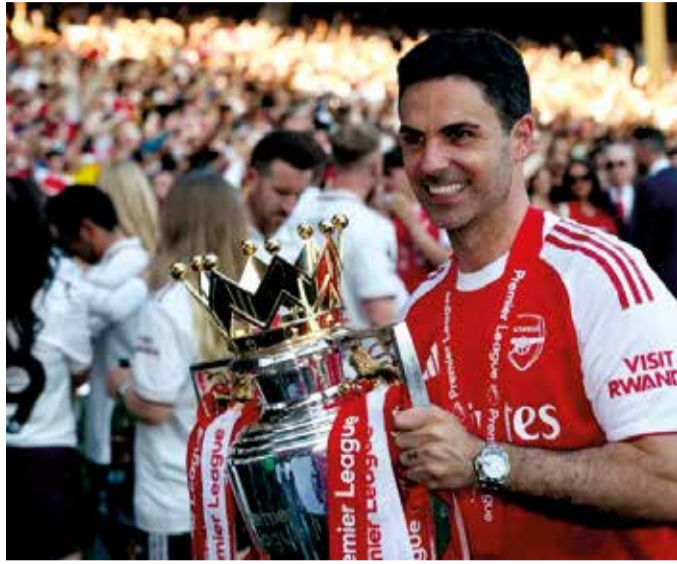


Arsenal will start Premier League title defence against Coventry



Arsenal head coach Mikel Arteta with the Premier League trophy (file photo)

AFP | London

Arsenal will begin their Premier League title defence against promoted Coventry on August 21, with the 2026-27 fixtures released yesterday. Coventry, managed by Frank Lampard, return to the top flight for the first time in 25 years after winning the Championship last season.

The opening weekend also sees Manchester City start life after Pep Guardiola at home to Bournemouth on August 23, with former Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca expected to replace him. Liverpool's new manager Andoni Iraola begins at Newcastle on the same day before his Anfield debut against Nottingham Forest on August 29. Chelsea, led by Xabi Alonso, open away at Fulham on August 24. Hull host Manchester United on August 22, Ipswich meet Sunderland, Aston Villa travel to Brighton, Brentford face Tottenham, Everton host Crystal Palace and Leeds visit Nottingham Forest.

Arsenal, champions for the first time since 2004, face a testing start after Villa away, Chelsea at home on September 5, followed by trips to Sunderland and Brighton. The first Manchester derby of the post-Guardiola era arrives on September 12.

Liverpool host Manchester United on November 21, while City meet Arsenal on November 28 at the Emirates, the same date as the Merseyside derby at Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium. The north London derby follows on December 5, while Boxing Day sees Lampard's Coventry face Chelsea.

The season ends on May 30, with Arsenal at home to Brighton, City at Sunderland, Liverpool hosting Bournemouth, Chelsea at home to Brentford and Manchester United at home to Fulham. The campaign begins later than usual due to the World Cup, which finishes just over a month before the Premier League starts.

Bahrain begin Asian volleyball title defence

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's volleyball national team are set to begin their defence of the AVC Men's Cup title today when they take on Chinese Taipei in Ahmedabad, India. The match is scheduled to get underway at 12.30pm Bahrain time.

The Bahrainis arrived in India earlier this week ahead of the 12-nation tournament, which runs until June 28 and features some of the continent's leading teams.

Bahrain enter the competition as reigning champions after securing a historic triumph in last year's edition, which was hosted by the kingdom. The nationals defeated Pakistan in four sets in the gold medal match to claim their first-ever championship in any Asian Volleyball Confederation competition.

The title-winning campaign also earned Bahrain qualification for the AVC Volleyball Men's Continental Championship, set to take place in Fukuoka, Japan, from September 4 to 13.

Drawn in Pool A, Bahrain will face Chinese Taipei, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Australia and hosts India in the preliminary round. Pool B features Qatar, South Korea, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Oman.

Following today's opener, Bahrain will take on New Zealand tomorrow before facing



Bahrain's roster arrives in Ahmedabad, India

Bahrain's preliminary schedule

TODAY	Bahrain vs Chinese Taipei	12:30 PM
Sunday, June 21	Bahrain vs New Zealand	9:30 AM
Tuesday, June 23	Bahrain vs India	6:30 PM
Thursday, June 25	Bahrain vs Kazakhstan	3:30PM
Friday, June 26	Bahrain vs Australia	6:30PM

hosts India on Tuesday. They then conclude the preliminary round with matches against Kazakhstan and Australia on June 25 and 26, respectively.

The team is guided by Montenegro's Ivan Joksimovic, who was appointed head coach earlier this year. Joksimovic has already enjoyed success with the national side, leading Bahrain to gold at the fourth GCC Games

in Doha last month in his first tournament in charge.

Key players expected to lead Bahrain's title defence include Hasan Alwarqaa, Ali Ebrahim, Mahmood Alafyah, Sayed Hashem Issa, Abdulla Mohammed Jaafar and Mahmoud Abdulwahed.

The AVC Men's Cup is being held for the seventh time and only the second under its cur-

rent format. After the preliminary round, the top two teams from each pool will advance to the semi-finals on June 27, with the gold and bronze medal matches scheduled for June 28.

Bahrain's triumph in 2025 made them only the fifth nation to win the tournament, joining Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand and Qatar on the honour roll. The nationals previously claimed silver medals in 2023, when the competition was still known as the AVC Men's Challenge Cup.

Having established themselves among Asia's emerging volleyball powers, Bahrain will now aim to retain their continental crown and add another chapter to one of the most successful periods in the history of the sport in the kingdom.

Adekoya settles for third in Doha Diamond League



Action from the race

Hussain Almaskati

Bahrain's Kemi Adekoya finished third in the women's 400 metres hurdles at the Doha Diamond League meeting on Friday night, clocking 53.67 seconds at the Suhaim bin Hamad Stadium.

The race was won by Slovakia's Emma Zapletalová in a meeting record 52.30 seconds, with Jamaica's Rushell Clayton taking second in 53.05. The top three headed a high-quality field that featured multiple athletes who have run sub-53 seconds this season, underlining the level of competition in Doha's 33°C evening conditions.

Adekoya, 33, arrived with a season best of 53.71 set earlier this month in Texas. She went out strongly and led the Bahraini challenge through the early stages before fading slightly over the final hurdles. Her 53.67 was a marginal improvement on that mark and marked a solid Diamond League season debut.

Zapletalová built her winning margin in the latter stages, pulling away off the final bend and maintaining her rhythm over the closing barriers to secure maximum points. Clayton stayed closest but had to settle for second despite a strong finish.

Panama's Gianna Woodruff

placed fourth in 53.88, followed by Norway's Amalie Luel in 54.09. Zimbabwe's Ashley Miller, Italy's Ayomide Folorunso, and Germany's Eileen Demes completed the line-up.

Adekoya now sits seventh in the Diamond League standings on six points after four qualification meetings. Zapletalová leads the rankings on 32 points, ahead of Clayton on 26, with two qualification meetings remaining before the Diamond League Final.

Adekoya, a former world indoor champion and Bahrain medal hopeful, will continue her build-up to the Asian Games in Japan, scheduled from September 19 to October 4.

Bahrain set for Thailand's King's Cup in November

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national football team is expected to take part in the 52nd King's Cup in Thailand this November after reportedly accepting an invitation to the annual tournament. The decision would mean Bahrain are unlikely to feature in the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Championship, which is also scheduled for the same month.

The nationals would have entered the WAFF Championship as defending champions, having won the title in its most recent edition in 2019. However, the competition has been postponed several times in recent years and now faces further uncertainty following reports of Oman's withdrawal as host.

The King's Cup, organised by the Football Association of Thailand, is an invitation-only tournament for four national teams. It is expected to form part of Bahrain's preparations for the AFC Asian Cup 2027, scheduled for January and February.

Tuchel 1 photographers 0 after World Cup moment 'ruined'



Thomas Tuchel, Manager of England, reacts as multiple photographers stand in front of him (file photo)

AFP | London

Thomas Tuchel said a "special moment was ruined" and FIFA have now reportedly acted to the England coach being swarmed by photographers during the national anthems ahead of the World Cup clash with Croatia.

The German, managing at a World Cup for the first time, was delighted after seeing his side win 4-2 on Wednesday in Texas in their opening match.

But he was less happy about the massed ranks of photographers snapping him from close range beforehand at the Dallas Cowboys' stadium.

"I am begging FIFA to change the position of the photographers for the national anthem because I could not see my team in the national anthem," he said.

"I was waiting for this moment, it was a very, very special moment today and I was standing in front of a wall of 50 photographers half a metre away.

"I could not see one single player and it ruined a little bit my experience today."

FIFA has now tweaked its guidelines, the BBC and The Athletic reported, to avoid a repeat at the tournament in North America.