embarrassment in a season of low moments -- United gave Ten Hag some much-needed breathing space thanks to Victor Lindelof's second-half winner.

United had suffered five defeats in their previous 10 home games this season, their worst start to a campaign at Old Traf-



Manchester United's Victor Lindelof celebrates with teammates after scoring

ford since 1930-31 when they also lost five of 10 and were relegated from the top flight.

They were also reeling from three losses in their last four games in all competitions as the heat was turned up on Ten Hag.

Against that depressing backdrop, and with the latest 'Glazers out' protests from fans outside Old Trafford before kick-off, struggling Luton's first visit to United since 1991 was well-timed for Ten Hag and his

troubled team.

Sixth-placed United made their pressure count in the 59th minute as Bruno Fernandes' corner was cleared to Marcus Rashford, whose cross fell kindly for Lindelof to lash home.

"It is a good day. We needed the win and we got it, but we could make life more easy by scoring early on and getting a second," Ten Hag said.

"I have to compliment the team that they kept going, kept organised and didn't give anything away."

Wolves' stunning late show denied Tottenham the chance to return to the top of the table as a pair of stoppage-time goals sealed a dramatic win at Molineux.