

Sports professionals face licence ban for betting

Coaches, referees, doctors and agents must meet new licensing rules or risk suspension or cancellation

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's sports professionals are operating under a new reality: bet on a match, fail a drug test, or submit false paperwork — and your right to work in sport is gone.

The General Sports Authority (GSA) introduced a sweeping licensing regime under Decision No. 8 of 2026, issued by His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the GSA. The system makes a GSA licence

compulsory for a vast range of roles — from head coaches and VAR referees to physiotherapists, talent scouts, sports psychologists, player agents, and media workers.

One Year to Comply — No Exceptions

Those already working in the sector have 12 months to meet the new requirements. Licences run for two years, with renewal applications due at least 30 days before expiry. Applicants must hold the relevant academic qualifications, pass fitness and compe-

tency assessments, and declare commitment to professional and ethical standards.

The Red Lines

The authority holds the power to warn, suspend for up to six months, or permanently cancel a licence. Betting on sport — directly or indirectly — is among the clearest grounds for cancellation. So is using or supplying banned substances, submitting false information, working for an unlicensed body, or participating in unauthorised



His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the General Sports Authority

sporting events.

Anyone convicted of dishonesty cannot obtain a licence until their legal status is restored. Those whose licences were previously cancelled must wait at least five years before reapplying.

The rules extend across clubs, federations, academies, and sports centres — covering virtually every professional who touches elite sport in Bahrain. The GSA also reserves the right to expand the list further.

Young Bahrainis eye Asian return

Kingdom's U20s face Tajikistan as road to China begins

Hussain Almaskati
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Bahrain begin their quest to return to the AFC U20 Asian Cup after a decade when they take on Tajikistan in their opening qualifier tonight at Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Isa Town.

The kingdom's junior men's football team are hosting Group D of the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers, with Jordan and Afghanistan completing the four-team pool.

Tonight's clash kicks off at 8.30pm and will follow the group's opening fixture between Jordan and Afghanistan at 5pm at the same venue.

Head coach Ali Aamer will hope his side can make the most of home advantage and get their three-match campaign off to a winning start.

The former Bahrain and Muharraq midfielder has selected a 23-player squad for the campaign; the youngsters completed their preparations at the



Bader Hussain in action during final preparations



Bahrain representative at yesterday's Group D coordination meeting

Bahrain Football Association pitches at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

The qualifiers feature 32 teams divided into eight groups of four, with matches in each pool played at a centralised venue.

Each group will be contested in a single round-robin format, with the eight group winners and seven best runners-up advancing to next year's AFC U20 Asian Cup in China.

That leaves little room for error during the three-match campaign as the youngsters look to secure the kingdom's 10th appearance at the continental showpiece.

A coordination meeting for the participating Group D teams was also held ahead of the qualifiers, with Bahrain team manager Turki Abdulla in attendance as administrative arrangements for the matches were finalised.

Aamer's squad features Hussain Zuhair, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaie, Amjad Jaafar, Khaled Ahmed, Bader Hus-

sain, Khaled Alkhalaf, Mubarak Fawaz, Mohammed Salah, Khaled Alkhalidi, Adam Fareed, Jassim Qasem, Abdulrahman Bassam, Ali Mehran, Karrar Huwaida, Ahmed Nasser, Ahmed Almuraisi, Komail Alsitrawi, Abdulla Osama, Ali Hussain and Mohammed Aljazzaf.

Goalkeepers Abdulla Ahmed, Hassan Albastaki and Hussain Ebrahim complete the roster.

Bahrain first competed in the Asian U20 championship in 1973 and are now looking to end a run of three successive missed editions.

The 2027 finals, which will be the 43rd edition of the tournament, are scheduled to take place in China from March 24 to April 10.

Group D action continues on Thursday, when Afghanistan face Tajikistan at 5pm before Bahrain meet Jordan at 8.30pm.

The final round of matches will be played yesterday, with Jordan taking on Tajikistan at 5pm and Bahrain facing Afghanistan at 8.30pm.

Bahrain eye third Asian youth crown

Warriors face fellow two-time champions Qatar in gold medal showdown

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain will bid to capture their third Asian youth title when they face Gulf rivals Qatar in the final of the 11th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship today in Amman, Jordan.

The gold medal showdown is scheduled for a 6pm start at Princess Sumaya Hall, where the kingdom's under-19 side will look to complete an impressive campaign by adding to the continental crowns they won in 2016 and 2018.

Standing in their way are fellow two-time champions Qatar, setting up a final between two sides seeking a third Asian crown.

Bahrain booked their place in the championship-decider with a hard-fought 26-23 semi-final victory over Iran on Saturday, while the Qataris advanced after defeating South Korea 32-28.

Under Egyptian coach Mohamed Soliman, the youngsters have yet to taste defeat in the tournament, progressing through the preliminary round with a perfect record before



Coach Soliman directs his players during Bahrain's previous match

overcoming Saudi Arabia 30-28 in the quarter-finals.

That result also secured the Young Warriors a seventh appearance at the IHF Men's Youth Handball World Championship, including a fifth in succession.

Saturday's semi-final provided another stern test, with Bahrain holding a slender 14-13 advantage at half-time before their opponents fought back to level the contest at 18-18 midway through the second

period.

The nationals then regained control during the closing stages, with Mahmood Ahmed and Mahdi Ali helping spark a crucial surge before Ahmed Abdulla struck from long range into an empty net to put Bahrain four goals clear at 24-20.

Goalkeeper Ali Almahroos was instrumental in the win, producing a number of important saves as Iran threatened to turn the contest around. He

finished with 12 stops and was named Man of the Match.

Ahmed, Ali, Sayed Omran Almahafdhah and Sayed Majeed Almuhafda shared the scoring honours with four goals apiece, while Hasan Saif added three.

Bahrain are appearing in the Asian youth final for only the third time, having won on both previous occasions. They also claimed bronze in 2010.

Success today would preserve their perfect record in the title game and bring a third continental crown on their 10th appearance in the competition.

Before the main event, hosts Jordan will face Uzbekistan in the seventh-place play-off at noon, followed by Kuwait against Saudi Arabia for fifth place at 2pm.

Iran and South Korea will then battle for bronze at 4pm before Bahrain and Qatar take centre stage two hours later.

All four semi-finalists have already secured qualification for next year's IHF Men's Youth Handball World Championship, scheduled to take place from July 29 to August 9, 2027.

Bellingham, Mbappe fire as Real Madrid ease to Malaga win



Real Madrid's English midfielder #05 Jude Bellingham (2-L) celebrates with his teammates

AFP | Madrid

Jude Bellingham and Kylian Mbappe both struck as Real Madrid's perfect start to La Liga under Jose Mourinho continued in a 4-0 cruise against Malaga yesterday. Los Blancos scored three times in just over 10 minutes in the first half to open up a comfortable lead over the Andalusian visitors to the Santiago Bernabeu.

Sandwiched between Bellingham and Mbappe's strikes was an own goal by Malaga

goalkeeper Alfonso Herrero, while Arda Guler tapped in a fourth late on.

After two victories in their opening two games and with superstar trio Mbappe, Bellingham and Vinicius Junior starting the season well, Madrid's confidence was high.

Mourinho rotated, making five changes to the team that started their opening matches, giving Trent Alexander-Arnold and Marc Cucurella among others their first starts this season.