



Kingdom Bids Glorious Farewell to Asian Youth Games

Bahrain's record-time hosting hailed a resounding success



His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Dr. Abdulrahman Sadiq Askar, Faris Al Kooheji, Dr. Shaikha Hessa bint Khalid Al Khalifa, and other officials attend the closing ceremony

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Bahrain bid a proud farewell to the 3rd Asian Youth Games last night with a vibrant closing ceremony at Khalifa Sports City, drawing to a close an event that captured the spirit of unity across the continent.

In a celebration marked by emotion, delegations from all 45 Asian nations paraded through the arena, greeted by loud cheers from the stands. The moment reflected both the diversity of Asia and the shared sense of pride in what had been achieved. It was a fitting tribute to Bahrain's remarkable accomplishment in organising the Games in just over eight months, something few believed possible when the Kingdom first took on the challenge.

That achievement took centre stage as His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, ceremoniously handed over the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) flag to Otabek Umarov, First Vice President of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Uzbekistan. The symbolic exchange officially marked the transfer of hosting rights to Tashkent for the 2029 Asian Youth Games, bringing Bahrain's brief yet brilliant chapter to a close.

OCA First Vice President Timothy Fok praised Bahrain's efforts in glowing terms, describing the Games as "nothing short of miraculous." He commended the Kingdom's ability to



Bahrain's 3x3 basketball athlete Yousif Meshael carries the national flag around the arena



The Palestinian delegation parades to a warm and enthusiastic reception from the crowd
Pics credit: Anchalo Bensiger

stage such a major continental event with grace, efficiency, and heart, highlighting the volunteers and young athletes as the true heartbeat of the Games. His remarks drew warm applause when he thanked His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, whose patronage, he said, gave the Games their soul.

Fok's message resonated deeply with the audience, reminding all that the Games were

about far more than medals or records. He said the 45 visiting nations would leave Bahrain with memories that would last a lifetime, capturing the idea that this was not only a competition but also a festival of friendship and youth.

That same sentiment carried through in the remarks of Faris Al Kooheji, Secretary-General of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, who reflected on the im-

mense effort behind the scenes. He credited the country's leadership, including His Majesty the King, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, for their vision and unwavering support, which transformed an ambitious idea into a national success story.

Al Kooheji spoke about the scale of the operation, noting that nearly every ministry played a role in making the event possible. With no time to build an athletes' village, Bahrain instead transformed Exhibition World Bahrain into a "competition village" that hosted 11 of the 28 sports. More than 4,000 athletes and 13,000 guests participated across the Kingdom, generating over 39,000 hotel nights. It was a logistical feat that, he said, showed the world what Bahrain can achieve when it works as one.

Turning to the athletes, Al Kooheji reflected on the legacy the Games would leave behind. Many of the young competitors, he said, would go on to become Olympians, and when they do, they will remember that it all began in Bahrain. His words drew a standing ovation from the volunteers and organising teams who had worked tirelessly for months to make the event possible.

As the evening drew to a close, the atmosphere inside Khalifa Sports City was one of pride and reflection. Bahrain's eight-month journey, from planning to podiums, had come full circle, leaving behind a legacy of friendship, excellence, and belief in what youth can achieve.



Team Bahrain in action during the Games' final event, equestrian sports, securing a proud silver finish

Drama at the Death as Al Najma and Budaiya Win



Al Najma celebrate Aldoseri's late winner against Al Shabab

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Week 6 of the Nasser Bin Hamad Premier League delivered drama from start to finish, with Al Najma and Budaiya both leaving their mark on the standings. Al Najma overcame Al Shabab with a late second goal, while Budaiya stunned Al Hidd with a stoppage-time winner.

At Khalifa Sports City, Al Najma were awarded a penalty in the 10th minute after Bruno de Andrade Ritter was brought down by Mujtaba Abdali. Achraf Douiri's spot-kick was saved by Mahmood AlAjmi, but Shamlan's men quickly regained momentum. In the 23rd minute, Mohammed Qayoom capitalised on a defensive error as Chikamuso Okechukwu's header fell to him, rolling the ball into the far corner. The match stayed finely balanced until the 85th minute, when Ali Aldoseri took advantage of another lapse, rounding the keep-

er to seal a 2-0 win. Al Najma move to 10th with five points, while Al Shabab remain 11th.

Meanwhile, at Shaikh Ali Bin Mohammed Stadium, Budaiya struck early in the 6th minute through Adriano Suarez, finishing a counter-attack after Hidd failed to clear their lines. Hidd responded in the 30th minute as Bekaye Wade converted a curving free-kick from Essa Musa. Budaiya thought they had regained the lead later, but Suarez's goal was ruled out by VAR for handball. The drama then continued into stoppage time (90+9) when Abdulla Al Bahrani bundled in the rebound from a penalty after Hidd's Ahmed Flamerze was penalised. Budaiya move to sixth with eight points, while Hidd sit fourth on seven.

Week 6 concludes tonight with Riffa hosting Al Khaldiya at Khalifa Sports City (7pm). Both teams are on nine points, and a win for Riffa could see them leap to the top of the table.