

BIC set for National Race Day excitement with touring cars and motorbikes tomorrow

Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', hosts an exciting double-header tomorrow with the fifth round of National Race Day this 2025/2026 season.

The event is set to feature two of the Kingdom's most exciting local championships, including the Bahrain Touring Car Challenge (BTCC) and the Bahrain Motorcycle Championship (BMC).

The meeting is being organised and run by BIC in cooperation with the Bahrain Motor Federation, the Circuit Racing Commission, and the Bahrain Motorcycle Commission.

Racing will be held along BIC's 2.55-kilometre Inner Track, with the action scheduled to begin at 10.30am and continue until after 4pm. All are welcome to attend and watch the exciting



bumper-to-bumper and wheel-to-wheel battles. Tickets are BD2 for adults and BD1 for children. They can be purchased online at bahraingp.com, through the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000, or at the gate.

Race-goers will get to watch both series from BIC's Beyon Grandstand, offering fantastic views of key parts of the circuit, including the Inner Straight where the start and finish lines are located.

BTCC practice kicks off the day's schedule at 10.30am, to be followed by qualifying at 11.45am. The first of two 15-lap races in the round will then be held at 1.25pm, followed by race two at 3.40pm.

The BTCC field is expected to be headlined by Ali Almansoori, who has swept all eight races held so far this season.

Meanwhile, the BMC will see action in both the 1,000cc and

600cc categories. BMC practice will kick off the series' programme at 11.05am, while qualifying will take place at 1pm. The round's sole 14-lap race is then set for a 2.20pm start.

Winners from the BMC's previous meeting were Saeed Al Sulaiti in the 1,000cc class and Mohamad Alzaidan in the 600cc.

The podium ceremonies for both the BTCC and BMC will follow all the action at 4.35pm.

BIC's 2025/2026 racing calendar features seven rounds of National Race Day. Following this weekend's action, the campaign resumes with the sixth and penultimate meeting on 13 March. That will set the stage for the grand finale on 24 April.

For more information on National Race Day or other events and activities at BIC, visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline.

Mir sets pace on Sepang day two, Yamaha absent



Honda HRC Castrol team's Spanish MotoGP rider Joan Mir takes a corner

AFP | Sepang

Spaniard Joan Mir set the pace on the second day of MotoGP pre-season testing in contrasting conditions at the Sepang circuit yesterday, as Italian-Japanese factory team Yamaha opted to stay off track.

Mir became the pace setter after the 28-year-old clocked 1 min 56.874 sec on his Honda machine after 11 laps, to become the fastest rider over two days of testing in Malaysia.

Italian Franco Morbidelli came close to matching Mir's timing after he posted 1 min 56.983 sec, while his compatriot Fabio Di Giannantonio was third fastest on the day after registering 1 min 57.049 sec, both on their respective Ducatis.

The morning session witnessed only 17 riders set out for testing, with Yamaha's notable absence as they tried to resolve a technical issue from Tuesday's test.

Their withdrawal compounded Fabio Quartararo's absence from the remaining

two days of testing after the Frenchman suffered a finger fracture following his crash on Tuesday.

As the skies changed from intense heat to a sudden downpour in the afternoon, only 11 riders emerged to weather the conditions.

Spaniard Alex Marquez, who crashed on the same turn as Quartararo the day before in the morning session, returned to post the fastest lap of the afternoon session as he stamped 1 min 58.094 sec on his Ducati.

"I was quite angry with myself after seeing the damage on the bike. I tried different things with the new tyres, the grip of the track is super high so, I had the problem," Marquez said.

"I understood the crash, and we look forward," he added.

Jorge Martin, the 2024 champion who endured a challenging previous season with injuries, was meanwhile spotted walking around shirtless with his racing gloves on.

The Spaniard appeared in good spirits as he posed for pictures with the medics and race marshals.

Selection process for future Olympic hosts set for reform

AFP | London

The International Olympic Committee is considering reforming its procedure for awarding future Games to restore "transparency" and establish a clearer timetable, as the contest looms as to who hosts the 2036 Summer Olympics.

The 2036 race is considered wide open and is expected to feature bids from India and Qatar, with Saudi Arabia, South Korea, South Africa, Turkey and Chile among other interested parties.

"While there is no desire to return to the costly pre-2019 bidding process, the current election process requires refinement," former Croatian president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, now an IOC member, told delegates yesterday during the IOC Session in Milan ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Grabar-Kitarovic, who heads



The Olympic rings at Cortina d'Ampezzo ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympics

a working group on the designation of Olympic hosts set up by IOC president Kirsty Coventry, said she believed "structured timelines, increased transparency and more meaningful participation by IOC members" were required.

Since 2019 -- when Coventry's predecessor Thomas Bach was president -- the IOC has radically changed the way it chooses

Games organisers, with the aim of stemming the lack of candidates, reducing costs and avoiding inflicting public humiliation on unsuccessful bidders.

Gone are the suspense-filled elections, seven years before the event, in which the lucky winner was drawn from an envelope during a ceremony broadcast around the world, after costly campaigns to promote bids.

Negotiations are now confidential until the designation of a "preferred host", which is selected behind closed doors by the IOC's Executive Board and approved at the end of the process by the roughly 100 IOC members meeting in their Session.

Grabar-Kitarovic said her working group was proposing introducing a "transitional stage".

It would "allow shortlisting of a limited number of interested parties with advanced projects for deeper evaluation".

That evaluation "should be based on transparent criteria published in advance", she added.

Grabar-Kitarovic suggested such criteria could include "the importance of venue master plans, clarity on the sports programme, financial guarantees, and the added value of prior experience in hosting multi-sport events".

Timber hopes League Cup can be catalyst for Arsenal success

AFP | London

Arsenal defender Jurrien Timber believes lifting the English League Cup could inspire the Gunners to even more success this season.

Mikel Arteta's men are just 90 minutes away from ending their six-year wait for a major trophy after seeing off Chelsea at the Emirates on Tuesday to secure a place in next month's final.

Arsenal are also six points clear at the top of the Premier League and through to the Champions League last 16 following an unblemished league-phase campaign.

They also face third-tier Wigan in the fourth round of the FA Cup a week on Sunday.

"We don't have anything yet, but we've put ourselves in an



Arsenal defender Jurrien Timber in action

amazing position to win," Timber said when asked if winning the League Cup could spur Arsenal on to greater heights.

"The Carabao (League) Cup final is coming early, so maybe that could be nice for us as a

motivation and a boost towards the other cups as well.

"It's not always possible to play your best. But this team does an amazing job of finding a way to win, no matter what. We have done it away at Chelsea,

where it is not easy (to win), and then at home as well. So, it is very deserved.

"You could see how relieved everyone was and how happy that we are going to Wembley. And hopefully there are more celebrations to come."

Kai Havertz came off the bench to make sure of Arsenal's place in the final when he scored in stoppage time against former club Chelsea.

Havertz spent nearly a year out injured following hamstring and knee operations but has now scored twice in his last three appearances.

"Kai's presence within the team makes a big difference, but also on the pitch," said Timber. "Everyone can see his amazing qualities, and how happy we all were for Kai.