QOC Secretary General visits INSEP in Paris

THE PENINSULA


Qatar Olympic Committee Secretary General Jassim bin Rashid Al Buenain with other members of the delegation during their visit to the French National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance in Paris.

DOHA: Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) Secretary General Jassim bin Rashid Al Buenain led a delegation from the QOC on an official visit to the French National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance (INSEP) in Paris.

The visit marked a significant step in strengthening strategic relations with leading global institutions in the fields of sports development and national team preparation.

During the visit, Al Buenain held a meeting with INSEP Director General Fabien Canu, where the two parties explored opportunities for the exchange of best practices, collaboration in academic and qualification programs, and technical cooperation in the areas of athlete care and performance optimization.

The meeting also reviewed ways to align preparations for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, with both Qatari and French Olympic teams gearing up for the road ahead.

The discussions covered INSEP's key success stories in education, sports medicine, and high-performance training, and its central role in preparing France's national teams for major international competitions. The QOC delegation also toured INSEP's world-class facilities, including its training venues, medical centers, and athlete support services. The visit provided valuable insights into INSEP's integrated model for nurturing Olympic and Paralympic talent, and the advanced systems in place to support athlete development across all disciplines.

France's INSEP, established in 1945 and operating under the Ministry for Sports, is regarded as the country's benchmark institution for elite sport. It plays a central role in the national Olympic and Paralympic strategy, with nearly 50% of France's Olympic medals attributed to athletes who train at INSEP-underscoring its vital contribution to international sporting success. The visit reaffirmed the QOC's commitment to forging meaningful partnerships with global centers of excellence, as part of its vision to elevate the standards of sport in Qatar and support the ambitions of Team Qatar athletes on the world stage.

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Qatar's Al Obaidly wins 6-ball singles bronze at Asian Championship



COLOMBO: Qatar's Ali Al-Obaidly **(pictured)** secured the bronze medal in the 6-ball singles category at the Asian Snooker Championship, currently taking place in Sri Lanka until June 28.

Al-Obaidly was defeated 1-5 by India's Paras Gupta in the semi-finals, in a performance that fell short of his usual standards — a surprise, considering he was the 2023 world champion in the same category. Malaysia's Thor Chuan Leong claimed the gold medal, defeating Gupta 6-2. Pakistan's Muhammad Asif, who was defeated by Thor in the other semi-final (2-5), also took home bronze.

Al-Obaidly delivered a strong performance throughout the tournament. He finished second in his group, defeating Hong Kong's Yu Kyu Chang (4-0) and Bangladesh's Muntaser Siddiqui (4-1), while losing to Singapore's Sunny Wang (0-4). Advancing as group runner-up, Al-Obaidly faced Sauchitaphim Loon of Cambodia in the round of 16, securing a 5-1 victory. He then defeated Bahrain's Habib Sabah 5-3 in the quarter-finals, before falling to Gupta in the semis.

Meanwhile, fellow Qatari player Muhanna Al-Obaidly competed in Group 4, finishing third with one win and two losses, exiting in the group stage. Bashar Hussein, competing in Group 8, lost all three of his matches and also exited early.

Qatar will now shift focus to the team competition, which begins today. — ***QNA***

Al Sadd extend Al Haydos' contract ahead of new season

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Hassan Al Haydos will stay with his childhood club Al Sadd, who yesterday announced the renewal of contract with the seasoned Qatari forward. The reigning Qatar Stars League (QSL) champions did not specify the length of his contract extension.

"The club was keen to keep him, in recognition of his great value as a key player for the club," Al Sadd said in a statement on their website.

Former Qatar captain Al Haydos, who retired from international football in March 2024 after leading the national side to a second successive Asian Cup title, has been part of Al Sadd since he joined them in 1998 at the age of eight.

I am very happy at Al Sadd Club, which is my home. We have a challenging season ahead which includes domestic and Asian competitions. Our ambitions are great and our goal is to compete for all titles.
Hassan Al Haydos

He joined the senior side in 2007 and has since played for them, celebrating multiple accolades with Qatar's most decorated club.

The 34-year-old forward, who captains the side, thanked the Al Sadd management for extending his contract.

"I am very happy at Al Sadd Club, which is my home," Al Haydos said on the club's website.

"We have a challenging season ahead which includes domestic and Asian competitions. Our ambitions are great and our goal is to compete for all titles."

Regarding his role as a captain, he said: "Leadership is a responsibility, and the Al Sadd players are like my brothers. We have been playing with each other for a long time. Our goal as a family is one, which is to always keep Al Sadd at the top."

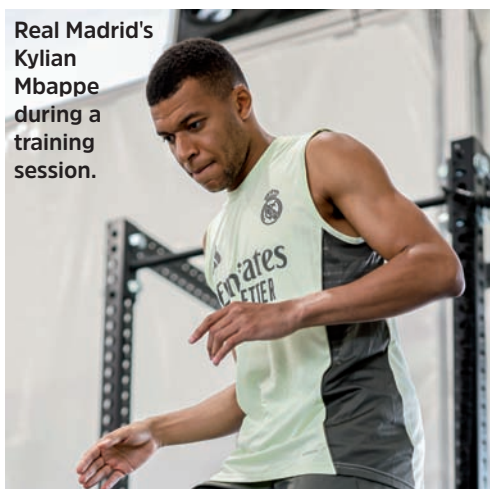
Meanwhile, Al Sadd also renewed the contract of Qatari defender Ahmed Suhail for five seasons until 2030 earlier this week.

Al Sadd, under coach Felix Sanchez, were phenomenal in the previous season, clinching the QSL and Qatar Cup titles. They will start their preparations for the new season with a home training camp on July 5 before departing to Spain for their overseas camp set to start on July 16.

Al Sadd are scheduled to play four friendly matches in Spain before returning home on August 4.

They will begin their QSL title defence with a match against Qatar SC at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on August 16, two days after the Qatari top flight kicks off.


Hassan Al Haydos


Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe during a training session.

Mbappe returns to Real training

PHILADELPHIA: Kylian Mbappe returned to training yesterday after missing Real Madrid's first two matches at the Club World Cup in the United States due to illness, the Spanish giants confirmed to AFP.

The French superstar was taken to hospital last Thursday for tests and treatment after suffering gastroenteritis, before later being released.

He played no part in Real's opening game at the tournament, a 1-1 draw with Saudi side Al-Hilal in Miami, or the 3-1 defeat of Mexico's Pachuca at the weekend.

Coach Xabi Alonso did indicate after the latter game that Mbappe was on the mend, saying: "He is doing better, he is recovering."

Real posted images of Mbappe in training yesterday on their website, as the squad worked out at their Florida base before travelling north in the afternoon to Philadelphia.

That is where Madrid will take on Red Bull Salzburg of Austria today in their last Group H match and will be looking for a victory which will confirm their progress to the last 16 in first place in the section.

A draw can also take them through to the next round, with Manchester City and Juventus the possible opponents in the last 16.

Mbappe has scored 43 goals in 56 appearances since joining Madrid from Paris Saint-Germain last year. His last game was for France in a 2-0 win away to Germany in the UEFA Nations League on June 8. — ***AFP***

Delap off mark as Chelsea ease into last 16


Liam Delap (centre) scores Chelsea's second goal against Esperance de Tunis.

PHILADELPHIA: Liam Delap scored his first Chelsea goal in a 3-0 win over Tunisian champions Esperance on Tuesday which took the Blues into the last 16 of the Club World Cup.

A game played in sweaty conditions at the end of a blisteringly hot day in Philadelphia was decided by two goals in first-half stoppage time by Tosin Adarabioyo and then Delap.

Tyrique George added the third in injury time at the end of the game in front of 32,937 fans at Lincoln Financial Field as Enzo Maresca's side bounced back from a 3-1 loss to Flamengo.

Chelsea clinched second place in Group D behind the Brazilian giants while Esperance were eliminated.

Asked about Delap's first goal on his third appearance, Maresca said: "Against Flamengo he had three clear chances to score goals so that means he is there, in the right position, he is doing well.

"We know Liam is going to score goals with us, we don't have any doubts about that."

The Premier League outfit will now travel to Charlotte to face Benfica on Saturday, with the Portuguese club having earlier beaten Bayern Munich to top Group C.

That will be a first meeting of the clubs since Chelsea beat Benfica in the 2013 Europa League final, and the winner of that tie will play either Palmeiras or Botafogo of Brazil in the last eight.

"Benfica is a top club with a top manager and top players and it is going to be tough, but from 32 we are now in the last 16 and the next target is to try to be in the last eight," said Maresca.

Chelsea only needed a draw to advance as Maresca made eight changes to his starting line-up following the Flamengo defeat.

Delap, Enzo Fernandez and Malo Gusto kept their places while Josh Acheampong was among the lesser-seen faces to get a chance.

Maresca explained the heatwave in and around Philadelphia, where Chelsea have been based, made squad rotation unavoidable.

"I said yesterday that it was impossible not to rotate players because playing every three days in these conditions is not possible.

FIFA CLUB WORLD CUP

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS
IES Tunis 0-3 Chelsea
Los Angeles 1-1 Flamengo
TODAY'S FIXTURES
Inter Milan vs River Plate
Urawa Reds vs Monterrey
Juventus vs Manchester City
Wydad Casablanca vs Al Ain



"The ones who played were good ...it is important now to recover energy and try to win the next game.

"Thirty-two clubs were in this tournament, now 16, they are clubs who in the last five or six years have been in Champions League finals, like Atletico Madrid who are already (back) in Spain, so we need to be proud and be happy."

Acheampong, making his 10th start this season, came close with a shot saved low down by Esperance goalkeeper Bechir Ben Said on 36 minutes.

Fernandez shot wide from the edge of the box as Chelsea controlled the first half without overly troubling the Tunisian defence until the third minute of stoppage time.

Fernandez floated a free-kick into the area and Adarabioyo scored with a header into the bottom corner.

Esperance needed to win and their hopes were as good as over as Chelsea scored again two minutes later.

Fernandez was again the provider as he fed Delap, and the new signing from Ipswich Town controlled with his back to goal, turned and slotted a low shot into the net to get off the mark in his new colours.

With temperatures still hovering close to 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) late into the evening, conditions remained far from easy.

Both teams made changes, with Mamadou Sarr and Andrey Santos getting their first Chelsea minutes since joining from Strasbourg.

Chelsea thought they had a penalty 15 minutes from time when the referee pointed to the spot as a Santos shot brushed the hand of Yassine Meriah -- but the award was overturned following a VAR check.

The third goal arrived deep in injury time at the end of the game as George, another substitute, found the net with a shot that the goalkeeper should have stopped.

"We came up against a team from the very highest level and were dominated, but we didn't disgrace ourselves," said Esperance coach Maher Kanzari. — ***AFP***

Messi, Miami relishing reunion with PSG and Enrique



MIAMI: Inter Miami coach Javier Mascherano is hoping that Lionel Messi's **(pictured)** memories of his unhappy time at Paris Saint-Germain will fire him up for Sunday's clash between the two teams in the Club World Cup.

Miami were surprise qualifiers from Group A after beating Porto and drawing with Palmeiras and Al Ahly and now face the daunting task of playing the recently crowned European champions.

Messi joined Miami after two seasons in the French capital and made clear he had not enjoyed his time with PSG.

"It's clear that it would better for us if he was angry, because he's one of those players who, when he has something in mind, gives a bit extra," Mascherano told *ESPN*.

The Argentine coach was clear though that the emotions will be less than if Messi were up against PSG on European soil rather than facing his old team in Atlanta.

"I think that's in the past now, it's another story. Also, the fact that it's here in the United States, I don't think the atmosphere will be the same, but what we will try to do is play a great game. We know that in order to have a chance, we have to play a perfect game, and well, we'll go for it," he said.

After joining Miami in Major League Soccer, Messi reflected on his time in Paris saying it had been "difficult".

"I spent two years that I didn't enjoy. I wasn't happy on a day-to-day basis, with the training sessions, the games, I found it hard to adapt to all that," he said.

The eight-times Ballon d'Or winner will face a very different PGS to the one that he left with the club having been transformed under Spanish coach Luis Enrique.

Luis Enrique is a familiar face for several of the Miami team who played under him at Barcelona.

Luis Suarez, Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba, Messi and Mascherano all featured for Enrique's Barca, winning the treble under him in 2015.

"I've said it infinite times: For me, he's the best - I think not just as a coach, but also how he manages the group," said Alba, who also worked with Luis Enrique with the Spanish national team.

"He's a phenomenon. I'm excited to see him, as well as his entire staff. I'll give him a hug but when the ref blows the opening whistle, try to beat him. Which is what all of us here are trying to do" added the left-back.

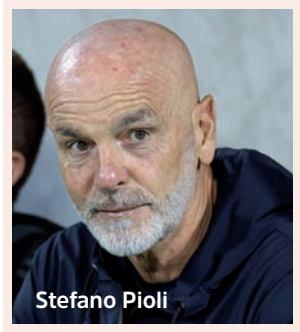
Suarez, who scored in the 2-2 draw with Palmeiras on Monday, was also full of praise for the Spanish coach.

"For me, along with Maestro (Oscar) Tabarez of the (Uruguay) national team, he was the most important coach of my career, for what they taught me, for what I learned in the day-to-day with them," he said.

"He's a coach who influenced me greatly. I already had a competitive DNA, but he injected even more into me. He taught me how to move within a space where I had to play a role I wasn't used to, not touching the ball a lot ... Not to mention on a personal level, a relationship of great respect and admiration for what he generated for us as players."

Mascherano, in his first club coaching job, said he remains a personal friend of the PSG coach and his family.

"That is the beautiful thing about football sometimes. You face these kind of things and, well, in my opinion, I do not deserve this as a coach just yet. But yes, it will be a very beautiful opportunity. I always wish him all the best; that won't be the case for Sunday. I hope luck will be on our side on Sunday. But yes, I have a very good relationship with him. I appreciate him a lot," he said. — *AFP*



Stefano Pioli

Pioli quits as coach of Saudi side Al Nassr

PARIS: Al Nassr have parted company with their Italian coach Stefano Pioli, the Saudi side announced yesterday.

No official reason was given for the split after only nine months in the post but Pioli's name has been linked with joining Fiorentina for a second spell in charge of the Serie A side.

"Al Nassr announces that Mr Pioli and his staff no longer coach the first team," Cristiano Ronaldo's club posted on social media.

"We would like to thank Mr Pioli and his staff for their work last season," added Al Nassr, who finished third in the Saudi Pro League.

Pioli, who guided AC Milan to the 2022 Serie A crown, only joined Al Nassr in September 2024.

Prior to his near five-year stint at AC Milan, the 59-year-old coached several other Italian sides including Fiorentina, Inter Milan, Lazio and Bologna. — *AFP*

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Neymar started his career at Santos before moving to Barcelona and then Paris Saint-Germain.

Neymar signs for six more months with Santos to prepare for World Cup

SAO PAULO: Neymar on Tuesday extended his contract with Brazilian club Santos until the end of 2025, as he attempts to recapture his form in time for next year's World Cup.

"I made a decision and I followed my heart. Santos is not just my team, it's my home, my roots, my history, and my life," the 33-year-old forward said in a statement from the club.

Neymar started his career at Santos before moving to Barcelona and then Paris Saint-Germain. After an injury-hit spell in Saudi Arabia, he returned to Santos in January on a contract that was due to expire on June 30.

The injury problems that restricted him to just seven matches in 17 months at Al-Hilal persisted.

He has played 12 matches in five months across all competitions for Santos, scoring three goals. In his last appearance in the domestic league, he was sent off for a second yellow card after scoring with his hand against Botafogo. After 12 matches in this season's Brazilian championship, Santos are only clear of the relegation places on goal difference.

Since his return to Brazil, Neymar has drawn criticism for partying at the Rio Carnival and for appearing in the gimmicky seven-a-side Kings League while nursing injuries.

Neymar is the Brazil national team's all-time leading scorer with 79 goals, two more than another Santos product, Pele, but his quest for a World Cup winner's medal has repeatedly ended in disappointment.

Neymar was recalled to the Brazil squad in March for two World Cup qualifier matches, but withdrew with a thigh injury.

In May, new coach Carlo Ancelotti left Neymar out of his first squad.

"I selected players who are in good shape. Neymar has just returned from injury, everyone knows he's a very important player and we're obviously counting on him," said Ancelotti. — *AFP*

Championship club QPR name Stephan as new head coach

LONDON: English Championship club QPR yesterday announced the appointment of Frenchman Julien Stephan as their new head coach.

The 44-year-old's arrival comes a day after Marti Cifuentes officially left the club, having been placed on gardening leave following the penultimate game of the season.

The second-tier side finished 15th in the table but won only two of their final 12 games under Cifuentes.

Stephan, 44, won the French Cup with Rennes in 2019.

"I feel very proud and excited to join QPR," he said.

"QPR is a historic club with strong values and passionate fans, so I feel honoured. I wanted to come here because I know there's a lot of passion around the club and around the team, and I feel very lucky to discover that." CEO Christian Nourry said: "Julien's track record of developing young players into world-class talent was a major factor in our decision to appoint him.

"Alongside this, both at Rennes and Strasbourg he achieved historic league success." — *AFP*

Barca announce Camp Nou return for Aug 10

BARCELONA: Barcelona announced yesterday their long-awaited return to the new Camp Nou for an August 10 friendly after years of work to expand and modernise the iconic stadium.

The traditional pre-season Joan Gamper Trophy match will only mark the stadium's partial reopening, with construction work continuing in various areas, the current Spanish champions said in a statement.

This includes the completion of the new third tier, the dual VIP ring, the roof installation, interior spaces and development of the stadium's surrounding area.

The Catalan giants have not confirmed the initial capacity, but local media reported that the available stands can hold 35,000 fans.

"Barcelona takes a symbolic and emotional step into the future, reclaiming its home in a new era that will culminate with the complete inauguration of the new stadium," the club said.

Barca will have another month to continue work on the stadium after requesting to play their first three La Liga games of the upcoming season away from home.

After suffering several delays since beginning in 2023, the project dubbed "Espai Barca" is due to finish in the summer of 2026 and boost the Camp Nou's capacity to 105,000.

Barcelona have in the meantime played their home games at the smaller Montjuic Olympic stadium. — *AFP*

Emma Raducanu's Wimbledon build-up hit by Eastbourne exit

EASTBOURNE: Emma Raducanu suffered a setback ahead of Wimbledon as the former US Open champion crashed to a shock defeat against Australian teenager Maya Joint in the second round at Eastbourne yesterday.

After a difficult year marred by poor form and back problems, Raducanu had hoped for a morale-boosting run at Eastbourne before Wimbledon starts on Monday.

But the British star slumped to a 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) loss that leaves her short of match practice leading into the grass-court Grand Slam.

Raducanu missed last week's Berlin Open due to the back problem she has been nursing since before the French Open.

On Tuesday, the 22-year-old held back tears after recovering from a set down to defeat American Ann Li in the Eastbourne first round.

"I'd prefer to not go in to it, if that's OK, but I just received some really bad news so I'm trying to overcome that in the background," she said after beating Li.

World number 38 Raducanu is building towards her fourth Wimbledon appearance, where she has twice reached the fourth round since her debut in 2021.

A run to the quarter-finals at Queen's Club two weeks ago was enough to see the 2021 US Open champion regain the British number one position for the first time in two years.

But Joint had knocked out two-time Wimbledon runner-up Ons Jabeur in the first round on Monday and the 19-year-old made Raducanu her second high-profile victim of the week.



Winner Australia's Maya Joint (left) and Britain's Emma Raducanu shake hands after their match.

"Today was really tough, there were a lot of ups and downs and momentum switches. I was really glad I could tough it out in the end. The atmosphere was amazing," the world number 51 said after the second grass-court win of her career.

"I'm an aggressive player, I like to use my backhand and I'm trying to learn to play on all courts." Joint, who was ranked 684th at the start of 2024, faces world number 69 Anna Blinkova in the quarter-finals.

Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejcikova saved three match points to reach the quarter-finals with a gutsy 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) against Britain's Jodie Burrage.

Twenty four hours after Harriet Dart spurned two match points against Krejcikova, the second seeded Czech had to dig deep again to avoid defeat after falling 0-40 down at 5-6 in the deciding set.

The world number 17's erratic performance suggested she has yet to escape the inconsistency that has plagued her since she beat Jasmine Paolini in last year's Wimbledon final to win her second Grand Slam crown.

Krejcikova made a poor start to this year's grass-court season with a 6-4, 6-3 loss against Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova in the opening round at Queen's Club.

The 29-year-old also lost in the second round of the recent French Open and missed January's Australian Open with a back injury that kept her sidelined until May. — *AFP*

Elliott double fires England into Under-21 Euros final

BRATISLAVA: Harvey Elliott scored twice as reigning champions England defeated the Netherlands 2-1 yesterday to reach the final of the Under-21 European Championship in Slovakia.

Lee Carsley's youngsters will face either Germany or France, who meet later, in Saturday's final as they bid for a second straight title.

Liverpool midfielder Elliott hammered home the opening goal shortly after the hour mark, making up for two earlier missed chances.

But Dutch substitute Noah Ohio, who played for England at Under-16 level, equalised for the Netherlands in the 72nd minute with a speculative effort from long range.

Elliott, who was part of the England squad which won the tournament in 2023, had the final say with four minutes remaining, cutting inside and slotting a clinical finish into the bottom corner. — *AFP*

'Tiny club, huge heart': Proud Auckland City coach Posa

NASHVILLE: Auckland City manager Paul Posa was "thrilled" with his amateur team's 1-1 Club World Cup draw against Boca Juniors on Monday.

The New Zealand side, already eliminated, secured perhaps the best result in the club's history in Nashville against the Argentine powerhouses, one of South America's biggest teams.

Boca were eliminated from Group C after Benfica edged Bayern Munich 1-0 in the day's other match.

"I'm sorry to break some Boca hearts, but we worked so hard," said Auckland coach Paul Posa.

"You can't say we haven't learned from the experience of being at the tournament, I'm thrilled for the players and the club, it's wonderful. It's something to go home with." Posa said it was a great result for football in Oceania.



Auckland City coach Paul Posa

"I think it's restored a little bit of pride, a little bit of reputation for us," he added.

"We're a tiny club with a huge heart and that's evident for all to see...

"I think people here just don't have any idea how small a little club we are and where we've come from. So, it's just awesome." After goalkeeper Nathan Garrow's own goal, Christian Gray, a teacher back home in New Zealand, headed Auckland City level in the second half.

Following a weather delay, the team clung on to earn a point and celebrated jubilantly at the end.

Boca coach Miguel Angel Russo said his team were distracted by the Benfica result which condemned them to elimination.

"Everything was kind of focussing on Benfica, that was the reality at the end of the day," he said.

"Now of course this is no excuse in any way, shape or form." — *AFP*

QBF approves 2025-2026 season agenda, new general league system

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Board of Directors of the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) convened for its second meeting at the Federation's headquarters, chaired by QBF President by Mohammed bin Saad Al-Mughaseeb **(pictured)**.

Present at the meeting were Saadoun Sabah Al-Kuwari, the Secretary General, and Ahmed Yousef Mohammed Mubarak Al-Darwish, the Assistant Secretary.

The meeting also featured Board members: Abdullah Sultan Al-Jaber, Abdulrahman Hamad Mohammed Al-Mana, Mishaal Abdullah Yousef Al-Malki, and Zahra Majed Burhan Al-Zaidan, the sole female member of the Board.

The Federation sanctioned several vital decisions, including the discussion and endorsement of the Competitions



Committee's recommendations and the establishment of the calendar and activities for the forthcoming season.

Additionally, the Federation introduced new modifications to the Men's General League competition framework, considering the unique characteristics of the impending phase, as Qatar prepares to host the prestigious global event, the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup, which is set to take place for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa region from August 27 to September 12, 2027.

As per the sanctioned schedule, the Men's General Basketball League is scheduled to take place from October 25, 2025, to February 16, 2026.

Following this, the Qatar Cup for the Men's category will commence, taking place from February 23 to March 9, 2026. The principal men's tournaments will conclude with the Amir's Cup, scheduled from March 26 to April 23, 2026.

In terms of age group competitions, the Under-19 General League is set to run from September 15, 2025, to May 28, 2026.

This league will consist of two segments: the first segment will occur from September 15 to December 1, 2025, and the second segment will take place from January 20 to May 28, 2026. The Qatar Cup for Under-19s is scheduled for May 4 to 27, 2026.

The General League for Under-16s will take place from September 14, 2025, to May 26, 2026, and will also be divided into two segments: the first segment will run from September 14 to November 30, 2025, and the second segment will be from January 18 to May 26, 2026.

The Qatar Cup for Under-16s is scheduled to take place from May 3 to May 26, 2026, while the Qatar Cup for Under-16s will also occur from March 30 to May 23, 2026.

In relation to the General League for Under-14s, the first section is set to be conducted from September 13 to November 29, 2025, whereas the matches for the second division will be held from January 17 to April 25, 2026. Additionally, the Qatar U-14 Cup is planned for May 2 to May 25, 2026.

The seasonal agenda further encompasses the organization of sports festivals aimed at younger age groups, specifically under 9 and under 12, during the timeframe from November 1, 2025, to May 16, 2026.

This initiative is part of the association's commitment to fostering a culture of the game from an early age. Concerning women's activities, it has been decided to conduct festivals for girls from January 17 to February 10, 2026.

The Under-15 Girls League is scheduled from January 16 to May 25, 2026, and the Under-18 Girls League will take place during the same timeframe. The Women's General League is also set to occur from January 17 to May 25, 2026.

Pakistan to play T20I series in Bangladesh next month

LAHORE: The Pakistan men's team will travel to Bangladesh next month to play three Twenty20 internationals as part of the build-up to next year's World Cup.

Pakistan's tour will be a reciprocal one after they hosted Bangladesh for three T20Is in May-June this year, all won by the home team and played in Lahore.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it has arranged various series to build for the World Cup to be co-hosted in India and Sri Lanka next year.

From Bangladesh, Pakistan team will fly to the West Indies to play three T20Is and as many ODIs. — *AFP*

Series Schedule

16 July - Pakistan men's team arrival
20 July - First T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka
22 July - Second T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka
24 July - Third T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka

Bowlers shine for Sri Lanka in second Bangladesh Test

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's bowlers reduced Bangladesh to 220 for eight at stumps on a rain-hit day one of the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo.

On a track that offered little for the bowlers, it was debutant Sonal Dinusha who stole the spotlight.

The 24-year-old left-arm spinner, thrust into the big league following Angelo Mathews' retirement, returned figures of two for 22 in an impressive debut.

Dinush's first scalp was Litton Das, ending a flourishing fifth-wicket partnership with Mushfiqur Rahim.

He then accounted for the prized wicket of Mushfiqur, who had scored a century in the first Test.

Pacer Vishwa Fernando provided useful support to Dinush.

The left-arm seamer, back in national colours after a successful County stint with Warwickshire, removed Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who had scored two hundreds in the first Test.

Vishwa returned later in the innings to dismiss Mehidy Hasan Miraz with a sharp delivery that found the edge.

Bangladesh's decision to bat first backfired as their batters



Sri Lanka's Sonal Dinusha (centre) celebrates with captain Dhananjaya de Silva (right) after taking a wicket yesterday.

struggled. Apart from Shadman Islam's patient 46, the top order failed to deliver.

"It's a slow kind of surface," Islam said. "It wasn't easy to play shots."

Sri Lanka's fielding was patchy in places, but their bowlers more than made up for it, ensuring the visitors never ran away with the game.

Asitha Fernando, drafted in after Milan Rathnayake's injury, ably supported Dinusha and Vishwa.

Sri Lanka's batting coach Thilina Kandamby praised the team's performance. "Very good effort by the quicks," he said. "They bowled to good plans and created opportunities."

Bangladesh rang in two changes to their side: Mehidy Hasan returned after recovering from fever, replacing Jaker Ali, while Ebadot Hossain came in for the injured Hasan Mahmud.

Brief Scores

Bangladesh: 220-8 (Shadman Islam 46, Mushfiqur Rahim 35, Sonal Dinusha 2-22, Vishwa Fernando 2-35) — *AFP*

Gambhir backs India bowlers to 'deliver'

LEEDS: India coach Gautam Gambhir has backed his side's raw bowling attack to "deliver for us" despite a chastening defeat by England in the first Test at Headingley.

India slumped to a dispiriting five-wicket defeat on Tuesday after they failed to stop England reaching a target of 371 in the 10th-highest run chase in Test history.

Ben Duckett scored a superb century and shared an opening stand of 188 with Zak Crawley, with India's Jasprit Bumrah -- the world's top-ranked Test bowler -- unable to take a wicket in England's second innings.

India have said they only plan to play Bumrah in three matches of this five-Test series against England, which continues at Edgbaston next week, in a bid to maintain his fitness following a back injury.



Gambhir insisted that was still the plan, even though India are now under pressure to get back into the series with a victory in Birmingham. Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj are the senior members of India's pace attack.

Prasidh Krishna and Nitish Kumar Reddy -- the latter left out at Headingley -- have just a handful of Test appearances behind them, with Arshdeep Singh yet to make his debut.

How India, without veteran seamer Mohammed Shami, missing from this tour following knee trouble, take the 20 wickets needed to win a Test remains an open question.

But Gambhir pleaded for patience by saying: "These are early days. If we start judging our bowlers after every Test, how will we develop a bowling attack?"

With India bidding for just their fourth Test series win in England after triumphs in 1971, 1986 and 2007, Gambhir added: "We believe in them. We trust in them.

"When we pick the squad, we pick the squad on trust, not on hope. These boys will deliver for us."

Batting collapses of

> *These are early days. If we start judging our bowlers after every Test, how will we develop a bowling attack?*
> ***Gautam Gambhir***
> ***India coach***

7-41 and 6-31 proved costly for India against England, with Gambhir's men in position to bat the hosts out of the game at 430-3 in their first innings before letting the advantage slip away.

In a match where they posted five individual hundreds, including two from Rishabh Pant, the fact their numbers eight to 11 managed just nine runs in total between them was a key factor in India's defeat.

"I think they are more disappointed than anyone," said Gambhir. "Because they knew that we had the opportunity.

"If we had got up to 570, 580 in the first innings, we could have dominated from there."

The result meant Shubman Gill suffered a defeat in his first Test as India captain since succeeding the retired Rohit Sharma.

England's Duckett says mindset change behind Test success

Meanwhile, Duckett said a change of mindset has inspired his successful return to Test cricket after a brilliant century laid the foundation for England's remarkable win in their series opener with India.

Duckett's commanding 149 was the key innings as England successfully chased an imposing total of 371 to win by five wickets in the first Test at Headingley on Tuesday.

Duckett's heroics at Headingley saw him lauded by former England captain Nasser Hussain, who labelled him "the best multi-format batsman in the world".

Duckett said his success was down to an improved mentality after he had been criticised for getting himself out with needlessly flamboyant shots.

"My mindset personally is a bit different to what it has been over the last couple of years," he told reporters.

"Potentially there's a bit of maturity kicking in. Playing more Test matches, learning from mistakes, is number one.

"Failures are easy to make changes and learn from, rather than just when you do well," he said. — *AFP*



BOTTOM LINE

By Hamad Saleh Alshaiba

Game changers: How community sports are reshaping society

COMMUNITY sports are far more than just recreational activities – they are a foundation for building healthier, stronger and more connected societies. While elite competitions often dominate headlines, it is in community fields, school gyms, and neighbourhood courts where the true power of sport unfolds.

At the heart of community sports lies accessibility. These programs welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Whether it's a child discovering teamwork for the first time, a teenager finding structure and discipline, or an adult returning to physical activity after years away, community sports offer an inclusive environment that embraces growth and change.

What makes community sports truly transformative is their ability to cultivate values. Discipline, respect, resilience, empathy – these are not just athletic skills, but life tools. Unlike professional sports, where the focus may be on performance and outcomes, community sports emphasise participation, effort and personal improvement. Every training session becomes an opportunity to build character, not just fitness.

Moreover, the social impact is profound. When children play together regardless of their differences, they break down barriers. When parents cheer from the sidelines, they create bonds that extend beyond the field. When volunteers commit their time to organise and mentor, they foster leadership and civic responsibility. These ripple effects are often invisible, but they are the true legacy of community sports.

In Qatar, we are fortunate to have a growing ecosystem that supports community-based athletic engagement. Institutions like Qatar Foundation have played a pivotal role in promoting initiatives that merge sport with education, health and social development. From school leagues to inclusive wellness programs, the emphasis has shifted from competition to collaboration, and from showcasing talent to building it.

Community sports also serve as a bridge between generations. They allow parents and children to share experiences, pass down traditions and build mutual respect. They offer safe spaces for youth to explore their potential while being guided by mentors who genuinely care. In these shared spaces, communities thrive – not because of victories on a scoreboard, but because of the life lessons absorbed through play, teamwork and consistency.

As we look ahead, the future of community sports lies in innovation and sustainability. Integrating technology for better access and engagement, designing facilities that are environmentally conscious and aligning sports programs with broader social goals – these are the directions we must pursue. But most importantly, we must preserve the human essence at the core of community sports: the joy of movement, the dignity of inclusion and the strength of belonging.

In the end, community sports are not a luxury or an afterthought – they are a necessity. They shape not only better athletes but better citizens. And if we truly believe in building a resilient, inclusive society, then investing in community sports is not an option – it is an obligation.

Hamad Saleh Alshaiba is the Head of Sports Programs at Qatar Foundation, the Official Spokesperson for Community Engagement, and a Board Member of the Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation. He is also the Chairman of its Competitions Committee and a member of the Technical Committee of the Asian University Sports Federation.

Kenya's Kipyegon seeks history with four minute mile attempt

PARIS: Triple Olympic champion Faith Kipyegon of Kenya will attempt to make history by becoming the first woman to run a sub-four minute miletoday, but to do so she must shave nearly eight seconds off her world record.

Already the world record holder in this non-Olympic distance equivalent to 1.6km, Kipyegon will nevertheless have to smash her own benchmark of 4min 07.64sec by gaining almost two seconds per 400m.

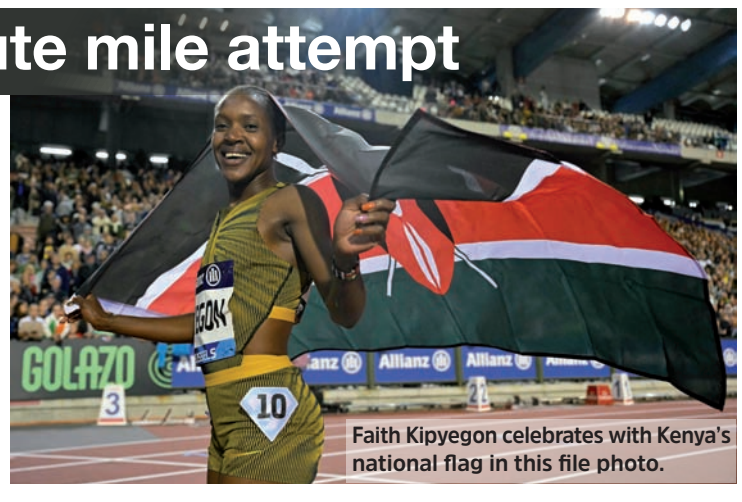
No woman has ever attempted the feat, which was first achieved in 1954 by Roger Bannister -- in 3min 59.4sec -- in what has gone down as one of track running's most momentous achievements.

When Bannister ran a sub-four minute mile 71 years ago, racing conditions were very different. The Briton did it after a morning's work at a hospital during a meet on a cinder track in Oxford and wearing heavy spiked shoes.

In the unofficial race in Paris organised by Nike, 31-year-old Kipyegon will benefit from the wealth of her sponsor's technological support.

The "Breaking 4" project follows on six years after Eliud Kipchoge's "Breaking 2" -- when the Kenyan became the first man to run a marathon in under two hours.

For the attempt, Kipyegon will sport a custom-made suit as well as new Victory Elite FK shoes. She will also reportedly be accompanied by a team of male pacemakers around the Stade Charlety track. — *AFP*



Faith Kipyegon celebrates with Kenya's national flag in this file photo.