

To subscribe  
**GULF TIMES**  
Newspaper  
Please call  
**444 666 35**



CRICKET | Page 2

Another blow for India as Gill suffers thumb injury



FOOTBALL | Page 4

Netherlands into quarter-finals as Germany hit record seven

To advertise here,  
PLEASE CALL  
**444 666 21**

Monday, November 18, 2024  
Jumada I 16, 1446 AH

# GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

World No. 1 Sinner beats Fritz to claim ATP Finals title

Page 3

## Qatar players getting ready for the crucial World Cup qualifier match against UAE



Qatar's Lucas Mendes and his team-mates during a training session yesterday ahead of their crucial FIFA World Cup qualifying match against the UAE. The Asian champions will take on the UAE in the Group 'A' match tomorrow at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Qatar will be looking to improve their position in the group. Al Annabi currently sit in fourth place, behind the UAE on goal difference and three points behind second-placed Uzbekistan. Last Thursday, hosts Qatar stunned Uzbekistan 3-2 after a last-minute goal from Mendes.

MOTOGP

# 'Emotional' Martin defies Bagnaia to claim world title

'It sounds amazing. This is for my people, for my family, for the people who are supporting me, this is for them'

AFP  
Barcelona

Spanish rider Jorge Martin produced an ice-cool ride to finish third in the season-ending Barcelona GP yesterday, which was good enough to secure him a first MotoGP world championship title.

The 26-year-old, nicknamed the 'Martinator', also ensured that Ducati-Pramac became the first independent team to win the rider's title since Valentino Rossi in 2001, the final year of 500cc racing.

Defending two-time champion Francesco Bagnaia, who started the race 19 points behind Martin, took the chequered flag for the 11th time this season but it was not enough to wrest the title from the Spanish rider who finished the season 10 points clear of his close rival.

"It sounds amazing," said an emotional Martin after being addressed as a world champion for the first time. "I don't know what to say, I am completely shocked."

"This is for my people, for my family, for the people who are supporting me, this is for them."

"I started crying at the end, it was a very emotional race. It's been a long journey, a lot of crashes, big injuries but finally we are here."

"I hope we can keep improving and enjoy the moment. This is the most important thing: live the present and enjoy the moment."

Martin, who will be leaving Pramac for Aprilia next season after being denied a ride alongside Bagnaia in the factory Ducati team, had made himself the favourite for the title with a remarkably consistent season.

He only won three grand prix all season but his third-place on Sunday was the 32nd time this season across the 40 sprints and grand prix that he made the podium.

After finishing third in Saturday's sprint he knew he had only to finish in the top nine to secure the title, turning the tables on Bagnaia who went into last year's final race with a 21-point lead. Bagnaia,



The new world champion Ducati Spanish rider Jorge Martin celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP Solidarity Grand Prix of Barcelona at the Circuit de Catalunya in Barcelona yesterday. (AFP)

however, has finished the season in blistering form, his victory in Barcelona giving him his fourth win over the final five races of the season. Victory in Saturday's sprint, his seventh of the season, gave him a sniff of a chance.

### 'TODAY IS FOR JORGE'

Starting from pole, the Italian made a perfect start but was soon under pressure from Marc Marquez who slipped past Martin.

Martin let them battle it out up front, guarding his track position as Aleix Espargaro and Alex Marquez toughed it out behind him.

Bagnaia had the control and pace to see off Marquez, who won the vote ahead of Martin to be his Ducati teammate next season, and duly crossed for a full-deserved if

ultimately pyrrhic victory. "This weekend we did all things possible," Bagnaia told TNT.

"Winning 11 races leaves me speechless. Not many have done that so I'm happy about that."

"We missed a bit of luck this season. We were the strongest all season, winning all those races, being consistently fast."

"But today is for Jorge who did a very good season."

"He understood that with our potential, he was good enough to finish second many times. I think he did it 17 times, me just two. These things can make a difference in a championship."

"It's great to have this kind of rider. He's a very fair guy and we know each other very well."

"I enjoyed the season. I would



Prima Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin celebrates with teammates after winning the MotoGP World Championship yesterday. (Reuters)

### FINAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

1. Jorge Martin (ESP) 508 pts, 2. Francesco Bagnaia (ITA) 498, 3. Marc Marquez (ESP) 392, 4. Enea Bastianini (ITA) 386, 5. Brad Binder (RSA) 217, 6. Pedro Acosta (ESP) 215, 7. Maverick Vinales (ESP) 190, 8. Alex Marquez (ESP) 173, 9. Franco Morbidelli (ITA) 173, 10. Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA) 165, 11. Aleix Espargaro (ESP) 163, 12. Marco Bezzecchi (ITA) 153, 13. Fabio Quartararo (FRA) 113, 14. Jack Miller (AUS) 87, 15. Miguel Oliveira (POR) 75, 16. Raul Fernandez (ESP) 66, 17. Johann Zarco (FRA) 55, 18. Alex Rins (ESP) 31, 19. Takaaki Nakagami (JPN) 31, 20. Augusto Fernandez (ESP) 27, 21. Joan Mir (ESP) 21, 22. Luca Marini (ITA) 14, 23. Pol Espargaro (ESP) 12, 24.

Dani Pedrosa (ESP) 7, 25. Stefan Bradl (GER) 2

### The last 10 winners of the MotoGP world championship:

2024: Jorge Martin (ESP/Ducati-Pramac)  
2023: Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati)  
2022: Francesco Bagnaia (ITA/Ducati)  
2021: Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha)  
2020: Joan Mir (ESP/Suzuki)  
2019: Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)  
2018: Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)  
2017: Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)  
2016: Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)  
2015: Jorge Lorenzo (ESP/Yamaha)

### The most successful riders in the premier class (500cc up to 2001, then MotoGP):

Giacomo Agostini (ITA): 8 titles in 500cc  
Valentino Rossi (ITA): 7 titles (6 in MotoGP, 1 in 500cc)  
\* Marc Marquez (ESP): 6 titles in MotoGP  
Mick Doohan (AUS): 5 titles in 500cc  
Mike Hailwood (GBR): 4 titles in 500cc  
John Surtees (GBR): 4 titles in 500cc  
Geoff Duke (GBR): 4 titles in 500cc  
Eddie Lawson (USA): 4 titles in 500cc  
\* Active rider

like to be the champion but sometimes that cannot happen."

When Martin crossed the line, the celebrations began in the Pramac garage and amongst the many Spanish fans who had made

the journey to the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. The race was due to take place in Valencia but had to be moved after the region suffered its worst floods in a generation which have killed more than

220 people. The race was switched to Barcelona and has been dubbed the Solidarity GP to show support for the people of Valencia, with all proceeds of the event going to the Valencia relief fund.

## King Abdullah II International Basketball Cup: Qatar edge Palestine

**Doha:** The Qatar basketball team secured a hard-fought victory in their second match of the 12th King Abdullah II International Basketball Cup, as they edged Palestine 74-72 in extra time. This match took place on Sunday evening at the Prince Hamzah Hall in Al Hussein Youth City, located in Amman, Jordan. The game concluded its four regular quarters with scores of 11-11, 21-15, 16-19, and 15-18, while the extra period ended 11-9 in favour of Qatar. The tournament, now in its 12th edition, follows a single-stage league format and serves as a preparatory event for the four participating teams ahead of the double qualifiers for the Asian Cup, scheduled to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and the 2027 World Cup in Doha. Qatar had earlier scored a 75-66 win over Syria, while the Palestinian team had lost their opening match to hosts Jordan 80-92. The tournament presents a significant opportunity for the Qatari team to enhance their players' readiness prior to the Asian qualifiers for the

2025 Saudi Asian Cup. Following their second victory, the Qatari team is set to compete in their final match against Jordan today. The Qatar team's preparations will continue with a match against the Indian team on November 21 as part of the 2025 Asian Cup qualifiers in India, followed by a match against Iran in Doha on November 25 at Al Gharafa Hall. The team includes: Omar Mohamed Saad, Mustafa Fouda, Mahmoud Darwish, Khaled Rushdi, Babacar Dieng, Nadim Muslik, Mohamed Bashir, Tyler James Lee Harris, Aladji Boubou Magassa, Ndaye Elhaj Sidou, Abdullah Yassin Musa, Mustafa Ndaw. The Qatar team's mission in Jordan is headed by Saadoun Sabah al-Kuwari, Secretary-General of the Qatar Basketball Federation, and the administrative and technical staff includes Jassim Ashkanani (team manager), Nabil Juma (team administrator), in addition to the technical staff led by Turkish coach Hakan Demir and his assistants.



### CRICKET

# Lewis and Hope guide Windies to stunning victory

The hosts beat England by five wickets after sensational run chase

Reuters  
St Lucia

**W**est Indies restored some pride by securing a thrilling five-wicket victory against England with a blistering run chase in their Twenty20 international in St Lucia on Saturday.

A big-hitting 55 from opener Phil Salt and an even more aggressive unbeaten 62 from Jacob Bethell, who brought up his second T20I half-century with three successive sixes, helped England post an imposing 218 for five from their 20 overs.

In reply, West Indies openers Shai Hope and Evin Lewis smashed 136 off the first nine overs to put the hosts in the driving seat, with captain Rovman Powell's 38 steering his side to their highest-ever successful run chase in the Caribbean with six balls to spare. England nonetheless take an insurmountable 3-1 series lead into the fifth and final T20I showdown.

"We've been losing early wickets so we needed to understand the best remedy to combat their bowlers," Hope said. "I just believe in doing what the team requires. Obviously different situations require different approaches. Just doing what the team need in a particular moment."

With the series victory already wrapped up, England's aggressive top order could really loosen the shackles after being put into bat first, with Salt, a centurion in the opening T20 of the series, in particularly fine fettle, racing to a 32-ball 50.

Salt, who now has 640 runs against West Indies in T20 cricket



Evin Lewis (left) and Shai Hope of West Indies celebrate their 100-run partnership during the 4th T20I match against England at Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, on Saturday. (AFP)

et - more than any other England batsman has scored against a single opponent - helped the tourists amass more than 100 runs inside the first 10 overs of a T20I when batting first for only the seventh time.

Skipper Jos Buttler continued the big hitting, but it was Bethell who stole the show, hammering nine boundaries to all corners of the ground en route to his highest T20I score to date.

With England firmly in the driving seat and the West Indies top order struggling in the series before Saturday's encounter, few gave the hosts any chance

of victory, but Lewis and Hope slammed 10 sixes on their way to match-winning contributions of 68 and 54, respectively.

Three wickets in three balls saw Hope, Lewis and Nicholas Pooran depart, Hope ran out for the second match in a row, to swing the pendulum England's way once more, but the hosts' score of 138 for three was still their highest after 10 overs of a T20I innings.

Powell, the only West Indies batsman who has performed consistently throughout the series, again took the attack to England, before Sherfane Rutherford sent back-to-back sixes sailing over

the boundary rope to secure victory. "It was an excellent wicket and we got off to a great start with our openers putting them under plenty of pressure," Buttler said.

"We thought we needed at least 220. "Their openers then played exceptionally well too. We were trying to do some things differently, create some opportunities with fielders in other areas of the field."

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**West Indies 221 for 5** (Lewis 68, Hope 54, Powell 38) **beat England 218 for 5** (Bethell 62\*, Salt 55) **by five wickets**

### FOCUS

## Another blow for India as Gill suffers thumb injury



Reuters  
Sydney

**I**ndia have suffered another injury blow as they prepare for this week's first Test against Australia, with batsman **Shubman Gill** fracturing his thumb in a training session in Perth on Saturday, according to multiple media reports.

India opted to prepare for the Perth Test, which starts on Friday, with squad sessions behind closed doors rather than take on a local side in a tour match.

Gill injured his left thumb while fielding and is a major doubt for the match, the *Times of India* and other media outlets reported, citing sources. The team did not provide immediate comment when contacted by Reuters about Gill's condition.

The news compounded India's issues at the top of the batting order with skipper Rohit Sharma not yet in Australia after staying home for the birth of his second child.

Gill has batted at number three since midway through last year but opened for most of his first 30 Tests and was a leading candidate to top the order with Yashasvi Jaiswal in Rohit's absence.

Another candidate, KL Rahul,

left the field on Friday's first day of the intra-squad session after being struck on the elbow by fast-bowling teammate Prasad Krishna but was back batting yesterday following an X-ray.

"The key for us is to make sure there's no fracture or bony lesions in there," India physiotherapist Kamlesh Jain said in a video posted on the Indian cricket board's X account.

"(It's been) 48 hours since the impact and he has responded well to the treatments. He should be ready to go."

The 32-year-old Rahul lost his spot in the team during the recent 3-0 home series loss to New Zealand after scoring 12 runs over two innings batting at number six in the opener.

The Test team have been practising match simulations against a side comprising India A squad members and fringe players at the WACA ground in Perth.

Devdutt Padikkal, who made his Test debut in March and is in Australia with the India A squad, has been asked to stay in the country, *Espnricinfo.com* reported.

There is less concern about Virat Kohli, the *Times of India* reported, after the batting mainstay took part in the sessions despite having scans on an undisclosed injury.

### MATCH REPORT

## Kusal the batting hero as Sri Lanka edge past New Zealand by three wickets



Sri Lanka's batsman Kusal Mendis (centre) watches the ball as he plays a shot during the second one-day international against New Zealand at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Kandy

**K**usal Mendis overcame injury to score a workmanlike half-century that helped Sri Lanka beat New Zealand by three wickets in their rain-shortened second one-day international at Pallekele yesterday and clinch the three-match series 2-0.

Chasing 210 to win, Sri Lanka struggled for partnerships on a turning pitch and were in trouble at 93-5 but Kusal managed a groin issue sustained early in his innings to make an unbeaten 74 off 102 balls that took his side home.

Late cameos by Janith Liyanage (22), Dumith Wellalage (18) and Maheesh Theekshana (27 not out) also eased the nerves of the hosts who were rocked by the spin of Michael Bracewell (4-36).

It was Sri Lanka's first ODI series victory over New Zealand since 2012 and their fifth bilateral series win of 2024.

Kusal, the Player of the Match,

said yesterday: (On his injury) I think a little bit okay, but not bad. It was very hard to bat against the new ball. Pathum started really well and that was very important. I tried to take a chance and take it deep. Dumith, Janith and Maheesh batted really well and supported me. Our spinners bowled really well. In the second half, it was spinning more. Dew came late and that helped more spin. Little hard to bat with my injury and I could not play the sweep (freely) and that is my getaway shot."

Earlier, Sri Lanka opted to bowl first and were in control with two early wickets but opener Will Young (26) steadied the ship before the match was reduced to 47 overs per side due to two spells of rain.

Mark Chapman (76) and Mitchell Hay (49) then helped New Zealand lay a solid platform but the end of their 75-run stand triggered a collapse and the tourists were bowled out for a modest 209 thanks to some sharp catching by Sri Lanka.

Spinners Theekshana (3-31) and Jeffrey Vandersay (3-46) tightened things up and bamboozled the tour-

ists as the last six wickets fell for only 36 runs.

Asitha Fernando (2-37) took the important wicket of Chapman, who smashed seven fours and three sixes and looked on course for his third ODI century until Avishka Fernando lunged forward in the deep to pull off a blinder.

Mitchell Santner, the New Zealand captain, said yesterday: "It is always a challenge when you are defending a low score. Kusal played the situation very well. We were trying to get the run-rate up but it never got over five. That partnership (between Kusal and Theekshana) at the end took it away, but we also left a few runs out there."

Sri Lanka won the rain-hit series opener in Dambulla by 45 runs via the DLS method after Kusal and Avishka made centuries. The final game takes place in Pallekele tomorrow.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Sri Lanka 210 for 7** (Mendis 74\*, Theekshana 27\*, Bracewell 4-36) **beat New Zealand 209 all out** (Chapman 76, Hay 49, Theekshana 3-31) **by 3 wickets** (47 overs a side)

## End of an era as Nadal aims for winning Davis Cup farewell

**Malaga, Spain:** Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal is aiming to cap his emotional farewell from tennis with another Davis Cup triumph in Malaga next week. Nadal, 38, has battled injuries over the past few years and the extent to which he can compete for his country is unknown, but all eyes will be on the 22-time Grand Slam winner. The veteran led Spain to victory in Madrid five years ago - the last time they won the trophy and Nadal's fourth. However, he admitted that his role in Malaga may be limited to doubles rather than singles. "First off, we'll have to see how I feel in training and, if I really don't feel I have a chance to win the singles, I'll be the first to not want to play," Nadal said in comments to the Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET). "If I don't feel ready, I'll be the first to speak to the captain (David Ferrer). I've already told him on a few occasions not to make any

decisions based on the fact that it's my last week as a professional tennis player." French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz will be Spain's leading player and his presence offers Nadal a real chance of retiring on a high note. "Probably one of the most special tournaments that I'm going to play. Last tournament of Rafa, I'll be able to be next to him in the last moments on a tennis court for him," said Alcaraz who played alongside Nadal in doubles at the Olympics in Paris this year. "I think it's most important for Rafa, for his last tournament. I really want him to retire with a title. It's going to be really, really emotional and a really special tournament for me." Representing Spain, Nadal won singles gold at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and triumphed in the doubles at Rio 2016 alongside Marc Lopez. But former world number one Nadal's injury setbacks in the twilight of his career



Spain's Rafael Nadal plays a return during a training session ahead of the Davis Cup at the Martin Carpena sports hall in Malaga, Spain. (AFP)

have seen his ranking slump to 155. The last of his 92 career titles came with his 14th French Open and 22nd major at Roland Garros in 2022. He hasn't played a competitive singles match since losing to Novak Djokovic at the Olympics in July while in 2023 he played just four times.

Many are hoping for Spain and Alcaraz to meet world number one Jannik Sinner's Italy, the defending champions, in the final, as the two young stars continue to build on a gripping rivalry. Record 32-time champions the United States have selected a strong team spearheaded by

US Open finalist Taylor Fritz and are also among the most likely contenders. Nadal clashed with Alcaraz in Saudi Arabia at the "Six Kings Slam" exhibition in October, losing in straight sets, but they will be fighting for the same goal in Andalusia. The start of the Billie Jean King Cup was delayed because of a weather alert in the Malaga region, in the wake of devastating floods in the east of Spain. Alcaraz, ranked third in the world, said the flooding in Valencia increased his motivation to help his country triumph. "I'm here to give my grain of sand because playing for Spain is the biggest thing that there is for me," he continued. Tennis greats and stars from other sports are among those clamouring to watch Nadal's farewell, with career rivals Djokovic and Roger Federer among those expected to attend. Spain face the Netherlands tomorrow

in the last eight, with the winner taking on Germany or Canada in the semi-finals. Italy ended a 47-year wait to win the Davis Cup again a year ago as they beat Australia in the final with Sinner their key player and are favourites to defend their title. The Australian Open and US Open winner is still waiting for an appeal from the World Anti-Doping Agency against him to be resolved. Sinner twice tested positive for traces of an anabolic steroid in March but the International Tennis Integrity Agency cleared him of blame in August. Italy face Argentina in the quarter-finals in Malaga with the winner taking on the United States or Australia. Captained by Lleyton Hewitt, Australia were runners-up last year and are second only to the US in Davis Cup triumphs, winning the title 28 times. The final takes place next Sunday with all matches held at the indoor hard-court Martin Carpena arena.

### TENNIS

# Sinner sweeps past edgy Fritz to win ATP Finals

'It's amazing, it's my first title in Italy and it means so much to me'



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the ATP Finals against Taylor Fritz of the US at Inalpi Arena, Turin, Italy, yesterday. Sinner won 6-4, 6-4. (Reuters)

AFP  
Turin, Italy

**J**annik Sinner won the ATP Finals yesterday after beating Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4 to claim his first title at the season-ending event in Turin. Italian Sinner's triumph on home soil was the latest moment of glory in a near-perfect year in which the 23-year-old won eight tournaments, including his debut Grand Slam victories at the Australian and US Opens. "It's amazing, it's my first title in Italy and it means so much to me," said Sinner. "It's something very special. I just tried to understand what works best for each opponent, trying to play my best possible tennis. That was the key. "It was a very high level tournament from my side. At times, I couldn't have played better, so I am very happy." World number one Sinner

**SINNER FACTBOX**  
**Sinner's win-loss ratio in 2024:** 70-6  
**Career titles:** 18  
**Titles in 2024:** 8 (listed below)  
**Australian Open,** beat Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3  
**Rotterdam Open,** beat Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-4  
**Miami Open,** beat Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-1  
**Halle Open,** beat Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (10-8), 7-6 (7-2)  
**Cincinnati Open,** beat Frances Tiafoe 7-6 (7-4), 6-2  
**US Open,** beat Taylor Fritz 6-3, 6-4, 7-5  
**Shanghai Open,** beat Novak Djokovic 7-6 (7-4), 6-3  
**ATP Finals,** beat Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4

again swept Fritz aside in straight sets just as he did in the group stage and the US Open final in September, improving his record on hard courts this year to 50-3. Sinner is the first Italian to win the Finals, doing so days after becoming the first from his nation to top the ATP's end-of-year rankings. His Tour-leading 70th win of the season made him the first player since Ivan Lendl in 1986 to win the tournament without

dropping a set. "I tried to make myself better than last year, to find the keys to win this final. I'm very happy to have handled this pressure and to share this success with the Italian crowd," said Sinner. The first set went in Sinner's favour after an enthralling seventh game which lasted nine minutes and was eventually won on the fourth break point. And despite Fritz's best efforts he couldn't fight back, failing

to get a single break point in the second set and succumbing to his opponent's superiority. Fritz fell short in his bid to become the event's first American champion since Pete Sampras in 1999 but will rise to a career-best of fourth in the rankings today. "With the good results, it's been a great week for me," said Fritz, beaten for the fourth time in five meetings with Sinner. "I want to congratulate Jannik and his team because he plays incredible tennis, really incredible." Sinner has reacted to losing last year's final to Novak Djokovic by displacing the Serbian great at the top of the game, winning 26 of his past 27 matches. However, he has been dogged by controversy after twice testing positive for traces of the steroid clostebol in March. Sinner now heads to Malaga where he hopes to lead Italy to a successful defence of their Davis Cup title.

### GOLF

## McIlroy clinches Dubai title with DP World Tour Championship win

AFP  
Dubai

**R**ory McIlroy won the DP World Tour Championship for the third time and claimed his sixth Race to Dubai title in the process yesterday, matching the tally of legendary Spaniard Seve Ballesteros. The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland made a crucial birdie on the par-4 16th hole to break a deadlock with Denmark's Rasmus Hojgaard. He then birdied the par-5 18th hole for a three-under-par 69 that took him to 15-under for the four days and was enough for a two-shot win that also secured him a sixth Order of Merit. The four-time major champion broke down on live television when asked what it meant to equal Ballesteros' record. "It's really cool. I think everyone knows what Seve means to European golf. In the European Ryder Cup locker room, all we have are quotes of Seve," said McIlroy, who is now two behind all-time record holder Colin Montgomerie's tally of eight. "We had a Seve shirt from 1995 when he played his last Ryder Cup in our changing room last year... For me to be mentioned in the same breath as Seve, I am very proud." Rasmus, who was trying to follow in the footsteps of his twin brother Nicolai and take the trophy back to Denmark for a second year in a row, made a stunning 22-footer par save on the 17th hole, but could not put the pressure on McIlroy on the 18th as he settled for a par and a final round score of 71. McIlroy, who started with a bogey and then made four successive birdies, dropped a couple of shots around the turn to be tied with

Hojgaard after 15 holes at 13-under. He finally edged ahead with a stunning second shot on the par-4 16th hole from 137 yards to less than a foot for his fifth birdie of the day and drained a six-footer on the final hole. "I think I would have been miserable for a few weeks if I hadn't won today. I've been through a lot this year professionally and personally. It feels like the fitting end to 2024. I've persevered a lot. Had close calls. Wasn't able to get it done. So, to be able to get over the line, when I got off to a great start and didn't have my best in the middle of the round, was very satisfying. I felt a lot of pressure out there, most of them self-inflicted. But to finish the way I did, I can now go and have a good few weeks off," added McIlroy. Including the Zurich Classic that the world number three claimed alongside Shane Lowry, it was McIlroy's fourth worldwide win of the season. Hojgaard was disappointed at not winning the title, but happy to have secured the No1 card of the 10 PGA Tour cards on offer at the end of the week for the top 10 players who are not already members. The No1 card gives him entry into some of the big events, including the Players Championship. "I came to Abu Dhabi (the previous week) with the goal of securing the No 1 PGA Tour card, and I am happy that I have done it," said Hojgaard, who missed the card by one spot last year. "It sucks to lose, but you need to make birdies in the end and Rory did that. I battled hard through the day." Australia's Adam Scott and Ireland's Lowry shot final-round 68s to tie for third place at 11-under par alongside France's Antoine Rozner. England's Tyrrell Hatton was solo 6th at 10-under.



Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy gestures as he poses for a picture with the trophy after winning the DP World Tour Championship at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

## SLOVAKIA BEAT AUSTRALIA TO REACH BJK CUP SEMI-FINALS

**Malaga, Spain:** Slovakia overcame Australia 2-0 yesterday to reach the semi-finals of the Billie Jean King Cup. The country of 5.4 million, which beat the United States in the first round, is into the semi-finals of the competition for the first time since 2013. Viktorija Hrunckakova and Rebekka Sramkova both won their singles ties to give Slovakia an

unassailable lead. "It's another big country which we beat, and I'm so proud for the girls, for our team members, for (our) country, because we are a small country," said Slovakia captain Matej Liptak. "For us, it really means so much." World number 241 Hrunckakova emerged victorious against Kimberly Birrell 7-5, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 after over two-and-a-half hours

on court to give the central European country the lead over Australia. Sramkova then needed just over an hour to win 6-1, 6-2 against former world number 32 Ajla Tomljanovic, who injured her knee in the third game of the first set. Later, Britain will play holders Canada with the winners set to face Slovakia in the semi-finals. "I think all of us are looking for-

ward to playing these amazing players," said Hrunckakova. "We have nothing to lose. That's why I think we enjoy it so much. We are doing good, and hopefully we're gonna keep doing that." Today, five-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek will lead Poland as they take on world number four Jasmine Paolini's Italy in the other semi-final.

## QATAR DRIVERS EXCEL AT JORDAN BAJA



Qatar drivers Rashid al-Muhannadi, Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Nasser al-Kuwari, Khalifa al-Attiyah, Ahmed al-Kuwari, and Abdallah al-Rabban and Mohammad al-Meer excelled at the recently concluded Jordan Baja (November 14-16). The rally, which started from the Arab Revolution Square in the city of Aqaba, was the 7th and penultimate round of the World Cup for the category of motorcycles and quad bikes - FIM - Baja, and the third round of the Middle East Cup-FIA-Baja. Rashid al-Muhannadi finished first in the Baja Middle East Championship/Challenger while Abdulaziz al-Kuwari and Nasser al-Kuwari, who won the stage on Day 2 were fourth overall. Khalifa al-Attiyah finished 5th. In the Baja Middle East Championship/SSV, Qatar's Ahmed al-Kuwari was second. In the Baja Middle East Championship/STK, Abdallah al-Rabban was second, and Mohammad al-Meer third.

### NATIONS LEAGUE

# Netherlands into quarters, Germany hit record seven

'THERE ARE ALWAYS THINGS WE CAN IMPROVE UPON'

AFP  
Paris

Netherlands outclassed Hungary with a 4-0 victory in their winner-takes-all Nations League encounter yesterday while record-setting Germany hammered Bosnia and Herzegovina 7-0.

Netherlands and Hungary went into the match tied on five points each and with the winner set to join Germany in ensuring their progress from Group A3 to the quarter-finals.

First-half penalties by Wout Weghorst and Cody Gakpo sent the Oranje on their way, before Denzel Dumfries and Teun Koopmeiners made the game safe in the second period.

"There are always things we can improve upon," Dutch captain Virgil van Dijk told SBS6. "But in the end, we deserved to win."

The match at the Johan Cruyff Arena was briefly interrupted in the seventh minute following a medical emergency on the Hungarian bench.

The referee stopped play for some 10 minutes while Hungary's assistant coach Adam Szalai received treatment, shielded from view by huddled players and staff members, as well as a large white sheet.

Szalai, 36, was stretched off to applause from spectators and players alike, the Hungarian FA later released a statement saying he was "conscious" and in a "stable condition" at an Amsterdam hospital.

"It was a scare of course," Gakpo told NOS. "Fortunately, I just heard he regained consciousness on the pitch. Things like this are more important than football."

Almost forgotten in the aftermath of the worrying incident was the handball by Tamas Nikitscher as the ball was crossed into the Hungarian box.

The referee consulted the touchline video monitor and promptly restarted play by pointing to the spot, allowing Weghorst to sweep the Netherlands in front.

Denes Dibusz was the busier of the two goalkeepers as the first period wore on and had to be alert to



Netherlands' Teun Koopmeiners celebrates with teammates after scoring their fourth goal against Hungary during the Nations League match in Amsterdam. (Reuters)

keep out efforts from Tijjani Reijnders and Donyell Malen.

In the 11th minute of added time, Dutch dominance told and Germany was clipped by Zsolt Nagy in the box.

Gakpo dispatched the resulting spot-kick, sending Dibusz the wrong way and Netherlands into a two-goal lead.

Right-back Dumfries sealed the Netherlands' spot in the quarters as he latched onto Malen's flick-on at the back post and fizzed a volley back into the far corner shortly after the hour.

Koopmeiners marked his first international match since 2022 by nodding in a fourth in the 86th minute. Germany cemented their spot at the top of the group with a 7-0 win over Bosnia - the heaviest in the six-year history of the Nations League.

"It was good fun tonight. After a couple of goals we did the work

defensively and then everything came together offensively. The more that happens, the more fun we have on the pitch," German attacker Jamal Musiala told UEFA's website.

Musiala opened the floodgates after two minutes with a header from Joshua Kimmich's cross.

Tim Kleindienst scored his first goal for Germany in the 23rd minute and Kai Havertz made the game safe eight minutes before the break, slotting home after a slick one-two with Florian Wirtz.

Wirtz then made it four on 50 minutes with a sublime swerving free-kick from wide on the left, before doubling up seven minutes later.

"Seeing Flo (Wirtz's) free-kick was kind of nice but just in general everyone played well, had good moments. We're just playing good football," added Musiala.

Substitute Leroy Sane scored

Germany's sixth in the 66th minute and Kleindienst completed the rout just over 10 minutes from time as he guided home a pinpoint cross from centre-half Antonio Rudiger. The emphatic result leaves Germany five points ahead of Netherlands with only one match left to play.

In Group B1, Georgia played out a 1-1 draw at home to Ukraine and stay two points ahead of the fourth-placed visitors.

The Czech Republic drew 0-0 in Albania and remain top of the group on eight points, one ahead of Georgia in second and their third-placed opponents.

Turkiye stayed top of Group B4 with a 0-0 draw at home to Wales, while Iceland beat Montenegro 2-0. Turkey were presented with a golden opportunity to grow their two-point lead over Wales but Kerem Akturkoglu sent his 89th-minute penalty wide.

### FOCUS

## World Athletics president praises Qatar's efforts in advancing sports

QNA  
Doha

President of World Athletics, Sebastian Coe, commended the State of Qatar's contributions to the development of sports at both technical and administrative levels, locally and globally, through its professionals holding international positions and leading continental federations.

Speaking during the Asian Athletics Association Board of Directors meetings in Doha, Coe expressed his admiration for Qatar's ambitious approach to hosting global and regional championships.

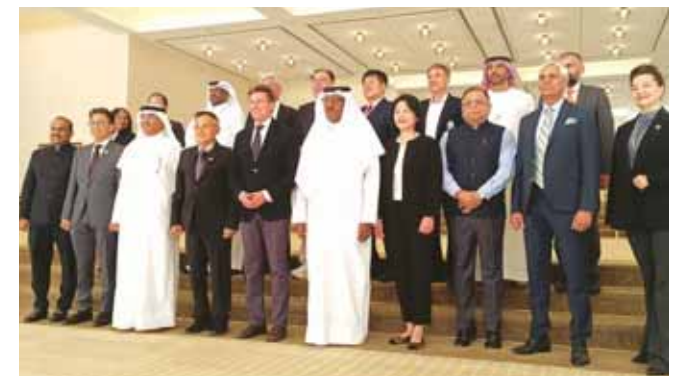
It is a source of pride, he said, highlighting the successful hosting of the 2019 World Athletics Championships, which met the highest standards and fulfilled the goals of Olympic champions.

Coe emphasised that Qatar possesses the expertise and resources to host the Olympic Games, thanks to its accumulated experience in organising world-class events and its long-

term vision for sports development. He also praised the leadership of President of the Asian Athletics Association, Dahlan Jumaan al-Hamad, under whom Asian athletics has seen historic advancements. Coe noted the remarkable performances of Asian athletes at the Paris 2024 Olympics, the increase in Asian medals at the World Athletics Championships, and the successes at youth and junior world championships in Peru and other editions in recent years.

Coe stated that Asia is poised to dominate athletics in the future, supported by studies, statistics, and initiatives under the leadership of the President of the Asian Athletics Association. He pointed out that Asia will host the World Athletics Championships in Japan in 2025 and in China in 2027, along with various other global events, reflecting the continent's remarkable progress and commitment to the sport.

Coe concluded by stating his willingness to run for the presidency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) if the members of the committee support his candidacy.



Sebastian Coe, President of World Athletics, and Qatar's Dahlan al-Hamad, President of Asian Athletics Association (AAA), are seen with AAA officials in Doha on Thursday.



### AL-DARWISH ELECTED TO FEI SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

DOHA: Badr al-Darwish, President of the Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF), was chosen as a member of the Solidarity Committee of the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) during the General Assembly meeting held recently in Abu Dhabi. QEF officials participat-

ed in the FEI General Assembly meeting and the delegation also included Sheikh Ahmed bin Nouh al-Thani, Secretary-General of the Federation. Al-Darwish thanked the members of the General Assembly of FEI for electing him and for their confidence in the role

played by the Qatar Equestrian Federation in the region and at the level in order to develop and advance equestrianism, noting that in recent years Qatar has continued to support international equestrianism by hosting many of the major championships.

