

# WGA SUPPORT BEACH GAMES

By PATRICK SALOMON

WESTERN Gulf Advisory (WGA) yesterday signed on as main sponsor of the first-ever GCC Beach Games.

Bahrain is set to host the multi-sport event between October 10 and 17 at a special venue near Marina Club along Al Fateh Corniche.

The Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) announced its preparations for the Games yesterday, along with unveiling WGA as the main sponsor.

WGA is a Bahrain-based asset and wealth management company. It is the same organisation that has launched an audacious takeover bid for leading English Premiership club Blackburn Rovers.

The sponsorship was confirmed in a signing ceremony between BOC second vice-president Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa and WGA president Ahsan Ali Syed. The signing was done at the BOC headquarters in Um Al Hassam.

Shaikh Khalid spoke on behalf of BOC president and the Games' high supreme organising committee chairman Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

"Our preparations for the Games are going on well, and we are looking forward to a fantastic event in Bahrain," Shaikh Khalid said.

"We really want to make this first GCC Beach Games special - one that people will remember for the next 20 years."



■ Shaikh Khalid, right, with Syed at the signing ceremony

Syed, who wished not to disclose the sponsorship amount, added: "This was a great opportunity for WGA to be a part of such an important regional sporting event. Our support is not just monetary; we are also here as friends. We are truly excited about being a part of these Games the whole way."

The Games will feature six sports, namely beach soccer, beach volleyball, beach handball, sailing, open water

swimming, and bodybuilding. All six GCC nations will be taking part in all the sports.

The Games' main location near Marina Club will feature the beach soccer pitch, two beach volleyball courts and one beach handball court, as well as a stage for bodybuilding. They will all be located next to each other to allow spectators easy access to all the sports.

The beach soccer facility will be the

Games' largest arena, and will host both the opening and closing ceremonies. Each of the beach soccer, beach volleyball and beach handball pitches will feature a special type of sand that is specifically used for beach sports.

Shaikh Khalid thanked Municipality and Agriculture Minister Juma Al Kaab for the ministry's assistance in obtaining the sand.

The sailing and swimming events, meanwhile, will take place in the waters just off the Games' main area. Shaikh Khalid assured that fans will be able to follow all the action from many strategic locations across the beach.

Apart from the playing courts, there will also be a medical tent and media centre, and plenty of family activities and food stalls to make for an enjoyable atmosphere. Entrance to the Games venue will be absolutely free on all days.

Shaikh Khalid added that the date of the Games' opening ceremony, which can be noted as '10.10.10', symbolises the hopes that the Games' impact would be similar to another major event in Bahrain, the Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, which was first held on '04.04.04' (April 4, 2004).