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## Qatar to host UAE at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in opening match of 2026 World Cup Qualifiers

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Doha, July 28 (QNA) – The Qatar Football Association (QFA) announced that Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium will host Qatar's opening match against the UAE on September 5th in the third round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The draw for the third round placed Qatar in Group A alongside Iran, Uzbekistan, the UAE, Kyrgyz Republic, and North Korea.

Qatar, the 2023 AFC Asian Cup champions, will play their second qualifying match away against North Korea on September 10th. They will then host Kyrgyz Republic on October 10th, followed by an away match against Iran in Tehran on October 15th. Qatar will conclude the first round of group matches by hosting Uzbekistan in Doha on November 14th.

Under the leadership of Spanish coach Bartolome Marquez Lopez, Qatar will begin the second round of matches with an away game against the UAE on November 19th. They will then host North Korea on March 20th, 2025, face Kyrgyz Republic on March 25th, host Iran on June 5th, and conclude the third round against Uzbekistan in Tashkent on June 10th.

Qatar secured their place in the third and final round of the World Cup qualifiers and also qualified for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, which will be hosted by Saudi Arabia. They topped their group with 16 points from five wins and one draw, with victories over Afghanistan, India, and Kuwait, and a draw with Afghanistan.

The top two teams from each of the three groups will directly qualify for the 2026 World Cup, securing six of the eight direct spots available to the Asian Football Confederation. The teams finishing third and fourth (six teams) will enter the Asian playoff, with matches played in a single round-robin format. The top team from each group will advance to the World Cup.

The teams finishing second in the Asian playoff will face each other in a two-legged playoff to determine the team advancing to the intercontinental playoff.