

Asian Games preparations gather pace

Less than a month to go

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TDT | Manama

Bahrain's men's handball and basketball teams have stepped up their preparations for next month's Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, vice-president of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, recently visited training sessions of both teams to assess their progress ahead of the continental showpiece, which will take place from September 19 to October 4.

Shaikh Isa first attended the handball team's training, where he was received by Bahrain Handball Federation president Ali Isa Ishaqi, board members and the squad's technical and administrative staff.

He watched part of the session and was briefed on the team's preparations and level of readiness before meeting the players.

Shaikh Isa conveyed the best wishes of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports first deputy chairman, General Sports Authority chairman and Bahrain Olympic Committee president, while stressing the importance of reaching peak condition for the Games.

He also praised the handball



HH Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa with Bahrain's senior men's handball and basketball teams during his visits

team's pedigree on the continental stage and expressed confidence in their ability to challenge for honours in Japan.

Coached by Swede Robert Hedin, Bahrain have been drawn in a challenging Group B along-

side South Korea, Kuwait, Iran and Kazakhstan, while hosts Japan, China, Hong Kong and two-time defending champions Qatar make up Group A.

The nationals will be looking to go one better after claiming

silver at each of the past two Asian Games, having also won bronze in 2014.

They head into the tournament following an impressive run of success, winning their maiden Asian Men's Handball

Basketball squad depart for Doha

Bahrain's senior men's basketball team have departed for Doha to compete in a three-nation friendly tournament alongside hosts Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The squad completed their final training sessions at home under head coach Slobodan Subotic, with the coaching staff focusing on technical and physical readiness as well as tactical work.

The Bahrainis will use their two matches in Qatar as their



Slovenian-Greek head coach Slobodan Subotic ahead of the team's departure

final competitive tune-ups before travelling directly to Dubai for their upcoming continental pre-qualifiers.

Championship title in January before adding GCC Games gold in May. Bahrain also captured the Islamic Solidarity Games crown last November.

HH Shaikh Isa later visited the men's basketball team's training in the presence of Bahrain Basketball Association vice-president Nader Al Awadhi and other board members, meeting the players and coaching staff while observing their preparations.

The basketball squad have since travelled to Doha, where they begin a three-nation friendly tournament against hosts Qatar today at 7pm.

Newly appointed Greek-Slo-

venian head coach Slobodan Subotic's side will then face Saudi Arabia tomorrow at the same time as they continue preparations for a busy period of international competition.

Following the Doha tournament, Bahrain will travel to Dubai for the first round of the Fiba Asia Cup 2029 pre-qualifiers, where they have been drawn alongside hosts UAE, Oman, Nepal and Kuwait.

Their attention will then turn to the Asian Games, where they will compete in Group C alongside defending champions the Philippines, China and Kazakhstan.

BRAVE CF brings modern combat into history's most iconic settings



Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation will turn one of Europe's most storied monuments into a stage for modern mixed martial arts when BRAVE CF 108 arrives at Croatia's iconic Pula Arena on Saturday, September 5.

For the Bahrain-based organization, the occasion represents more than another stop on its international calendar. It extends a distinctive tradition of taking elite combat sports into places where architecture, heritage and spectacle converge.

Built during the height of the Roman Empire, Pula Arena once hosted gladiatorial contests and vast public gatherings. Its limestone structure has endured through the centuries, preserving one of antiquity's most complete amphitheatres.

Now, those historic walls will witness a new generation of athletes competing under modern rules, bringing contemporary MMA into a setting that still carries the grandeur of the ancient world.

"Bringing BRAVE CF to Pula Arena is a tremendous honor. This ancient amphitheatre has stood the test of time, and hosting a modern combat sports event inside its walls is a privilege we share with the people of Croatia," BRAVE CF President Mohammed Shahid said.

The extraordinary surroundings will be matched by compelling action inside the cage.

Hometown hero Andi "High-light Machine" Vrtacic will headline the evening against France's Sofiane Bouafia in a three-round middleweight clash.

Sharing top billing is a high-stakes encounter between Filipino superstar Stephen "The Sniper" Loman and Georgian sensation Lasha Abramishvili, with the winner potentially earning an opportunity to vie for the vacant BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Championship.

The choice of Pula Arena also follows a blueprint the organization has established at other

remarkable locations.

In Bahrain, the 15th-century Portuguese-era mud-brick Arad Fort became an open-air venue for the "Return to Kombat Kingdom" series in 2021. Four consecutive cards unfolded between March and April, building toward the promotion's landmark 50th global event.

The promotion later took that concept abroad. At BRAVE CF 59 in June 2022, the Bukhara Amphitheatre in Uzbekistan provided another striking setting, further demonstrating its appetite for unconventional stages. Pula Arena now becomes the latest addition to that history.

For BRAVE CF, however, the concept extends beyond visual grandeur. Its choice of destinations reflects an effort to connect sport with the cultural identity of each host country, allowing local heritage to become part of the international viewing experience.

"What awaits this September will elevate our vision even fur-

ther. As we continue to expand into new territories in the region, we aim to deliver unforgettable moments for the global MMA community," Shahid said.

That ambition has accompanied the organization's rapid rise. In less than a decade, BRAVE CF has established the largest share of the European MMA market while extending its presence across 38 nations worldwide.

Croatia will become the 18th European country to stage a BRAVE CF event and the 39th nation overall, underscoring the remarkable breadth of its global footprint.

From a centuries-old fortress in Bahrain to an amphitheater in Uzbekistan and now a Roman landmark overlooking the Adriatic, the promotion continues to challenge conventional ideas about where major MMA events can unfold.

On September 5, Pula Arena will offer more than a glimpse into the past. It will provide the setting for a new chapter in combat sports history.

Arsenal chief expects Arteta to sign new contract 'very shortly'



Mikel Arteta celebrates with the Community Shield trophy

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta will sign a new contract with Premier League champions Arsenal "very shortly", the club's chief executive Richard Garlick said yesterday.

Arteta ended Arsenal's 22-year wait to win the Premier League last season, but the Spaniard has entered the final 12 months of his current contract.

Although Arteta had insisted he was happy to remain at the Emirates Stadium, the lack of progress over a new deal had sparked concern among Arsenal fans about his future.

But the 44-year-old now appears certain to stay with the north Londoners for the long term after Garlick's revelation that a contract extension is on the cards imminently.

"Mikel wants to be at Ar-

senal and we want Mikel at Arsenal. It's only a matter of time before we put that into a new contract," Garlick told the BBC.

"Everyone is very confident and calm. We're just navigating a transfer window and I'm sure Mikel's contract will be resolved very shortly."

Arteta has revitalised Arsenal since taking charge in 2019 and guided the Gunners to last season's Champions League final as well as winning the English title.

He signed his last contract extension in September 2024, and it is anticipated that his next deal will be finalised at the conclusion of this month's transfer window.

Arsenal open their Premier League title defence at home to promoted Coventry in the first game of the top-flight season on Friday.