

Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and the Basketball Africa League (BAL) held a joint media event on the sidelines of the Nile Conference of BAL Season 2, taking place in Cairo, Egypt. This comes ahead of Rwanda's preparations to host the playoffs and finals of the NBA affiliated Africa league in Kigali from 21-28 May 2022.

During a successful first year of the multi-year partnership and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the event showcased the country as a world-class tourism and investment destination and highlighted Africa's growing sports industry. The inaugural season also brought to Kigali notable global personalities, former NBA players and legends to witness the historic inaugural season.

The second edition of the BAL, which started in March with stops in three countries, saw Dakar, Senegal host the Sahara conference, Cairo, Egypt hosting the Nile conference. The season will finish off in Kigali with an eight-game Playoffs and the Finals.

Through the partnership, Visit Rwanda branding is being prominently displayed, and the best of what the country has to offer is being broadcasted on channels such as ESPN to thousands of basketball and sports fans across the world. In addition, this season will see The BAL and RDB collaborate on youth development and social responsibility initiatives in Kigali on the sidelines of the playoffs.

The two partners organized a media event attended by over 20 journalists from various countries at the Dr Hassan Moustafa Sports Hall in Cairo, Egypt. They touched on the impact of the partnership, the upcoming Playoffs and what to expect when in Kigali in May.

Basketball Africa League President Amadou Gallo Fall said: "As we set to return to the world-class Kigali arena to play our second consecutive BAL final, teaming up with RDB and Visit Rwanda reflects our belief that sport, and basketball, can be an economic growth engine for the continent. Rwanda continues to lead the way for tourism in Africa, and this partnership highlights an African continent that is creative, vibrant, and ready to tell its story.

Speaking during the media briefing Rwanda's Ambassador to Egypt, Alfred Kalisa, said: "Sports and tourism are important to Rwandans at all levels. We have the responsibility to ensure Rwandans continue to take pride in their culture and in all sports engagements, like the BAL, that uplift our nation. We are very happy to see The BAL returning home to Rwanda for the second time, and we look forward to

welcoming all visitors to Kigali in May.”

Eight teams from across the continent, including Rwanda’s Energy Group (REG), who topped the Sahara Conference in Dakar, Senegal, will compete in the Playoffs. The Kigali Arena will host all the Playoffs games, with the second edition of the finals taking place Saturday, 28 May.

Visit Rwanda is the tourism-focused arm of the Rwanda Development Board, a government body responsible for fast-tracking Rwanda’s economic development by enabling private sector growth. Visit Rwanda has worked with local conservation, tourism, and development partners to generate tourism products that benefit inbound tourists and local communities and native flora and fauna.

The BAL, a partnership between the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and the NBA, is a new professional league featuring 12 club teams from across Africa. The BAL, headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, builds on the foundation of club competitions FIBA Regional Office Africa has organized in Africa and marks the NBA’s first collaboration to operate a league outside North America.