

Bahrain in line to get top-class tennis facility

Manama- Gulf Daily News - 31st May 2007 - BAHRAIN could soon have its first world-class tennis facility after an agreement was signed yesterday between the Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) and the Kuwait Business Town Real Estate Company (KBT) to conduct a six-month feasibility study on the construction of a BD92 million Bahrain International Tennis Centre (BITC).

The deal was made official by BTF president Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa and KBT chairman Mohammed Al Ghunaim during a signing ceremony at the Regency Intercontinental Hotel.

The BITC, should plan for the facility push through, will be built in Hamad Town on a proposed site of 660,000 square metres in size. It will be located near Roundabout 16, and will be easily accessible from the Shaikh Khalifa Highway that links Manama to Sakhir.

The centre will include a state-of-the-art tennis facility in one section, and a commercial area that will consist of apartment buildings, a shopping complex and a food court in another section.

Fifteen courts of International Tennis Federation (ITF) standards is being targeted, including a main Centre Court which will have a seating-capacity of 1,000 spectators at first, and can be extended to 5,000 in ensuing years. The other courts can accommodate around 200 spectators each, another four indoor courts that can host 100 each, and six outdoor practice courts.

The BITC will also be the home of the new headquarters of the BTF. A health club and offices for umpires and sports physicians are also being planned, as well as a car park that can accommodate 750 vehicles.

"This will be a major leap for tennis in Bahrain, in terms of its presence on the international scene," BTF vice-president Ahmed Ebrahim told the GDN. "One of our major problems right now is that we do not have the proper facilities to host big championships at the world level. With the construction of a facility such as the BITC, that problem will be solved."

Also present at yesterday's ceremony were other BTF officials, KBT general manager Tareq Al Othman, and officials from the General Organisation for Youth and Sports (Goys).