

Bahrain set for World Cup qualifiers

Kingdom's senior men's national football team depart today for Abha, Saudi Arabia for opening match against Yemen tomorrow

● **Bahrainis to face off with Yemen in Abha tomorrow night with a 9pm kick-off, Bahrain time**

● **Nationals meet with Bahrain Football Association officials in training prior to departure**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team depart for Abha, Saudi Arabia, today for their opening continental qualifying match for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The nationals take on Yemen in their Group H contest tomorrow, scheduled for a 9pm kick-off, Bahrain time, at Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City in Abha.

The Bahrainis are in the same pool as the UAE and Nepal in this second round of qualification under the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The fixtures are also qualifiers for the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

Tomorrow's fixture is the first of two games this month. They next take on the UAE on Tuesday next week at home at the Na-



Bahrain head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi supervises training

tional Stadium in Riffa.

Prior to their departure today, the national team met with Bahrain Football Association (BFA) president Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, BFA vice-president His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Isa Al Khalifa, BFA secretary general Rashid Al Zoubi, and other officials.

Shaikh Ali encouraged the players to give their best in

their coming matches, and also stressed that the BFA is giving their full support for their success.

The Bahrainis have been training over the past few days locally under the supervision of head coach Juan Antonio Pizzi.

Pizzi had originally called up 26 of Bahrain's biggest names for the upcoming qualifiers, but has recently made four additions. The new selections in-



YOU KNOW WHAT
Four players have been added to the original national team roster of 26. The new call-ups include Salem Hussain, Hussain Abdulkareem, Hamad Al Doseri and Jassim Khelaif

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They are joining a squad that already 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 Mohammed Jaafar, Amine Hasan, Waleed Al Hayyam, Abdulla Al Khalasi, Mubarak Mohammed, Ebrahim Luthfallah, Abdulla Al Hashash, Ebrahim Al Khattal, Mohammed



Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa greets national team player Mohammed Jassim Marhoon prior to a training session

Abdulwahab and Ebrahim Al Wali.

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

Thirty-six nations are directly in this second 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 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 on 11 June.

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.

Top seed Robin marches through in ITF tennis

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Top seed Robin Boeckli of Switzerland advanced into the boys' singles second round in the Bahrain ITF Juniors 2023 tournament, currently being played at the Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) hard courts in Isa Town.

The competition is the third of three straight ITF events hosted by the Kingdom over the past few weeks. It is the only J60 event that is part of the 2023 International Tennis Federation (ITF) World Tennis Tour Juniors, which features the world's top tennis talents aged 13 to 18.

Robin booked his place af-



Action from yesterday's matches

ter battling past Bora Bakici of Turkey 6-3, 2-6, 6-1 yesterday. He will next face Venkat Rishi Batlanki of the US in the ensuing stage. Venkat had earlier beaten Nikita Gribyakin of Estonia 6-0, 6-1 in their first-round match-up.

Also winning yesterday and marching on to round two are fifth seed Aril Kayra Tuna of Turkey, sixth seed Arsenil Lesniak, Andres Pereiro Lopez of Spain, Mustafa Eren Elmas and Cagan Efe Tufekci, also from Turkey and Sergiy Rafiee of Great Britain.

In the girls' singles, winning yesterday were Simay Keles and Berrak Kocak of Turkey.

Muharraq lose WASL opener



Muharraq's Tyler Wilkerson tries to drive to the basket during their game against Kuwait SC

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Bahrain's Muharraq Club bowed to Kuwait Sporting Club 92-108 in their opening Group A game of the Gulf sub-zone in the FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL) 2023/2024.

A disappointing second quarter, where they were outscored 10-26, saw the Bahrainis concede a narrow advantage, and they never recovered. They fell behind 38-53 at the half and went down by as many as 28 points the rest of the way.

Tyler Wilkerson finished as Muharraq's leading scorer with 34 points in the loss, while Mohammed Juma'a added 23 and Bader Abdulla Malabes had 14. Julius Coles Jr was held to just eight points in the setback.

For Kuwait, Hamad Hasan finished with 28 as their leading scorer, while Cody Lalanne had 16 and Mohammad Hasan 15.

Muharraq are one of two Bahrain clubs in this year's WASL. Making their debut in the competition, Muharraq are in Group A alongside Al Ahli Jeddah of Saudi Arabia, Al Rayyan of Qatar and Kuwait. Manama, the reigning WASL champions, are in Group B of the tournament's Gulf sub-zone along with Kazma of Kuwait, Shabab Al Ahli of the UAE and Al Shamal from Qatar.

Muharraq return to action against Saudi's Ahli on 28 November. Manama, on the other hand, play their first game against Kazma on Monday next week.

Bellingham ruled out of England Euro 2024 qualifiers

AFP | London

Jude Bellingham has been ruled out of England's final Euro 2024 qualifiers against Malta and North Macedonia, the Football Association announced yesterday.

Chelsea defender Levi Colwill has also been withdrawn from Gareth Southgate's squad, meaning five players are missing from the initial group announced for the match at Wembley on November 17 and the away fixture three days later.

Midfielder Bellingham, 20, who has scored 13 goals so far in a stunning debut season for Real Madrid, and Colwill both



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham vies with Rayo Vallecano's Isi Palazon

have shoulder issues.

"Jude Bellingham and Levi

Colwill will play no part in England's forthcoming UEFA Euro 2024 qualifiers against Malta and North Macedonia," the FA said in a statement.

"The pair arrived at St George's Park for assessments on Monday but will now return to their clubs to continue their rehabilitation."

Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford and Manchester City midfielder Calvin Phillips will join the squad later this week "owing to personal matters", the FA said.

On Monday, Cole Palmer, Ezri Konsa and Rico Lewis replaced the injured James Maddison, Callum Wilson and Lewis Dunk.