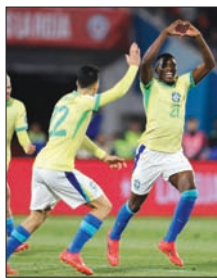


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Djokovic proves staying power as he progresses to Shanghai semis



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Argentina held, Brazil leave it late in 2026 World Cup qualifiers

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CRICKET

England thump Pakistan by innings and 47 runs for historic Test win

Page 2

FIA WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP

# Al-Attiah makes it hat-trick of W2RC titles after Morocco win

'The season wasn't necessarily easy for us after our retirement from the Dakar Rally in January'

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**Q**atar's Nasser al-Attiah starred in the Moroccan desert, driving his new team Dacia Sandrider to a glorious debut at the Rallye du Maroc yesterday.

His seventh triumph at the Rallye du Maroc also secured al-Attiah his third consecutive FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) title, with wins at the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge and Rallye Raid Portugal making up for his non-finish on this year's Dakar.

In the final stage in Morocco yesterday, al-Attiah finished eighth behind stage winner Sebastien Loeb but that was enough for him to seal the rally and world title. In the championship table, he tallied 202 points, 42 ahead of his closest rival Yazeed al-Rajhi of Saudi Arabia. Al-Attiah's navigator Edouard Boulanger also won his first co-driver world title ahead of Timo Gottschalk (Overdrive Racing) and Armand Monleon (Toyota Gazoo Racing).

Al-Attiah said: "The victory and a third world title for the first race with Dacia, we couldn't have dreamed of better. The season wasn't necessarily easy after our retirement from the Dakar. We corrected the situation well and I'm really happy about that. We will continue the development of the Sandrider to arrive at the Dakar in top shape."

Always a master of bold decisions, al-Attiah switched vehicles at the end of the season and with this risky move he wrote another successful chapter in his career. The Qatari driver flew to an impressive victory, with the Sandrider proving to be a machine up to the challenge, which bodes well for the upcoming Dakar Rally.

Al-Attiah won the shortened opening stage of five of Monday and never looked back, the Qatari star not encountering a single mechanical fault or puncture on his way to victory.

Al-Attiah's talent was tested to the full in Morocco, with Guillaume de Mevius, showing strength in taking the helm of the X-Raid Mini JCW. Both teams made Toyota race to keep up the pace, with al-Rajhi securing a respectable third place in the rally. The Saudi driver also took second place



Nasser al-Attiah has a hearty laugh after winning his seventh Rallye du Maroc and his third consecutive FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) title.

in the W2RC championship for the second time, with Lucas Moraes completing the podium. Despite not winning, Toyota Gazoo Racing secured the constructors' title.

The 2025 season will get off the ground at the Dakar in Saudi from January 3-17, followed by the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge from February 21-27. Next, the championship will make its first foray into the South African Safari Rally from May 18-24 before heading to Europe for the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal from September 22-28. Last but not least, the caravan will double back to Africa for the finale at the Rallye du Maroc, scheduled for October 10-17.

RALLY DU MAROC - TOP 10 RESULTS

1. Nasser Saleh al-Attiah (QAT)/Edouard Boulanger (FRA) Dacia Sandrider; Time: 14hr 26min 34sec
2. Sebastien Loeb (FRA)/Fabian Lurquin (BEL) Dacia Sandrider 14hr 31min 44sec
3. Guillaume de Mevius (BEL)/Mathieu Baumel (FRA) Mini JCW Rally 3.0D 14hr 40min 19sec
4. Yazeed Al-Rajhi (SAU)/Timo Gottschalk (DEU) Toyota Hilux Overdrive 14hr 50min 04sec
5. Seth Quintero (USA)/Dennis Zenz (DEU) Toyota GR DKR Hilux 14hr 56min 05sec
6. Martin Prokop (CZE)/Viktor Chytka (CZE) Ford Raptor RS 15hr 13min 50sec
7. Eryk Goczal (POL)/Alex Haro (ESP) Taurus T3 Max 15hr 14min 11sec
8. Denis Krotov (KGZ)/Konstantin Zhiltsov (ANA) Toyota Hilux Overdrive 15hr 21min 19sec
9. Marek Goczal (POL)/Maciej Marton (POL) Taurus T3 Max 15hr 24min 02sec
10. Juan Cruz Yacopini (ARG)/Daniel Oliveras (ESP) Toyota Hilux Overdrive 15hr 24min 57sec



Al-Attiah won the shortened opening stage on Monday and never looked back, the Qatari star not encountering a single mechanical fault or puncture on his way to victory.



Al-Attiah won the shortened opening stage on Monday and never looked back, the Qatari star not encountering a single mechanical fault or puncture on his way to victory.

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

# Afif and Lopez hail crucial victory as Iran looms

By Sport Reporter  
Doha

**A**kram Afif, named the best player in Qatar's 3-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan on Thursday, emphasised the importance of securing their first win at this stage of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

Almoez Ali put the Qataris in front in the 39th minute at the Al Thumama Stadium before an own goal from Tamirlan Kozubayev 18 minutes into the second half put the back-to-back Asian champions in control of the tie. And while Alimardon Shukurov pulled one back with 14 minutes remaining, Ibrahim al-Hassan restored his side's two goal cushion five minutes later to seal the win for Qatar.

Bidding to qualify for the FIFA World Cup on merit for the first time, Qatar had suffered a shock 3-1 defeat to United Arab Emirates in their opening game and then had to survive a nervy encounter against North Korea, with the tie ending 2-2 under challenging conditions in Laos.

Qatar have four points in Group A, where they sit fourth. Uzbekistan lead the group, having played out a goalless draw against Iran in Tashkent on Friday, with both teams tied on seven points but Uzbekistan topping the standings on goal difference.

"Victory was crucial to correct our course and keep our chances alive for qualifying for the next World Cup," Afif said. He highlighted the efforts of all his



Qatar's Akram Afif goes down after being tackled by Kyrgyzstan's Valerii Kichin during the 2026 World Cup Asian qualification match at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha.

teammates, noting how Qatar imposed its dominance from the start, with a clear determination to earn the three points.

Afif also acknowledged Kyrgyzstan as a challenging opponent, playing with a fighting spirit despite having lost two matches earlier in their campaign.

Qatar play heavyweights Iran next in

Dubai on Tuesday, and Afif stressed the win against Kyrgyzstan will serve as a great morale booster ahead of the crucial tie. "The victory is important motivation before our game with Iran, which will be vital in our journey through the qualifiers," he added.

Meanwhile, Qatar coach Marquez Lopez



Qatar coach Marquez Lopez.

echoed Afif's sentiments, expressing his satisfaction with Qatar's performance. Lopez was pleased with how his team controlled the game from the beginning. "We entered the match aiming for victory, and the players worked hard to dominate and secure the result we needed," Lopez said during the press conference.

He acknowledged that the three points were pivotal, given the pressure of the qualifiers. "Our objective in every game is not to lose points. We need to approach every match with seriousness, as the road ahead remains tough," Lopez emphasised. He also looked forward to the next match against Iran, stressing that Qatar must continue to push hard to claim one of the two qualification spots in the group.

Asia is assured of eight spots in the expanded 48-team FIFA World Cup 2026, to be co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The top two finishers from the three groups will confirm their places directly. The third and fourth-placed teams from each group - six in total - will progress to the Playoff, to be contested in two groups of three teams in a single round robin format, with both group winners qualifying for the 23rd FIFA World Cup.

The two second-placed finishers will face off in a home and away tie to earn the right to reach the Intercontinental Playoff and play for the final available berth.

RASHID STADIUM IN DUBAI TO HOST QATAR VS IRAN CLASH

Meanwhile, The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has chosen Rashid Stadium in Dubai, UAE, to host the Qatar's World Cup qualifying match against Iran on Tuesday. The match will be held at 7pm Doha time.

This decision follows extensive discussions with FIFA and relevant stakeholders, considering the current security situation.

MATCH REPORT

# England complete record win over hapless Pakistan

THE VISITORS POST VICTORY BY AN INNINGS AND 44 RUNS

Reuters  
Multan

England, riding on the sublime batting of Harry Brook and Joe Root, became the first team to win a Test by an innings after conceding more than 500 runs in the first stanza, sealing the victory early on the fifth day of the series opener yesterday.

After a record-breaking day in which the duo helped England post a colossal 823-7 before the bowlers ran through Pakistan's top order, the tourists completed an extraordinary innings and 47-run victory well before lunch.

With Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed not batting due to illness, England reduced the hosts to 220-9 after some early resistance as Jack Leach bagged the three wickets needed and sparked huge celebrations among a small but vocal group of travelling fans.

While the bowlers completed the job, it was a stupendous batting effort that set up the win after man-of-the-match Brook scored 317 and Root made 262 in a partnership that ground the hosts to dust.

"We knew the way to win this game was to put a mammoth score on the board," England's stand-in skipper Ollie Pope said.

"I think that's credit to (Brook and Root) for the skills they've got with the bat, the determination they had to put the team in a winning position. So it was awesome."

Pakistan resumed on a precarious 152-6 and Salman Agha was the first to depart in the morning after a defiant 63, with the introduction of Leach helping England snap his 109-run stand with Aamer Jamal.

England's pace bowlers peppered the two overnight batsmen



Players shake hands at the end of the first Test between Pakistan and England at the Multan Cricket Stadium yesterday. (AFP)

with bouncers earlier and Jamal recovered after being hit on the side of the head by a fiery ball from Brydon Carse to bring up his own half-century.

He was then granted a lifeline when Pope dropped a tough chance at square-leg - England's fifth dropped catch of the innings - and was not out on 55 when he ran out of partners.

Leach pulled off a stunning catch off his own bowling to remove Shaheen Afridi, before having Naseem Shah stumped to finish with figures of 4-30.

England declared after their highest total in 86 years and extracted the most from a lifeless pitch at the Multan Cricket Stadium to rattle Pakistan on Thursday.

The hosts flexed their muscles in the early part of the test with 556 in the first innings, but found themselves under the gun, trailing England by 115 runs at the end of the fourth day and they eventually folded under pressure.

Pakistan's tally was the joint third-highest first-innings total in a losing cause and marked the first time in more than 700 Tests in Asia that a team had lost after making 500-plus runs in the first innings.

Skipper Shan Masood said his team were pained after their sixth straight loss and sought a strong response when the sides meet in the second of three matches next Tuesday.

"We're hurt as a nation, but the beauty of the game is it al-

ways gives you another chance. Life gives you another chance so the quick turnaround might be quite beneficial for us and we're all looking forward to it," Masood said. "We're getting into good positions. You ask your batting side to put up a good score in the first innings, and the onus on us now is to set the game up well so we can finish it off. The trick for us is that we should learn, obviously, from England as well."

**BRIEF SCORES (Day 5)**  
**England 823 for 7 dec** (Brook 317, Root 262, Duckett 84, Crawley 78) **beat Pakistan 556** (Masood 151, Salman 104\*, Shafique 102) **and 220** (Salman 63, Jamal 55\*, Leach 4-30) **by an innings and 47 runs**

## Masood says bowlers must be more effective to win Tests

Multan: Pakistan captain Shan Masood said his bowlers had to learn how to take 20 wickets in a test match and their opponents England had shown them the way after sealing an innings victory in the series opener yesterday. After putting up 556 on the board in their first innings, Masood's side squandered the advantage and allowed the tourists to post a colossal 823-7 declared and complete an innings and 47-run win on day five. Despite no help from a flat pitch in Multan, the tourists bagged 19 wickets to prevail as Abrar Ahmed did not bat on the final day due to illness. "The trick for us is that we should learn, obviously, from England as well. They found ways to get those 20 wickets. You can't win tests without picking up 20 wickets," Masood said. "As a team, we have that second innings of batting to improve but the most important thing is we must also learn how to pick 20 wickets. "So that's the challenge the side has going forward." Defeat was Pakistan's sixth on

the trot and they have now gone 11 matches without victory on home soil since beating South Africa in 2021. Masood, who replaced Babar Azam as Test skipper in November and has lost all six of his matches at the helm, said he would not shy away from responsibility in the wake of the big defeat. "What hurts is that we're not getting the results that Pakistan deserves. "We're all trying hard. We're going to give it our all, and we're going to try and turn this around," he said. "We have to get this right as a squad and as a cricket playing nation." Pakistan will have a chance to set the record straight when the teams meet in the second of three games starting on Tuesday and Masood welcomed the quick turnaround. "The beauty of the game is it always gives you another chance. Life gives you another chance," he added. "The quick turnaround might be quite beneficial for us and we're all looking forward to it."



England's captain Ollie Pope shakes hands with Pakistan's skipper Shan Masood (right) at the Multan Cricket Stadium. (AFP)

## Pope lauds batting brilliance of Brook, Root after victory

Multan: England's stand-in skipper Ollie Pope hailed the fitness and determination of his team yesterday after they crushed Pakistan by an innings despite conceding 556 runs, singling out batsmen Harry Brook and Joe Root for scripting the historic win. England responded to Pakistan's total with a mammoth 823-7 thanks to Brook's 317 and Root's 262 on a flat pitch before the tourists completed a famous innings and 47-run win early on the fifth day by taking the three wickets needed to prevail. "I think credit to firstly, the bowlers, the way they went about their stuff on day one and the majority of day two," Pope said at the post-match presentation. "The fitness that they showed... and then the same with Harry and Joe. We knew the way to win this game was to put a mammoth score on the board. "And it wasn't just 100 obviously... I think that's just credit to them, (not just) for the skills they've got with the bat but (also) the determination they had to put the team in a winning position. So it was awesome." Pope sympathised with Pakistan,

who fell to their sixth straight loss and have not won a test at home since 2021. "Obviously when you bat and make 550, you think you're in the driving seat there," Pope said. "But when you come out to bat again, and you're 260 runs behind, and the pitch is three days older than it was when you first batted, it's never an easy thing to do. "We felt like we had a lot of different wicket-taking opportunities. The odd ball was staying low, we got the ball reversing a little bit, and got the odd ball to spin as well. It's never an easy position. "Even if you bat as well as you can and make 400 in that last innings, we still would have tried to back ourselves and chase 140 or so." The only bitter pill for Pope in a game where the runs flowed freely was his two-ball duck. "I mean, that's the game, isn't it? I smoked a pull shot straight to mid-wicket and, unfortunately, I was the one to miss out this week. "But it's a team game and what matters is that we're on the right side," he said.

ANNOUNCEMENT

## Shami still out as India name team for NZ Tests

AFP  
Delhi

India pace bowler Mohammed Shami has failed to recover from injury and will miss the three-Test series against New Zealand, team chiefs said yesterday. Shami, 34, has been suffering

from an ankle injury, which required surgery and last played for India in the 2023 50-over World Cup at home. The hosts will look to extend their lead at the top of the World Test Championship standings when they take on New Zealand in the opener starting Wednesday in Bengaluru. Rohit Sharma will lead the

15-member squad with Jasprit Bumrah named his deputy ahead of a much-awaited five-Test tour of Australia next month. India did not have a vice-captain in their recent 2-0 Test sweep of Bangladesh at home. India have nearly the same squad for New Zealand Tests with only left-arm pace bowler Yash Dayal omitted from the list.

**INDIA SQUAD**  
Rohit Sharma (captain), Jasprit Bumrah (vice-captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, K L Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep.

COMMENT

## New skipper Latham wants NZ to take the game to India in Test series

Reuters  
New Delhi

New Zealand plan to take the game to India with a "no fear" approach when they play tests in Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai over the next month, new captain Tom Latham said yesterday. Latham took over as permanent test captain from Tim Southee last week and said touring India, who have not lost a Test series at home in more than a decade, was a "great challenge".

"Hopefully (we'll) play with a bit of freedom, bit of no fear and try take it to them. And if we do, hopefully that gives ourselves a good chance," he told reporters at Christchurch airport yesterday before his departure for India.

"I think in India, we've seen teams that have done well there in the past have been quite aggressive towards them, especially with the bat," the 32-year-old added.

"They've looked to play a few shots but also put them under pressure, which is really important over there, rather than sitting and waiting for something to happen."

Latham said he did not envisage much of a change to the side's approach under his leadership.



### Injured Bavuma to miss first Test against Bangladesh

South African captain Temba Bavuma will miss the first Test against Bangladesh later this month as he recovers from an elbow injury.

Bavuma will travel to Bangladesh with the team next week but a left triceps muscle strain will keep him out of the first Test starting in Dhaka on October 21.

According to a statement from Cricket South Africa, it is hoped Bavuma will be fit for the second Test starting in Chittagong on October 29.

Aiden Markram will captain the team in the first Test. Markram has captained South Africa in white-ball cricket but it will be his first time in charge of the Test team.

**Amended South Africa squad:** Temba Bavuma, Aiden Markram, David Bedingham, Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Tony de Zorzi, Keshav Maharaj, Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Dane Paterson, Dane Piedt, Kagiso Rabada, Tristan Stubbs, Ryan Rickelton (wkt) and Kyle Verreynne (wkt).

**Fixtures:**  
**October 21-25:** First Test, Dhaka.  
**October 29-November 2:** Second Test, Chattogram.

FOCUS

## Australia thrash 'embarrassing' Pakistan at Women's World Cup

AFP  
Dubai

Defending champions Australia hammered Pakistan by nine wickets to extend their winning streak to 14 in the Women's T20 World Cup and close in on a semi-final spot yesterday.

Spinner Ashleigh Gardner finished with figures of 4-21 in Dubai as six-time winners Australia bundled out Pakistan for 82 - the lowest team total in this edition.

Skipper Alyssa Healy hit 37 before retiring hurt as Australia romped home in 11 overs to stay unbeaten against Pakistan in the format.

But Healy injured her leg while going for a second run as she walked off in pain, becoming the second player injured after quick bowler Tayla Vlaeminck dislocated her shoulder while fielding in the first over of the match.

"Calf (injury of Healy), damage to be assessed," said vice-captain Tahlia McGrath. It has been a big day for us and heartbroken for the two girls. We will find out in a few days."

McGrath added: "The thing about this Australian side is how much depth we have got, captaincy-wise and wicketkeeper-wise, yeah, time to use it."

Australia have been clinical in their three matches in Group A to extend their victory run in the tournament since 2020. Pakistan, whose semi-final hopes have been seriously hit with their second loss in three matches, suffered a big blow when captain Fatima Sana flew back home ahead of the match after the death of her father.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Muneeba Ali took charge. Invited to bat first, Pakistan lost regular wickets



Australia's Ashleigh Gardner (left) celebrates with teammate Phoebe Litchfield against Pakistan in Dubai yesterday. (@AusWomenCricket)

after left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux dismissed Ali, for seven, and pace bowler Megan Schutt had Sadaf Shamas caught behind for three.

"We are not up to the mark in batting. That's not how you approach T20 cricket, it's embarrassing and we need to change that and win games for Pakistan," said Ali. "Everybody needs to step up and we need to have the confidence to win the last game."

Australia next take on India in a much-awaited clash on Sunday in Sharjah.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Pakistan 82 all out in 19.5 overs** (Aliya Riaz 26; Ashleigh Gardner 4-21) **v Australia 83-1 in 11 overs** (Alyssa Healy 37 retired hurt, Ellyse Perry 22 not out) **Result:** Australia won by nine wickets  
**Player of the Match:** Ashleigh Gardner (AUS)  
**Toss:** Australia



## HATHAB

## Al-Suwaidi shines in Amateur class, Jumaa claims Medium Tour

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**K**halid Jassim al-Suwaidi won the Amateur class, while Saeed Hamad Jumaa clinched the Medium Tour class at the second leg of the eighth Longines Hathab – Qatar Equestrian Tour yesterday.

At the Qatar Equestrian Federation's indoor arena, in the amateur round, featuring a 100cm obstacle height, al-Suwaidi claimed the top spot, finishing with a time of 24.49 seconds on his horse Pepsi.

He edged out runner-up Abdullah Saleh al-Obaidli by just 0.32 seconds, as the latter clocked 24.81 seconds on Valonivada. Faisal Mohammed al-Nuaimi secured third place with a time of 24.9 seconds on Tulipards. Fahad Rashid al-Ameri, Director of the First Equestrian Team, presented the awards to the winners.

The Medium Tour class was won by Saeed Hamad Jumaa in a time of 43.7 seconds on Amber. Rashid Tuwaim al-Marri was second with a time of 45.78 seconds on Navarone, while Ali Saeed al-Misnad came third, completing the course in 46.31 seconds on Calgary.

In the Medium Tour team competition, featuring jumps at a height of 130 cm, Al Fardan finished first with a total of 130 points and a time of 96.96 seconds. The Wathnan team took second place with 130 points and 101.42 seconds, while the Lekhwiya team finished third with 126 points and a time of 106.5 seconds.

Tournament Director Faisal al-Kahla and Director of the Media and Live Broadcast Committee Abdullah al-Qashouti presented the awards.

Meanwhile, Badr bin Mohammed al-Darwish, President of the Qatar Equestrian



Tournament Director Faisal al-Kahla and Director of the Media and Live Broadcast Committee Abdullah al-Qashouti presented the awards to the winners of the Medium Tour class during the second leg of the Longines Hathab.

and Modern Pentathlon Federation, noted the steady improvement in the technical level of riders across the first two rounds.

He emphasised that this progress will positively impact the performance of Qatari teams in regional and international events. "We are witnessing an increasing number of participants across various categories, many of whom are capable of representing our national teams in inter-

national competitions," al-Darwish said. He encouraged the public to attend and support local riders throughout the championship's upcoming rounds.

Longines Hathab features 14 rounds, held at the Qatar Equestrian Federation and Al Shaqab's Longines arenas. The championship is a key event in the region's equestrian calendar, offering riders a platform to enhance their skills.



Amateur class winner Khalid Jassim al-Suwaidi receives his award from Fahad Rashid al-Ameri, Director of the First Equestrian Team.



## WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

## Argentina held by Venezuela, Brazil leave it late

Second-placed Colombia suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to Bolivia

AFP  
Montevideo

**A**rgentina were held to a 1-1 draw by Venezuela on Lionel Messi's return as Brazil got their 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign back on track with a last-gasp 2-1 victory over Chile on Thursday.

Messi, who missed Argentina's last round of fixtures in September due to injury, looked to have put the world champions on course for victory after his free-kick helped set up Nicolas Otamendi's 13th-minute opener in the Venezuelan city of Maturin. But a battling performance by Venezuela in front of their home fans was rewarded midway through the second half when veteran striker Salomon Rondon met Yeferson Soteldo's cross with a header that flew past Argentina goalkeeper Gerónimo Rulli.

Despite the dropped points, 2022 World Cup winners Argentina remain firmly on course for a place at the 2026 finals, which are being staged in the United States, Canada and Mexico. With the tournament expanded to 48 teams, the top six finishers in South America's 10-team round-robin qualifying competition will earn a ticket to the finals.

Argentina lead the standings with 19 points from nine games, three points clear of second-placed Colombia, who suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to Bolivia in other qualifying action.

Yet while Argentina look poised to qualify comfortably, rivals Brazil continue to make hard work of their qualifying campaign. Chile, who are one place off the bottom of the standings, rocked Brazil after just two minutes when veteran striker Eduardo Vargas steered a looping header over Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson to make it 1-0.

But Brazil drew level in first-half stoppage time after Savinho worked himself into space before crossing for Botafogo forward Igor Jesus to head home. The match looked destined to finish in a draw until the 89th minute, when Brazil substitute Luiz Henrique arrowed in a low shot from the edge of the area to make it 2-1. The win moves Brazil into fourth place in the standings with 13 points from nine games, six points adrift from leaders Brazil.



Brazil's Luiz Henrique (right) celebrates after scoring against Chile during the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying match in Santiago on Thursday. (AFP)

Elsewhere, Bolivia boosted their hopes of a first World Cup appearance since 1994 with their gutsy 1-0 win over Colombia in a game played in the thin air of El Alto, which is situated at around 4,150m (13,600 feet) above sea level. A superb individual goal from Miguel Terceiros handed the Bolivians their fourth victory of qualifying and vaulted them up into the automatic qualification positions.

Bolivia's fortunes have taken a dramatic upturn since the team started playing qualifiers in El Alto, which is just over 500m higher than the Bolivians' usual home venue of the Estadio Hernando Siles in nearby La Paz.

Bolivia opted to move fixtures to El Alto after losing two out of their opening three home qualifiers in La Paz last year.

The move has paid off, with Thursday's 1-0 win coming after a 4-0 rout of Venezuela at the same venue in September. After claiming a shock 2-1 win away to Chile last month, Bolivia are now sitting in sixth place in the South American standings with 12 points from nine games.

Terceiros's winning goal arrived in the 58th minute, with the 20-year-old winger who plays for Brazilian club Santos cutting in from the right flank, shimmying past Colombian defenders Jhon Lucumi and Kevin Castano and unleashing a left-footed thunderbolt that flew into the top corner. Bolivia are level on points with Ecuador, who finished the day in fifth place in the table after a 0-0 draw with Paraguay in Quito.

Diarra. The complaint also underlines a growing tendency by disgruntled athletes and sports organisations to turn to the EU antitrust enforcer to help secure a level playing field and chip away at the power of governing bodies.

European Leagues and FIFPRO's grievance centres on the international match calendar, which they say has become unsustainable for national leagues and a

health risk for players, with FIFA allegedly abusing its market power.

FIFA in turn has said the current calendar was unanimously approved by its council after a comprehensive consultation, which included FIFPRO and league bodies.

The European Commission, which acts as the competition enforcer for the 27-country bloc, can order companies to stop anti-competitive practices and also fine them.

## QSL CUP

## Sanchez strikes as Arabi beat Duhail

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**A**l Arabi rode on a Rodrigo Sanchez strike to edge Al Duhail 1-0 in Round 4 of the QSL Cup at the Al Khor Stadium yesterday. The hard-fought win saw Al Arabi move into second place in the group A with nine points, behind Al Duhail on goal difference. The result also ended Al Duhail's winning streak.

Both sides displayed astute defence throughout the match, but Rodrigo broke past The Red Knights in the 30th minute, striking from well outside the box, with his kick being deflected a bit further left taking the toe-end of a defender's boot to beat goalkeeper Bautista Burke in the left corner.

Al Duhail, however, were unlucky as they came close to scoring twice, but hit the woodwork. First, it was the Mohammed Ibrahim Abdelmajid who struck the crossbar with a powerful kick in the 12th minute, and in the second half

(62nd minute), Mubarak Shanan Hamza's fine kick found the bottom of left post.

Ten minutes later, Al Duhail's Luis Alberto's attempt was saved in the left corner by Al Arabi goalkeeper Mohammed Saeed Ibrahim.

Meanwhile, Al Rayyan and Qatar SC played out a 2-2 draw in another Group A match at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium. Roger Guedes (60th minute) and Rodrigo Tabata (85th minute) scored for Al Rayyan, while Qatar SC got their goals through Ben Malango (64th minute) and Ali Awad (73rd minute).

With the result, The Lions now have seven points, while Qatar SC, who are yet to record a win, are on two.

In the other match, Al Shahania and Al Ahli drew 1-1 in at the Suhaim Bin Hamad Stadium. Lotfi Madjer opened the scoring for Al Shahania in the 23rd minute before Oumar Sekou got Al Ahli's equalizer in the 50th minute to move The Brigadiers to four points, while Al Shahania's points tally stood at two.



Al Arabi's Rodrigo Sanchez (left) celebrates after scoring against Al Duhail during the QSL Cup match at the Al Khor Stadium yesterday.

## Forest fined 750,000 pounds for social media post targeting VAR

**London:** Nottingham Forest have been fined 750,000 pounds (\$979,500) and warned for misconduct in relation to a social media post criticising the referee after their Premier League defeat by Everton last season, the Football Association said.

Forest were angered at being denied three penalty claims in the 2-0 loss and minutes after the game they issued a statement on social media platform X accusing Video Assistant Referee (VAR) Stuart Attwell of being a Luton Town fan. At the time, Forest were involved in a relegation battle with Luton but they eventually finished 17th while Luton went down. Forest said they would appeal the FA's decision.

Soon after the game, Forest said on X: "Three extremely poor decisions - three penalties not given - which we simply cannot

accept. We warned the PGMOL (Professional Game Match Officials Limited) that the VAR is a Luton fan before the game but they didn't change him. Our patience has been tested multiple times. NFFC will now consider its options."

The FA said that no other professional club had ever breached its regulations designed to control the use of social media in such a manner, describing it as a public attack on the integrity of a match official on an "unparalleled scale". "Even the drafters of the rule could not have foreseen a breach of this nature by a professional club," it said.

They also said Forest's concerns before the match "fell well short of a request" for Attwell to recuse himself. Forest had asked for the fine to be suspended but the FA rejected the request.

## European Leagues, FIFPRO to file antitrust complaint about FIFA on Monday

**Brussels:** European Leagues and FIFPRO Europe will formally file a joint complaint about FIFA's international match calendar to EU antitrust regulators on Monday, the sports organisation and players' union said.

The move by the two, announced in July, comes two weeks after Europe's top court ruled that the world soccer governing body's player transfer rules breach EU laws following a challenge by French former player Lassana