

Zain Bahrain steps up Esports presence

Collaboration established between telecommunications giants and Bahrain Esports Federation along with PLAYHERA

● Collaboration aims to support and explore Esports enthusiasts and gamers through organising championships and exploring the potential of Esports

● The first-ranked Esports summer championship in the Kingdom will soon be announced

● Zain Bahrain advocates the values of Esports as it aligns with its strategy of promoting sporting excellence, health and fitness, and empowerment across the youth

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Zain Bahrain, a telecommunications industry innovator in the Kingdom, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) yesterday with Bahrain Esports Federation and teamed up with PLAYHERA to cooperate and jointly leverage their strengths to grow the gaming and Esports ecosystem in the Kingdom.



At yesterday's signing, from left, Naif Mulaeb, Abdulla Bin Khalid Al Khalifa, Hussain AlKooheji and Mohammed Al Shahi, Vice-President of the Bahrain Schools and Collegiate Athletics Association

The collaboration aims to support and explore Esports enthusiasts and gamers through organising Esports championships and tournaments, and exploring the potential of esports in the Kingdom, which comes as part of Zain Bahrain's future roadmap to grow the gaming community.

In support of both entities, Zain Bahrain will also be able to organise and launch the first ranked Esports summer championship in the Kingdom, which will provide an excellent opportunity to pilot Esports and offer the community another exciting event in the Esports calendar.

The championship will soon be announced and will be open for all gamers over 13 years old.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that without Bahrain Esports Federation, Zain Bahrain will not be able to accelerate and proceed with the first ranked Esports Championship in Bahrain to develop the Es-

ports culture in the Kingdom and enhance the presence of players in local and global competitions.

Abdulla Bin Khalid Al Khalifa, Zain Bahrain Director of Communications and Investor Relations, commented: "Esports continues to grow dramatically in popularity and participation, particularly amongst young people, and the Middle East is one of the fastest-growing gaming regions in the world, and Zain Bahrain aims to explore and create opportunities for the Esports enthusiasts and gamers to participate in a team environment like traditional sport with all the benefits."

"We hope to play a major regional role as an enabler of Esports, to grow the gaming ecosystem collectively, and give gamers the support and recognition they deserve to compete globally."

He added: "The collaboration with Bahrain Esports Federa-

tion and PLAYHERA will play an important role in discovering and supporting new local gaming talents, organising Esports Championships, and building a vibrant gaming scene, reflecting 2030 vision towards improving youth skills."

Proud

Hussain AlKooheji, President of Bahrain Esports Federation, said: "We are proud to partner with Zain Bahrain to provide more opportunities to local gamers and Esports enthusiasts and to build and expedite the growth of Esports in the Kingdom."

"We look forward to launch the first-ranked Esports summer championship in the Kingdom."

Naif Mulaeb, Chairman and CEO of PLAYHERA MENA, added: "Throughout our collaboration with Zain Bahrain, we will be able to leverage our technology, expertise, and market knowledge to ensure that a national-level Esports team in Bah-



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port Zain Bahrain in hosting online and physical Esport events for school students across the Kingdom, including organising boot camps, tournaments, and championships that will foster the growth and upskilling of gaming talents, as well as further developing their cognitive skills.

Gaming is part of a digital world without borders, where fast network speeds, connectivity, and local market knowledge is critical; it is a natural and perfect fit for Zain.

The vision of Zain Esports across the region aims to unite and support esports amateurs, professionals, content creators, casters, commentators, teams, fans, organizers, and sponsors under one roof. It also aligns with its strategy of promoting sporting excellence, health and fitness, and empowerment across the youth in the Kingdom.

It also contributes to the Zain Bahrain Sustainability Strategy that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Goal 3 Good Health and Wellbeing and Goal 17 Partnership for the Goals.

Groupwide, Zain is inspired by the competitive spirit of the 20,000-plus gamers who have played in the various tournaments held over the last 18 months and the enormous social media following that has been garnered, which exceeds 45 million views on Zain's YouTube, Twitch and other social media channels.

rain are properly built from the grounds up.

"We wish to be the partner that Zain Bahrain relies on when dealing with Federations, teams, influencers, and other entities, and we will carry such burdens off your shoulders because it is our bread and butter."

Zain Bahrain has also recently signed a three-year partnership with Bahrain Schools and Collegiate Athletics Association (BSCAA) to build Esports's ecosystem and advocate its values across the Kingdom. The partnership aims to sup-

Bahrain's junior spikers set for Slovenia camp



Bahrain's junior national volleyball team

● Bahrainis preparing for West Asian and Asian championships, taking place over next two months

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Bahrainis preparing for West Asian and Asian championships, taking place over next two months.

Bahrain's junior national volleyball team are set to leave for Slovenia today where they will hold a training camp over the next week-and-a-half in preparation for their upcoming major competitions.

The Bahrainis are set to compete in the West Asian Junior Volleyball Championship, to be held in Saudi Arabia, from July



For the Asian championship, Bahrain are one of 18 nations from across the continent participating. They have been drawn in Pool A for the competition's preliminary round alongside Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia

20 to 30. They will then also be flying the Kingdom's flag in the

21st Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship, which will be hosted by Bahrain from August 22 to 29.

The team is coached by Tunisian tactician Saber Abdulwahed, and they will be travelling for their camp with a 12-player squad that includes Hussain Ali, Redha Matrook, Ali Al Bosta, Hassan Al Warqa, Sayed Hashem Issa, Ali Hussain, Ali Habib, Sadeq Marhoon, Sayed Ahmed Murtadha, Hussain Abdulredha, Hassan Aliwi and Abbas Ihsan.

The camp is scheduled to continue until July 7.

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Najma through to Asian clubs handball semis

● Bahrain and Gulf champions draw with Al Wakrah of Qatar 24-all to end their preliminary round campaign as Group B winners

● Najma next set to face off with Qatar's Al Arabi in semi-finals, with other contest set as all-Kuwaiti affair between Al Kuwait and Al Qadsia

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Bahrain's Al Najma barged into the semi-finals of the 24th Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship yesterday as Group B winners, following their concluding game in the preliminary round of the competition, currently being held in Hyderabad, India.

Najma were held to a 24-all stalemate by Qatar's Al Wakrah to claim a share of the points on their divisional table.

It was their first draw after opening the tournament with back-to-back wins.

They thus finished the group stage with five points from three games, earning them the top spot in Group B and their place in the final four.

There, they will take on Al Arabi of Qatar, who finished as



Al Najma's Bakary Diallo tries to attack the Al Wakrah defence

runners-up in Group A. That contest is scheduled for tomorrow at 5.30pm, Bahrain time.

The other semi-final will be an all-Kuwaiti match-up between Group B runners-up Al Kuwait and Group A winners Al Qadsia. Kuwait secured their place in the next round following a 30-17 win over Mes Kerman of Iran in yesterday's other divisional fixture.

They advanced behind Najma, while Wakrah and Mes Kerman were eliminated from

title contention. Najma and Wakrah were deadlocked yesterday at 9-9 heading into the half-time interval.

The Bahrainis were spear-headed in the contest by the likes of Ali Eid, Mohammed Habib Naser, Mohammed Mirza, Mahdi Saad, Hasan Al Fardan, Ahmed Fadul, and the French trio of Alix Kevynn Nyokas, Olivier Nyokas and Bakary Diallo, and goalkeeper Mohammed Abdulhussain.

Group B standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Al Najma (Bahrain)	3	2	1	0	7	5
Al Kuwait (Kuwait)	3	2	0	1	22	4
Al Wakrah (Qatar)	3	1	1	1	-9	3
Mes Kerman (Iran)	3	0	0	3	-20	0