Olympic excitement reaching fever pitch

Bahrain's Olympians count the days down to the start of the much-anticipated Tokyo Olympic Games

Boxer Danis Latypov trains with national boxing team coach Tony Smith in Tokyo

Bahraini shooter Maryan Hassani, right, upon travelling to Japan with a team official

Swimmer Abdulla Isa, left, and Noor Yusuf Taha, right, with their coach Dhaen Yusuf Alamer prior to their departure for Tokyo

- **Bahrain's young swimmers Abdulla Isa and Noor Yusuf Taha, and shooter Maryam Hassani, depart for Olympics**
- **Bahrain's national handball team and boxer Danis Latypov continue to train hard in Tokyo**

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Following Friday's Olympics Opening Ceremony, Bahrain's athletes will get right into action the following day in three sports: handball, boxing and shooting

The start of the Tokyo Olympic Games is just two days away, and the Bahrain delegation competing at the Japanese capital are in the final stages of their preparations for the world's biggest global sporting showcase.

While the Kingdom's men's national handball team and boxer Danis Latypov have already reached Tokyo, swimmers Abdulla Isa and Noor Yusuf Taha along with shooter Maryam Hassani have also already departed for the Japanese capital.

Bahrain's athletics team members are scheduled to arrive there on different dates as they travel from their respective training camps around the world.

The Olympics get officially underway with the Opening Ceremony scheduled to be held on Friday at 2pm, Bahrain time. National handball team captain Hussain Al Sayyad will be the flag-bearer for Bahrain, who are expected to be one of over 200 national delegations taking part at the Parade of Nations.

Following the inauguration formalities, some of Bahrain's Olympians will get directly into action the following day.

The handball squad will be taking on Sweden in their first match on Saturday at Tokyo's Yoyogi National Gymnasium, while Latypov will fight in the Round of 32 of the Men's Super Heavyweight (+91kg) division, to be held at the Kokugikan Arena.

Also, Maryam will compete in Qualifying of the Women's Skeet event at the Asaka Shooting Range.

Bahrain's other Olympic athletes will only be in action a few days later. Swimmers Abdulla and Noor are set to take to the pool at Tokyo's Olympic Aquatics Centre on July 29 and 30, respectively; while the Kingdom's track and field stars begin their hunt for medals in the athletics events from July 30.

Tokyo marks Bahrain's 10th participation in the Summer Olympics.

Bahrain have won three Olympic medals in the past, including two gold and one silver. The gold medals were claimed by Maryam Yusuf Jamal at the London Olympics in 2012 for the Women's 1,5000m and Ruth Jebet at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016 for the Women's 3,000m Steeplechase. That same year, Eunice Kirwa claimed the Women's Marathon silver medal.

Bahrain out of Mixed 4x400m Relay at Olympics

- **National athletics team roster for Tokyo Games down to 13 competitors from 17 originally**

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Bahraini shot putter Abdelrahman Mahmoud remains one of Bahrain's elite athletes for the Tokyo Olympic Games

Bahrain's athletics team competing at the Tokyo Olympic Games has been reduced to 13 from 17.

This follows the withdrawal from the Mixed 4x400m Relay.

Sprinters Salwa Eid Naser, Abbas Abubaker, Salem Eid Yacoob and Musa Isah will all no longer be competing at the Japanese capital, according to Bahrain's Olympic athletes' roster listed by World Athletics, the sport's international governing body.

The revised squad now includes five women, namely Aminat Jamal in 400m Hurdles, Winfred Yavi in the 3,000m Steeplechase, Kalkidan Gezahegne in the 10,000m, and the pair of Eunice Chebichii Chumba and Tejitu Daba in the Marathon.

For the men, there remain eight athletes set to go for Olympic gold. Abdelrahman Mahmoud is in the Shot Put, Al Siddique Mikho in the 1,500m, Dawit Fikadu and Birhanu Balew are in the 5,000m, John Koech is in the 3,000m Steeplechase, and the trio of Elhassan Elabbasi, Alemu Bekele and Shumi Dechasa are in the Marathon.

The athletics events in Tokyo are scheduled to be held from July 30 to the closing day on August 8. A total of 48 events will be held on the track, in the field and on the road (marathon and race walking).

China table tennis boss says Olympic playing areas too small

Fan Zhendong of China hits a return (file photo)

AFP | Tokyo

China's table tennis chief yesterday claimed the "smaller than usual" size of the playing areas may affect players' performance and safety, in his latest complaints about the Tokyo Olympics.

China have won 28 of the 32 table tennis titles awarded at the Olympics, dominating a sport in a way that has rarely been matched.

But the lead-up to the pandemic-delayed Games has thrown up several challenges, from inconsistent form among China's top players to new rules to stop the coronavirus spreading.

"The whole playing space is smaller than usual... world competitions normally have areas measuring seven by 14 metres... I just measured it at six by 11 metres," Chinese Table Tennis Association president Liu Guoliang told state broadcaster CCTV.

"I'm a little worried about the athletes' running and safety. It's quite different from before."

Players on the team also voiced concerns.

> **The whole playing space is smaller than usual... world competitions normally have areas measuring seven by 14 metres... I just measured it at six by 11 metres**
>
> CHINESE TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT LIU GUOLIANG

Japan police find Ugandan weightlifter who went missing from Olympic camp

AFP | Tokyo

Members of the Uganda Olympics team pose for a photo call

A Ugandan weightlifter has been found four days after he disappeared from an Olympic training camp in Japan leaving a note saying he wanted to find work, police said yesterday.

The disappearance of Julius Ssekitoleko came at a time of high public concern over coronavirus risks as thousands of foreigners arrive for the Games.

"Today, the man was found in Mie Prefecture with no injuries and no involvement in any crime," an Osaka police official, who declined to be named, told AFP.

"He carried his own ID and identified himself. It is not certain to whom we should send the man -- the team or the embassy."

The alarm was raised on Friday after Ssekitoleko failed to show up for a coronavirus test and was not in his hotel room.

The 20-year-old had recently found out he would not be able to compete at the Tokyo Games, which open on Friday, because of a quota system.

A note was found in his room requesting his belongings be sent to his family in Uganda, according to officials in Izumisano city in Osaka prefecture, where the team were training.

Police said Ssekitoleko had travelled to Nagoya in central Japan and then to nearby Gifu prefecture, before moving south to Mie.

"He was found in a house belonging to people who have a connection to the man. He did not offer resistance. He was talking frankly. We are still questioning him about his motive," the police official said.

When Uganda's delegation arrived in Japan last month, a coach tested positive on arrival, with another member of the delegation also testing positive later.

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