

Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani, QOC Vice-President H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, QOC Vice-President Mohammed bin Yousuf Al Mana, QOC Secretary-General Jassim Rashid Al Buenain and the former QOC second Vice-President Dr. Thani bin Abdulrahman Al Kuwari pose for a photo.

QOC elects Sheikha Hind as Vice-President

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) held its 2026 Extraordinary General Assembly yesterday, chaired by President H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani.

The meeting finalised the composition of the QOC Board of Directors, alongside a review of the performance of Qatar's national teams and preparations for upcoming sporting events.

The General Assembly elected H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani as QOC Vice-President, while Mohammed bin Yousuf Al Mana was also appointed Vice-President, following the decision of Dr. Thani bin Abdulrahman Al Kuwari to step down from his position.

The Qatar Olympic Committee expressed its sincere appreciation to Dr. Thani for his valuable efforts and contributions during his tenure, and wished him continued success.

The General Assembly also reviewed the results of Qatar's national teams at the Aichi–Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, including the medals and achievements secured across various competitions, as well as preparations for Qatar's participation in upcoming multi-sport events.

H E Sheikh Joaan commended the achievements of Qatari athletes and national teams throughout the year, particularly their performances at the Asian Games.

He also praised the efforts of national sports federations, committees, and technical and administrative teams in preparing athletes and supporting their participation in international competitions.

Qatar name 21-player squad, target strong show in FIFA U-17 World Cup

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar named their 21-player squad for the FIFA U-17 World Cup yesterday, 10 days before the tournament kicks off, with coach Alvaro Mejia targeting a strong showing from the hosts.

Qatar will open their Group A campaign against Panama on November 19 at the Aspire Zone before facing Egypt three days later. They will complete their group fixtures against Greece on November 25 as they look to advance to the knockout stage.

Mejia, who is leading Qatar's youth national team in the tournament for the second consecutive year, said hosting the tournament would give young players a valuable opportunity to develop.

"Hosting a tournament of this level in Qatar, with the participation of the best Under-17 teams from around the world, gives young players an exceptional and unparalleled experience," he said.

The Spanish coach expects the competition to provide a platform for emerging talents while showcasing Qatar's football potential.

"I am certain that this tournament will once again be a platform for launching the next generation of football stars, and I look forward to showcasing the great passion for football and the promising talents that Qatar has," Mejia said.

Qatar midfielder Mohsen Al Hajri, meanwhile, described his selection as a great honour and said he hoped to represent his country well.

"All players dream of participating in the Under-17 World Cup, and I am very honoured to have this opportunity. I hope to represent my country in the best way possible," he said.



> *I am certain that this tournament will once again be a platform for launching the next generation of football stars, and I look forward to showcasing the great passion for football and the promising talents that Qatar has.*
> ***Alvaro Mejia***

"Facing teams from around the world gives us the opportunity to showcase our football skills, as well as introduce our culture and heritage."

Al Hajri, who has trained at Aspire Zone from a young age, also highlighted the role of Qatar's facilities in developing athletes.

"I have been training at Aspire Zone since a very young age, and the state-of-the-art sports infrastructure and facilities here provide an ideal environment for the growth and development of all athletes, not just football players," he said.

Midfielder Hadi Khalil of Al Duhail also views the tournament as an opportunity for Qatar's young players to make their mark internationally.

"This tournament is the biggest football tournament in the world for the under-17 category, and we will be playing with the best players and rising stars from different countries. It is important for us to showcase our potential and capabilities on the international stage," Khalil said.

The tournament will run from November 19 to December 13, with 48 teams divided into 12 groups of four. The top two teams from each group, along with the eight best third-placed sides, will advance to the Round of 32, which begins on November 30.

The final will be played at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium on December 13, while the remaining matches will be staged at the Aspire Zone complex in Al Rayyan.

Portugal are the defending champions after beating Austria 1-0 in last year's final. The 2025 edition was the first to feature 48 teams and attracted large crowds to watch the world's leading young talents.

Qatar is hosting the tournament for the second consecutive year and will stage five straight editions through 2029.

QATAR U-17 SQUAD

Bakri Mohamed, Hossam Al Abd, Mohamed Mirghani, Abdullah Babiker, Adham Adnan, Ahmed Adel, Ahmed Wael, Ali Mohamed, Ayokunle Samuel, Cristiano Soria, Dhiaeddine Al Arabi, Hadi Khalil, Mateo Esparza, Mohamed Fadl, Mohsen Al Hajri, Omar Ayman, Amr Mohamed, Sami Darani, Shaher Wael, Taha Naseer and Youssef Islam

Coach: Alvaro Mejia

Lopetegui names Qatar squad for friendlies against Australia and Republic of Korea

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Akram Afif and Almoez Ali will lead Qatar's attack as coach Julen Lopetegui named a 28-player squad yesterday for the national team's November friendlies against Australia and the Republic of Korea.

The Spanish coach has retained experienced forward Hassan Al Haydos, while sticking with his established goalkeeping trio of Mahmoud Abunada, Meshaal Barsham and Salah Zakaria for the two home matches.

Qatar will open their programme against Australia on November 13 at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium, with kick-off scheduled for 5:45pm. They will then face the Republic of Korea at the same venue on November 17, with the match starting at 5pm.

Afif and Almoez remain key attacking options for Lopetegui, while Al Haydos brings valuable experience to the squad. Edmilson Junior, Hashim Ali, Youssef Abdulrazzaq and Shehab Ellethy also feature among the attacking options.

The midfield includes Abdulaziz Hatem, Assim Madibo, Ahmed Fathy, Jassim Gaber and Karim Boudiaf, while Bassam Al Rawi, Boualem Khoukhi, Tarek Salman and Homam Al Amin provide defensive options.

The November fixtures are part of Qatar's preparations for their title defence at the AFC Asian Cup, although the continental tournament has since been postponed from January 7-February 5, 2027, to December 23, 2027-January 21, 2028.

Qatar's planned December 27 friendly against Saudi Arabia in Al Khobar was subsequently cancelled following the postponement, with the Qatar Football Association confirming the decision was taken in coordination with the Saudi side.

The November programme will also feature two other international friendlies in Doha.

Saudi Arabia will face the Republic of Korea at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on November 13, with kick-off at 5:30pm, while Saudi Arabia will take on Uzbekistan at the same venue on November 17 at 6:30pm.

QATAR SQUAD

Mahmoud Abunada, Meshaal Barsham, Salah Zakaria, Shehab Ellethy, Abdulaziz Hatem, Ahmed Al Janehi, Ahmed Alaa, Ahmed Fathy, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali, Assim Madibo, Ayoub Al Alawi, Bassam Al Rawi, Boualem Khoukhi, Edmilson Junior, Hashim Ali, Hassan Al Haydos, Homam Al Amin, Ibrahim Al Hassan, Issa Laye, Jassim Gaber, Karim Boudiaf, Mohammed Mannai, Niall Mason, Sultan Al Brake, Tarek Salman, Youssef Abdulrazzaq, Youssee Ayman.

Coach: Julen Lopetegui



Qatar will take on Australia on November 13 at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium. They will then face the Republic of Korea at the same venue on November 17.

Qatar coach Julen Lopetegui

Stojadinovic wins rifle gold at ISSF World Championship

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Serbia's Aleksandra Stojadinovic clinched the women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions title at the ISSF Rifle, Pistol, Shotgun World Championship Doha 2026 yesterday, edging Republic of Korea's Oh Sehee by a mere 0.7 points in a thrilling final.

At the Lusail Shooting Range, Stojadinovic produced a winning score of 358.4 points to take gold, while Oh settled for silver with 357.7. Japan's Nobata Misaki completed the podium with 348.2 points.

The gold medal in Doha marks the first senior World Championship title for 22-year-old Stojadinovic.



Serbia's Aleksandra Stojadinovic celebrates after winning the gold medal.

The Serbian shooter had earlier won silver in the mixed doubles at the 2022 Junior World Championships in Cairo, partnering Marko Ivanovic.

Stojadinovic has also enjoyed success at major international competitions during her short senior career.

Last year, she claimed silver in the mixed team event alongside Aleks Rakonjac and individual bronze at the European Air Rifle Championships in Osijek.

She also secured her first ISSF World Cup medal in October, winning gold in the air rifle event at the World Cup in Cairo.

"I still can't believe it. I've been preparing for the Doha championship all year. I wanted a quota, but it's still unreal. I managed to maintain a high level of concentration and self-confidence throughout the final, so that kept me on top. I didn't relax until the end, even when it was clear that I had secured a medal and a quota, and thanks to that approach, I took the chance to get the gold medal with the last shot," Stojadinovic told international media after the final.

The top three finishers also secured Olympic quota places for their respective National Olympic Committees for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Norway's Jeanette Hegg Duestad finished fourth with 336.4 points, ahead of Switzerland's Chiara Leone (325.4). South Korea's Im Hana placed sixth with 314.4, while Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le (303.7) and Great Britain's Seonaid McIntosh (302.6) finished seventh and eighth respectively.

The event added three more LA28 quota places to the tally in Doha, with Serbia, the Republic of Korea and Japan each securing an Olympic berth.

Today, Qatar's shooters will be in action in the trap qualification events, with the men's and women's competitions taking place this morning.

Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, Angelo Scalzone and Nasser Ali Al-Hemaidi will represent Qatar in the men's event, while Kholoud Hassan Al-Khalaf, Metha Hamad Al-Binali and Ray Bassil will compete in the women's qualification.

Morocco, UAE golfers shine as Arab Championships continue in Doha


Qatar's Saleh Al Kaabi in action.

THE PENINSULA/QNA

DOHA: The 45th Arab Golf Championship continued at Doha Golf Club, with Morocco leading the men's individual standings and the UAE topping the team competition after the third day of action.

Morocco's Reda El Hali maintained his lead in the men's individual event, moving to 10-under-par 206. Emirati Jonathan Selvragh was second on six-under 210, followed by compatriot Sam Mulani on five-under 211.

Qatar's Saleh Al Kaabi climbed to fourth with a three-under 213, two strokes behind third place. Daniel Sokolov shared sixth with Morocco's Hugo Trometer on one-under 215. Ali Al Shahrani was 16th on 14-over, while Fahad Mir finished 34th on 29-over.

"I am satisfied with my performance today and my move to fourth place, just two strokes behind third. I hope to maintain this form in the final round," Al Kaabi said.

He added that he was aiming for a positive result to boost Qatar's chances of reaching the podium in both individual and team events. He also expressed pride in Doha hosting the championship and thanked the Qatar Golf Federation for its support.


Morocco women team's player pose for a photo.

In the men's team event, the UAE led with seven-under 641, ahead of Morocco on five-under 643. Qatar were third on 10-over 658, followed by Bahrain and Tunisia.

The women's individual title was decided in a play-off after Morocco's Maria Harrouch and Reem Imni, along with the UAE's Intissar Rish, finished tied on four-under 215. Harrouch won gold, Imni took silver and Rish claimed bronze.

Qatar's Nada Mir finished 12th on 28-over, while Moza Al Thani was 19th on 72-over.

Morocco won the women's team gold with a 13-under 425, ahead of the UAE on five-under 433. Tunisia took bronze on 47-over 485.

The championship features 73 players from 14 countries.

Mohammed Faisal Al-Nuaimi, a Doha Golf Club board member, praised the competition and described the championship as an important Arab sporting gathering, highlighting the close contest among players in both the men's and women's events.

Warner backs Khawaja's 'sandpapergate' claims

SYDNEY: David Warner backed former teammate Usman Khawaja's claims that the entire Australian team was in on the 2018 "Sandpapergate" scandal as "100 percent accurate".

Warner, one of three players banned over the ball-tampering controversy in Cape Town along with Steve Smith and Cameron Bancroft, said he stood "with my brother" Khawaja.

"It's been eight years since I spoke on this topic," the former opener said on Instagram.

"Uzzie, I throw my full support behind you. I thank you for what you've done.

"It's 100 percent accurate what you've said. Now everyone knows the truth. It's out there. People wanted to know it. You've come out and said it."

Khawaja, Warner's close friend and long-time opening partner, re-ignited the infamous incident on Saturday ahead of the release of his autobiography this week, where a chapter is dedicated to the issue.

"It was all of us. Not the batters, not the bowlers, not the staff. All of us," Khawaja claimed about who was in on the plot to doctor the ball with sandpaper.

Cricket Australia's original investigation found only Smith, Warner and Bancroft were in the know, with the governing body at the weekend saying it remained "comfortable" with its findings.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon all denied publicly in 2021, while Darren Lehmann, who was head coach, denied there was widespread knowledge. — *AFP*

Bangladesh force draw in second Test as West Indies clinch series


Bangladesh's Towhid Hridoy reacts after playing a shot.

SYLHET: Towhid Hridoy became the first Bangladesh batter to score 324 runs in a Test match, as the second Test against West Indies ended in a draw in Sylhet yesterday.

Chasing 369 to win, Bangladesh were 184-4 when fading light ended the final day's play.

West Indies, who won the opening Test in Mirpur by eight wickets, took the two-match series 1-0.

"Coming to Bangladesh is always a tough place to play cricket, so to beat them in their own backyard is always a pleasure," West Indies captain Roston Chase said.

Hridoy rescued Bangladesh from 88-3 with an unbeaten 242 in their first innings, helping the hosts post 386 for a 30-run lead over West Indies' 356.

His marathon knock surpassed Mushfiqur Rahim's previous Bangladesh record of 219 not out, and included a 117-run partnership with Taijul Islam.

Hridoy added 82 in the second innings, taking his match aggregate to 324 and surpassing Mominul Haque's previous record of 281 against Sri Lanka in 2018.

West Indies resumed on 345-3, with Kavem Hodge unbeaten on 140. Bangladesh took three early wickets, including Hodge for a career-best 142 off 194 balls. Mehidy Hasan Miraz trapped Justin Greaves lbw for nine, before Nayeem Hasan removed Shamar Joseph for one, leaving West Indies on 372-6.

Joshua Bishop hit an unbeaten 20 off 11 balls, including two sixes, while Amir Jangoo made 39 off 74 deliveries.

Chase declared at 398-6, setting Bangladesh a target of 369. Taijul, Mehidy and Nayeem took two wickets each.

Bangladesh began their chase without regular opener Shadman Islam, who was ruled out with an ankle injury.

Tanzid Hasan made 21 before falling to Jomel Warrican, who also trapped captain Najmul Hossain Shanto lbw, leaving Bangladesh on 40-2.

Hridoy and Mushfiqur steadied the innings, bringing up a century stand off 185 balls.

Mushfiqur reached 7,000 Test runs during the partnership, becoming the first Bangladeshi batter to achieve the milestone.

Bangladesh went to tea on 162-2, with Mushfiqur on 40 and Hridoy unbeaten on 82.

Warrican broke the 135-run partnership by bowling Hridoy for 82 off 140 balls, claiming his 100th Test wicket.

Player of the series Warrican took 16 wickets across the two Tests, with Chase praising his ability to build pressure on Bangladesh's batters.

"He built a lot of pressure and put the ball in front of the batsmen for a long period of time," Chase said.

"He really kept us in this series and won the series for us."

Joseph dismissed Mushfiqur for 49 off 123 balls before bad light ended play.

Shanto said Bangladesh had failed to implement their plan.

"We didn't play well in batting, bowling or fielding, that's why we lost. I think the plan was right, but the execution wasn't," he said.

BRIEF SCORES: West Indies 356 (Jangoo 133, Hasan 6-90) and 398 for 6 dec (Hodge 142, Da Silva 78) drew against Bangladesh 386 (Hridoy 242*, Warrican 4-104) and 184 for 4 (Hridoy 82, Warrican 3-44) — *AFP*



West Indies' players pose with the trophy after winning the series.


The visit is part of QSL's initiative to showcase Qatar's landmarks.

Qatar Stars League players visit Qatar National Library

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Qatar Stars League (QSL) organised a visit to Qatar National Library (QNL) yesterday.

The event was attended by QNL President Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari and QSL Sales, Marketing and Communication Executive Director Hassan Rabiah Al-Kuwari, alongside a group of prominent players.

The visit is part of QSL's initiative to showcase Qatar's landmarks, aiming to introduce players and their families to one of the country's most significant cultural institutions and to encourage them to take advantage of the programmes and services offered by the library.

Dr. Al-Kuwari provided an overview of QNL and its role in fostering access to knowledge and promoting a culture of reading.

He emphasised the importance of sports in society, noting that the presence of star players from various clubs at this cultural landmark exemplifies the synergy between sports and knowledge.

Following the address, the attendees took a guided tour of the library's facilities and departments, where they explored its services, knowledge resources, and various cultural and educational programmes.

For his part, Hassan expressed his gratitude to Dr. Al Kuwari and the team at QNL for their warm welcome and dedicated efforts in serving the cause of culture and knowledge.

He added that this visit reflected QSL's commitment to collaborating with national institutions while leveraging the influence of football stars to support cultural initiatives and promote reading.

Spain's Yamal, Oyarzabal out for Czech Nations League clash

MADRID: Lamine Yamal and Mikel Oyarzabal will miss Spain's upcoming Nations League match against the Czech Republic, the Spanish football federation (RFEF) said yesterday.

Barcelona's teenage winger Yamal "reported discomfort in his right knee" after their 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid in La Liga on Sunday.

Real Sociedad forward Oyarzabal "is in the final phase of a bout of flu", explained the federation.

"Both players will join the training camp in the coming days so they can be available to face England at the Metropolitano Stadium (on Sunday)," added the RFEF.

Spain, who have already qualified for the Nations League quarter-finals, visit the Czechs on Thursday before hosting Thomas Tuchel's England in Madrid. — *AFP*

Australia axe Labuschagne for New Zealand Test series

SYDNEY: Marnus Labuschagne was yesterday axed from Australia's squad for their upcoming four-Test series against New Zealand, paying the price for a long run of poor form.

The number three, who has played 68 Tests, was under-pressure going into their recent tour of South Africa and failed to fire across the three Tests.

"At this stage we won't be considering Marn for selection for certainly that first Test, but for the New Zealand series," chairman of selectors George Bailey told cricket.com.au.

"There's been a lot of speculation around his place in the team.

"So I think this gives him a little bit of space and clears up a bit of conjecture as we work through the next round of (Sheffield) Shield cricket."

Labuschagne had a tortured tour of South Africa, where his highest score was 39. The 32-year-old has not scored a century since the 2023 Ashes series against England, but Bailey left the door open for a recall if he again finds form in the domestic red-ball competition.

The first Test against New Zealand starts on December 9 in Perth with the squad set to be named after the next round of Shield action, which begins Wednesday.

With Labuschagne gone, the question is who replaces him, with Steve Smith tipped to move up from four to three. — *AFP*

Pakistan post 281-5 to punish Sri Lanka in first Test


Pakistan's Mohammad Taha plays a shot as Sri Lanka's captain and wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis looks on during first day of the opening Test.

RAWALPINDI: Captain Babar Azam and two debutants were among four batters to hit half-centuries as Pakistan reached 281-5 on day one of the first Test against Sri Lanka yesterday.

Opener Tayyab Arif scored an impressive 57 and Mohammad Taha a patient 51 -- both playing their first Test -- while Azam hit 50, with Sri Lanka's decision to bowl on what appeared to be a green pitch in Rawalpindi seeming to backfire.

Saud Shakeel was unbeaten on 57 when bad light stopped play 15 minutes before schedule, with Ghazi Ghori seven not out.

Sri Lanka's decision to go with a pace quartet and without a frontline spinner could also prove costly, with the pitch not offering much to the fast bowlers.

Asitha Fernando was the pick of bowlers with 2-64.

Azam looked in good touch but still failed to score an elusive century, and was dismissed by Dilshan Madushanka after the lunch break.

He hit seven fours in his 58-ball innings.

Azam has now gone 41 innings without a Test century, his last coming against New Zealand in Karachi in December 2022.

Salman Agha made 16 before giving Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis his fourth catch of the innings. Arif said Pakistan has done well under the conditions.

"We have played good and positive cricket considering the conditions," said Arif. "I have played a lot with some of these players so I was supported well and I am happy on scoring a half century."

Arif put on a confident 86-run opening stand with Azan Awais (30) as Sri Lanka's pace bowlers struggled to break through.

The 20-year-old, playing his maiden first-class season, cracked nine boundaries and a six in his impressive 51-ball knock. Sri Lanka had to wait until the 16th over for a breakthrough, when Milan Rathnayaka had Awais caught behind by Mendis.

Fernando found an edge off Arif's bat to Mendis, making it 90-2.

Sri Lankan bowling coach Ryan van Niekerk wasn't happy.

"Probably not satisfied as bowling first and with the seamers we have we should have taken a couple of more wickets," said Niekerk. "But bowlers pulling it back in the last session was good."

Allrounder Arafat Minhas and pace bowler Saqib Khan are also making Test debuts for Pakistan. The second and final Test is in Lahore from November 17. — *AFP*

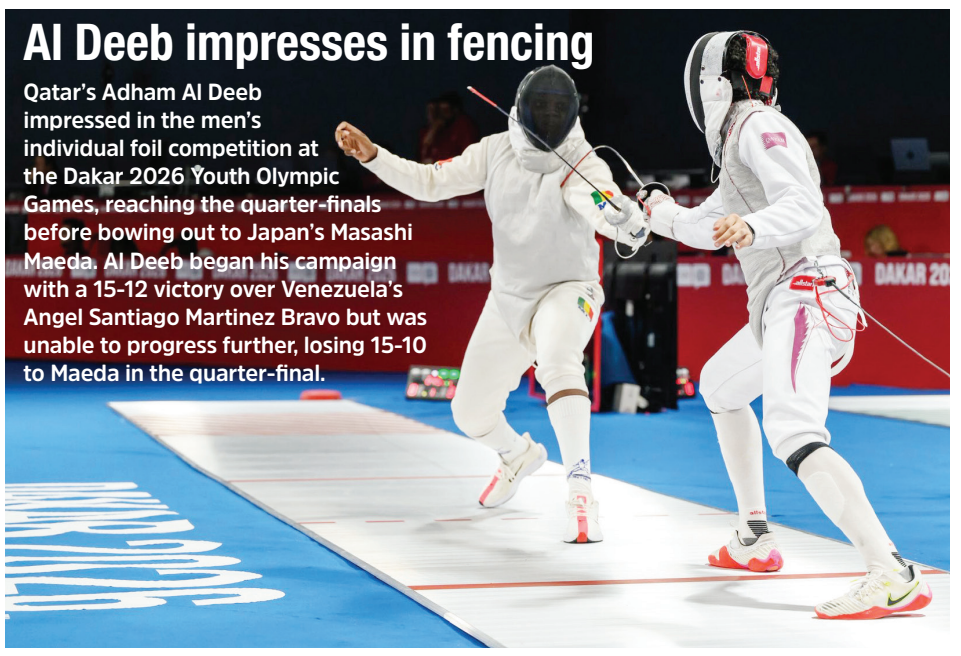
Qatar's Dana wins bronze at Youth Olympics

Qatar's Dana Salem won the bronze medal in the women's 100m final at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, clocking 11.48 seconds. Nigeria's Rosemary Nwankwo claimed gold in 11.16 seconds, while the UAE's Arwa Ali took silver with a time of 11.41 seconds.



Al Deeb impresses in fencing

Qatar's Adham Al Deeb impressed in the men's individual foil competition at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, reaching the quarter-finals before bowing out to Japan's Masashi Maeda. Al Deeb began his campaign with a 15-12 victory over Venezuela's Angel Santiago Martinez Bravo but was unable to progress further, losing 15-10 to Maeda in the quarter-final.



Gauff outlasts Pegula to win group opener at WTA Finals

LOS ANGELES: Coco Gauff outlasted fellow American Jessica Pegula to win a tension-packed group stage opener 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 in the WTA Finals at Indian Wells.

Two-time major winner Gauff fell behind 5-1 in the second set but saved three set points in the 10th game and captured five games in a row to seize a 6-5 edge.

Pegula denied a Gauff match point and held in the 12th game to force a tie-breaker, then jumped to a 5-2 lead and forced a third set with a forehand return winner.

Gauff seized a 3-0 lead in the third set and dominated from there, holding in the final game to take the match after two hours and 39 minutes when Pegula swatted a backhand beyond the baseline.

"I was having a lot of fun," Gauff said.

"I took a little break. First match in like a month. To play a tournament like this with no preparation is something I've never done in my career.

"I'm just really happy to get through today. It was a tough match. It was 2 1/2 hours and I feel like every point was -- I don't know if you guys were holding my breath but me too, so just happy to be through.

"I'm really proud of myself for this one." Gauff, the 2023 US Open and 2025 French Open champion, and Pegula had split 10 prior career matches, Gauff winning the Cincinnati final and a Wimbledon quarter-final this year in their most recent prior meetings.

In the other Group One opener, reigning Wimbledon champion Linda Noskova defeated Marta Kostyuk 6-2, 6-4.

Noskova, a 21-year-old Czech, needed only 86 minutes to defeat Ukraine's Kostyuk.

World number one and reigning champion Elena Rybakina withdrew from the WTA Finals on Saturday due to a viral illness with Kostyuk replacing her at the California hardcourt event.

Noskova improved to 3-1 against Kostyuk, all matches coming this year as both made the WTA Finals for the first time.

Noskova won in three sets at the US Open fourth round in their most recent prior meeting and in the Wimbledon semi-finals, while Kostyuk won on her way to the Madrid clay crown.

This year's WTA Finals were scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia but in July were moved to Indian Wells after US military strikes on Iran in February and the subsequent war in the region. — ***AFP***



Coco Gauff returns a shot to Jessica Pegula.



Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker.

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker wants new contract

LONDON: Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker has urged the club to extend his successful stay at Anfield by handing him a contract beyond this season.

Becker has played a key role in Liverpool's Premier League and Champions League triumphs since signing from Roma in 2018.

The 34-year-old Brazilian has made 347 appearances for the Reds, winning seven major trophies.

Becker is out of contract at end of the current campaign and has been linked with a move, but is keen to prolong his time on Merseyside with a new deal.

"Yes (I want to stay), in my mind. I'm focused on playing every game but in my mind I'm happy to stay," Alisson said after Sunday's 3-1 win at Crystal Palace in the Premier League.

"That depends on a lot of aspects and different situations. But my will is to stay. I'm happy here and my family is happy here.

"I'm still hungry for titles and to (keep) delivering good performances. I still want to play at the top level for as long as I can, so that's my thinking."

Liverpool boss Andoni Iraola recently said he hoped the 'keeper could "continue for more time" with his team.

Becker revealed "my agent is talking with the club" after a close-season that featured talk of a potential switch to Juventus.

He underlined his enduring value with a fine performance to help Liverpool beat Palace.

But Giorgi Mamardashvili is waiting in the wings as Becker's solid deputy, with teenage 'keeper Lucca Brughmans set to join Liverpool from Genk next year.

"Our reality is that we're not doing as well as we can. The consistency is not there yet," Becker said of Liverpool's inconsistent start to the season.

"We have a top manager, top players. We are capable of great things but as a team we need to get to a point where we feel: 'We are OK now. We have the confidence. We have everything that's needed to win.'" — ***AFP***

Infantino re-election a 'foregone conclusion', says AFC official

ALEY: Gianni Infantino's re-election as FIFA chief is "a foregone conclusion", Asian Football Confederation vice-president Hashem Haidar said yesterday.

"We fully and publicly support Infantino," Haidar, who is also president of the Lebanese Football Federation, said at an event in Lebanon which Infantino also attended.

Infantino had faced stinging criticism and calls to quit after his plan to sell off commercial interests in the World Cup came to light in July.

With European confederation UEFA and CONCACAF in North America, and initially the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) leading the opposition, it seemed Infantino would have a fight on his hands.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino attends the opening of a mini football pitch in Lebanon.

But the Swiss now appears to be in a strong position to secure re-election for a fourth and final term as FIFA president in March after the AFC performed a U-turn and endorsed the 56-year-old last month.

Kozo Tashima, the honorary president of the Japan Football Association, announced last week he would stand against Infantino, but Haidar said he would not have the necessary support globally.

"Kozo Tashima might get a few votes, but it will be difficult for him to compete, as the FIFA presidency requires maintaining relationships in all regions of the world," Haidar said. — ***AFP***



Former Real star Raul to coach Oviedo

MADRID: Former Real Madrid striker Raul Gonzalez was appointed as coach of Spanish second-division side Real Oviedo yesterday.

"Oviedo have reached an agreement to hire Raul... as the new first-team coach until June 2028," said the Asturian side in a statement.

Oviedo, who were relegated from La Liga last season, dismissed coach Julian Calero earlier Monday with the team ninth in the table.

"My way of understanding football is with respecting the talent (in the squad) but asking for unconditional effort," said Raul in a video published by the club on social media platform X.

"The team has to fight from the first minute to the last for victory so the fans are proud of them." Raul, 49, previously coached Real Madrid's reserve side from 2019 to 2025.

As a player, Raul won six La Liga titles and three Champions Leagues with Real Madrid, before joining Schalke, Al Sadd and the New York Cosmos.

The striker was also a regular for Spain, making 102 appearances and netting 44 goals with La Roja. — ***AFP***

Wolff hails Mercedes title double

SAO PAULO: Toto Wolff hailed his Mercedes team on Sunday after adding the constructors' championship to Kimi Antonelli's drivers' title.

Needing to outscore Ferrari by at least three points at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix, George Russell finished fourth and Antonelli fifth in a rain-swept Sao Paulo Grand Prix where Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finished seventh and Lewis Hamilton ninth.

"It was a very strong beginning of the season that got us over the line -- these last few races have been challenging!" said Wolff.

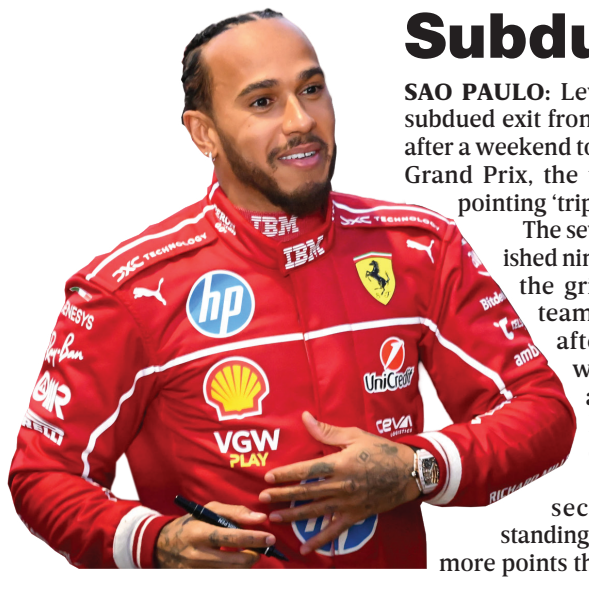
"I'm so proud of the organisation. We've taken a few years to be back on the top spot and not many teams have been able to come back from that situation."

The Mercedes team took to the podium for a post-race celebration of their triumphant season and ninth constructors' crown, which drew them level with Williams in third place in the all-time table behind Ferrari on 16 and McLaren on 10.

"They all deserve it -- an incredible year by everyone," Antonelli said.

"Not only all the people here at the track, but all the people back at the factory in Brackley and Brixworth."

Russell said: It's a huge amount of work from all of the team to achieve that." — ***AFP***



Subdued Hamilton praises Ferrari after 'tricky' weekend

SAO PAULO: Lewis Hamilton made a subdued exit from Interlagos on Sunday after a weekend to forget at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix, the third race in a disappointing 'triple-header' for Ferrari.

The seven-time champion finished ninth after starting 20th on the grid, two places behind teammate Charles Leclerc, after a rain-hit contest where Ferrari were amongst the also-rans as Mercedes clinched the constructors' title.

Ferrari remained second in the teams' standings but needing only three more points that their rival Mercedes cruised to the world title with little concern on the day.

The result saw Hamilton slip from third to fourth in the drivers' title race behind new champion Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes, Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Mercedes' George Russell. Leclerc is fifth.

Hamilton, ahead of his 400th Formula One race start, had started the weekend declaring that he and Leclerc had squashed the unrest and tension that lay between them in the team after a first lap tangle in Mexico, but his raised optimism did not produce results.

"It was a really tough day and weekend for the whole team," he said. "They have done a really great job - especially all the mechanics in switching the engines and making sure the car was as good as it could be."



Lewis Hamilton races during the qualifying session in Sao Paulo.

Hamilton had engine problems on Friday and had to introduce two new units on Saturday as another one failed during final practice. It led to him being penalised and starting 20th.

"I had a great start in the race, but unfortunately the rear tyre just ballooned and over-heated and after that on slicks I was feeling pretty good.

"It was very tricky in these conditions, and we ended up making an extra stop so I had a lot of ground to cover."

He said he spun late in the race because he did not realise how wet it had become.

"I didn't hear that it was raining more in the first sector and I passed the pit lane, got to turn one and it was wet. So that unfortunately, lost us a couple of places, but otherwise the team did a great job." — ***AFP***