

Iran Comes Second in West Asian Baseball Cup

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran finished in second place in the 12th West Asian Baseball Cup held in Pakistani capital city of Islamabad. The Iranian team came second in the competitions held at the Pakistan Sports Board Complex in Islamabad. Team Melli defeated Iraq 18-4

to secure second place by winning two out of three matches. Pakistan retained the title after beating India 11-0. Pakistan, Iran, India and Iraq participated in the 12th edition of the tournament. The fifth team Afghanistan was not allowed to participate due to a documentation issue.

AFC Women Referees & Assistant Referees Course Takes Off

KUALA LUMPUR (AFC) - The Asian Football Confederation Women Referees & Assistant Referees Course 2015 kicked off Part 3 of the AFC Refereeing Seminar with 16 Women Referees and 26 Women Assistant Referees from across Asia participating in the

five-day course in Malaysia. The course's program, approach and content are similar to those for the AFC's men officials. Speaking at the opening, Yoshimi Ogawa, Director of the AFC Referees Department ad-

vised the participants that they should always be aware of the latest trends in football, while remarking on the some of the difficulties faced by officials. "Women's football is also becoming very fast and you must be able to keep up with the pace. It is not always easy to anticipate movement of play to take up good positioning in order to be in the right place at the right time. In some situations, even a one second delay may be crucial," he said.

assistant referees need to master. Having a good knowledge of this will help match officials better understand the trends and patterns of play and also the development of the game," he added. Ogawa concluded by advising the participants to always prepare themselves for their assignments, saying that they must be technically and physically prepared and that their commitment to improve themselves will produce good performances on the field of play.

Refereeing Instructors handling the course are Ali Traifi (Saudi Arabia), John Chia (Singapore), Jacqui Hurford (Australia), Ganesan Maniam (Singapore) and Zhang Lingling (China). The course ends on March 3, 2015.

International standards in fitness are constantly being raised and speed and agility are therefore important qualities that referees and assistant referees must have. On the field age can never be an excuse. "Team tactics are also an important area that referees and

War at Home: Luis Enrique, Lionel Messi Not Speaking



Luis Enrique, Lionel Messi Not Speaking

MADRID (FNA) - Luis Enrique acknowledges that his future at Camp Nou is far from secure as he continues to endure a difficult relationship with Lionel Messi and the Barcelona squad. The Austrian only took over as coach of the Blaugrana last summer, but his first season on the bench has been dogged by dressing room problems, particularly with star man Messi.

The pair fell out at the start of January, leading to a highly-publicized power struggle, but they then called a truce, and agreeing to put their differences aside for the greater good of Barcelona. However, according to Goal, despite this ceasefire the pair are actually not on speaking terms. The club has sided with Messi on the issue, and while president Josep Ma-

ria Bartomeu insists that the coach will remain in his job next season, Luis Enrique himself realizes that his position at the club is precarious. A further reason for this is because the ex-midfielder also has a frosty relationship with many other members of the first-team squad, and Luis Enrique's authoritarian management style is not approved by his players.

Luis Enrique is not the kind of coach to accept suggestions or pointers. Unlike Pep Guardiola, who was hugely popular with Messi, Xavi, Andres Iniesta, and other senior squad members, Luis Enrique is more comparable to disciplinarians such as Louis Van Gaal and Fabio Capello in demanding total obedience from his players. While the players have agreed to co-operate enough to ensure they can fight for major titles this season, there have been occasions when some Barcelona players have been unwilling to take orders from their boss. Indeed the players have found a way of self-managing the team when required. This is not the first time that Luis Enrique has had a troubled relationship with one or more of his players. While at Roma, he also fell out with club legend Francesco Totti, and this was an important reason why he only lasted one season in the Italian capital. Barcelona is currently second in La Liga, four points behind Real Madrid.

Iran to Host 2015 AFC Futsal Club Championship

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran has been selected as host country for the sixth edition of the AFC Futsal Club Championship. "Iran will host the AFC Futsal Club Championship after five years. The champion of the Iran Futsal League will most likely host the event," Abbas Torabian, a member of the AFC Futsal and

Beach Soccer Committee, said. The AFC Futsal Club Championship is the current annual Asian futsal club competition hosted by the Asian Football Confederation. The 1st edition of the AFC Futsal Club Championship held in Isfahan, Iran, where Foolad Mahan won the title.

Djokovic, Federer to Face Each Other in Dubai Final



Novak Djokovic fell to Roger Federer in the Dubai semi-finals last year.

DUBAI (Xinhua) -- The world's number one Novak Djokovic won here on Friday the semi-final against the world's number eight Tomas Berdych in three suspense sets, while Roger Federer swept away the Dubai Duty Free Championship's surprise candidate, 18-year-old Boris Coric from Croatia in a short and decisive blitzkrieg-style match. Federer entered the Dubai open final first by winning 6-2, 6-1 over Coric on early Friday afternoon amid cloudy, but warm weather in Dubai. Coric, nevertheless, gained ample recognition when he kicked out Englishman Andy Murray in the quarter-finals on Thursday, a major surprise of the tournament. The Swiss Federer, currently ranked second in the men's ATP list, could win his seventh title in Dubai on Saturday.

The "Djoker" won 6-0, 5-7, 6-4 against Czech player Berdych, who was especially weak in his first services throughout the match. The suspense was high during this high-class match and Djoker's trainer, Germany's former superstar Boris Becker, got up several times from his seat on the tribune during the match and gave hints with hand signals. Both players had a rate of 48 percent unforced errors. "To me, there were two different parts of the match," said Djokovic referring to his strong first set and the neck-on-neck fight during the second set which he lost. On the upcoming final against 33-year-old Federer, the 27-year-old Serbian superstar said "Roger represents always a big challenge and I look forward to the match on Saturday." If Djoker wins, it would be his fifth title in Dubai.

President Xi Pins High Hopes on Chinese Soccer

BEIJING (China Daily) - President Xi has made a number of public comments related to Chinese soccer to express his support and has high hopes for the national team. He has made no secret of his determination to improve the sport's image, which has been tarnished by scandals and poor administration. A meeting of China's Leading Group for Overall Reform, headed by President Xi Jinping, approved a reform plan to boost every area of the sport from playgrounds to



Xi Jinping prepares to kick a Gaelic football as he visits the headquarters of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) at the Croke Park Stadium in Dublin, Ireland

stadiums and said institutional flaws hindering the game's development must be tackled. Entitled "The overall plan for the reform of Chinese soccer," the project calls for increased public involvement and diversified training, including campus soccer and professional clubs, to develop young players and hone their skills. It also highlights the need for an innovative approach, combining the state-run system with market forces.

Selman Set for Another Stint as Iraq Head Coach



Akram Selman has been appointed head coach of Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFC) - Experienced campaigner Akram Sel-

man has been appointed head coach of Iraq following the

departure of Radhi Shenaishil, who led the West Asian nation to a fourth-place finish at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup. No stranger to the national team, Selman oversaw the Lions of Mesopotamia's 1986, 1990, and 1994 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaigns and guided Iraq through the qualifiers of the 2007 AFC Asian Cup, laying the foundations for the side that Jorvan Vieira would ultimately lead to a historic first continental title. Selman was also in charge of the Iraq side at the 1988 Sum-

mer Olympics in Seoul and was at the helm during Iraq's 2005 West Asian Games gold medal triumph. Most recently in charge of Oman's Al Nasr, Selman is a veteran of numerous continental competitions with various clubs throughout the Middle East. He led Iraq's Arbil through the Group Stage of the 2008 AFC Champions League before participating in four AFC Cup campaigns with Jordanian giants Al Wehdah (2009), Duhok of Iraq (2011) and Lebanon's Safa (2012 and 2013).