

GCC Youth and Sports Cooperation Strengthened

Bahrain hosts ministers' meeting as Shaikh Khalid highlights shared Gulf ambitions

TDT | Manama

His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS), Chairman of the General Sports Authority (GSA) and President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC), chaired the 39th GCC Youth and Sports Ministers' Meeting, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

His Highness conveyed the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Majesty's wishes for success to the GCC ministers of youth and sports.

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad said the longstanding ties between GCC countries, along with their shared goals and common destiny, provide a strong foundation for advancing joint Gulf action, particularly in the youth and sports sectors.

He emphasised the importance of youth as a key driver of development and a valuable asset in sustaining progress. He highlighted Bahrain's pride in this year's achievements of Youth City 2030 this year and its role as an advanced model for youth empowerment and capacity development.

He invited GCC countries to participate in the Arab Games,



HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad chairs 39th GCC Youth and Sports Ministers' Meeting



Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council



Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfeeqi, Ministry of Youth Affairs

which Bahrain will host in 2027, bringing together Arab youth and athletes in an atmosphere of unity and fair competition.

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad also wished success to all GCC teams participating in the 20th Asian Games, which will be held in Japan next month. He extended his best wishes to Saudi Arabia for its hosting of the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament.

His Highness said the ambitions of GCC youth are significant, while the shared goals of GCC countries require continued efforts to empower young people, develop their capabilities and advance Gulf sports towards further achievements, in line with the aspirations of GCC leaders and citizens.

Conceicao strike earns Najma first win

Hussain Almaskati

Rickson Barbosa Sa da Conceicao struck a brilliant late free-kick to give Al Najma their first win of the 2026-27 Nasser bin Hamad Premier League, securing a 1-0 victory over Al Malkiya last night.

The Brazilian midfielder, one of Najma's new signings for the campaign, settled a tight contest at Al Ahli Club Stadium after the sides had gone into the interval goalless.

Conceicao broke the deadlock in the 85th minute with a free-kick from just outside the penalty area, sending the ball over the wall and towards the bottom corner. Malkiya goalkeeper Sayed Ali Mohammed got a hand to it but could not keep it out.

The goal rewarded Fethi Laabidi's men for a stronger attacking showing, with Najma enjoying 61 per cent of possession and registering 11 attempts, four on target, compared with Malkiya's four efforts.

It was a welcome response after their 7-2 defeat to Al Khaldiya in the opening round, moving them onto three points from two matches.

Malkiya, coached by Alvaro Jose Rodrigues, remain bottom of the early standings without a point following back-to-back defeats.

At the National Stadium, East Riffa and Sitra played out a goalless draw, with neither side able to break the deadlock.

Hisham Al Mahoozi's men came closest five minutes after the restart when substitute Ra-



Rickson da Conceicao celebrates his winning goal against Malkiya

heem Daniel delivered a cross from the left for captain Talal AlSheroqi, who headed into the net. The effort was ruled out for offside.

East Riffa recorded four shots on target to Sitra's one as they collected their first point since returning to the top flight.

The result leaves Hassan Sayed Isa's Sitra top of the early standings on four points.

Matchweek two continues tomorrow at 7pm, with Al Khaldiya facing A'ali at the National Stadium and reigning champions Muharraq taking on newly promoted Al Ettifaq at Al Ahli Club Stadium.

The round concludes on Saturday, when Hidd meet Al Ahli at the National Stadium and Manama face Riffa at Al Ahli Club Stadium; both matches also kick off at 7pm.

Al Ahli bolster squad for new basketball season

● Kawaidd brothers among additions for 2026-27 campaign

Hussain Almaskati
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Al Ahli have continued to strengthen their senior men's basketball team ahead of the 2026-27 season, signing Bahrain internationals Mohammed and Younis Kawaidd. Mohammed joins from Al Najma and is no stranger to Al Ahli, having previously represented the club during the 2021-22 season.

The experienced forward returns for another spell alongside his brother Younis, a guard who arrives from reigning league champions Muharraq.

The Kawaidd brothers are among several additions ahead of the new campaign, with Al Wathiq Ali also signing and Ali Baqer returning to the club.

Captain Hesham Sarhan will remain with the team, while veteran Maytham Jameel has departed for Al Najma.

There has also been a change on the sidelines, with Spaniard Marcelo Zubiran taking over



as head coach following the departure of Bahraini tactician Ahmed Jan.

The moves follow a 2025-26 campaign in which the Eagles reached the semi-finals of both major domestic competitions.

They made the Golden Square of the Zain Bahrain Basketball League before their title bid was ended by Muharraq, who completed a 3-0 sweep in the best-of-five series.

Al Ahli also reached the last four of the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, where they were again eliminated by Muharraq following a 2-0 sweep in the best-of-three series.

With their squad now taking shape, the club will be looking to build on last season's runs and mount a stronger challenge in 2026-27.

Rybakina, Gauff advance as Zverev launches US Open campaign

AFP | New York

World number two Elena Rybakina and former champion Coco Gauff breezed into the second round of the US Open on Tuesday as men's top seed Alexander Zverev launched his campaign.

Rybakina, eyeing a third Grand Slam title and the world number one ranking, beat US teen Thea Frodin 6-3, 6-2.

Gauff showed off her immensely improved serve in a confident 6-3, 6-4 victory over 53rd-ranked Zeynep Sonmez of Turkey.

Gauff blazed through the opening set before Sonmez upped her game, recovering an early break in the second and briefly taking the lead before Gauff regrouped.

"I think I was just trying not to panic," Gauff said. "She started coming to the net and playing great tennis."

"That 3-all game was real important," added Gauff, who saved three break points in the sixth game and broke in the next for a lead she wouldn't relinquish.

World number two Rybakina and fourth-ranked Gauff are two of the three players, along with No. 3 Jessica Pegula, who have a chance to supplant Aryna Sabalenka atop the world rankings in New York.

Gauff would have to add a



Coco Gauff in action

second US Open title to the one she captured in 2023 while Kazakhstan's Rybakina could do it just by reaching the semi-finals.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina showed little sign of the left heel injury that forced her out of her quarter-final in Cincinnati this month.

She saved both break points she faced in a polished performance against the big-hitting if erratic American, who was playing her first Grand Slam main draw match on a wild card.

"I'm happy with the match. Especially when you don't know

your opponent, it always can be dangerous, but overall I'm happy with the first match and how it went," the world number two from Kazakhstan said.

"It's a great result after 10 days from that kind of injury," added Rybakina, who was unable to walk without pain for several days and is still carefully managing her training, rest and treatment.

Zverev, who nabbed his long awaited first Grand Slam title at the French Open this year, opened his bid for another against Lorenzo Sonego in the

nightcap on Ashe.

Women's French Open champion Mirra Andreeva also advanced easily, cruising past Indonesia's 36th-ranked Janice Tjen 6-2, 6-2.

Andreeva, seeded fifth, has had a lackluster run on North American hard courts since her scintillating run to a first Grand Slam title in Paris.

But she was dialed in as she produced her second win over Tien in less than two weeks.

After a tough win against the Indonesian in Cincinnati, Andreeva said, "I was just trying to be very aggressive."

Cobolli comeback

Fifth-seeded Flavio Cobolli, runner-up to Zverev at Roland Garros, rallied from two sets down for the first time in his career to beat Argentina's Francisco Comesana 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

The Italian shook off an erratic start, dropping to his knees and raising his arms in celebration after closing out the four-hour, 13-minute marathon.

"In a Grand Slam it's never done," Cobolli said. "You have to fight to the last point."

Cobolli recouped an early break in the fifth set, breaking back to pull level, breaking again for a 5-4 lead and sealing the triumph in the next game with a blistering forehand volley.