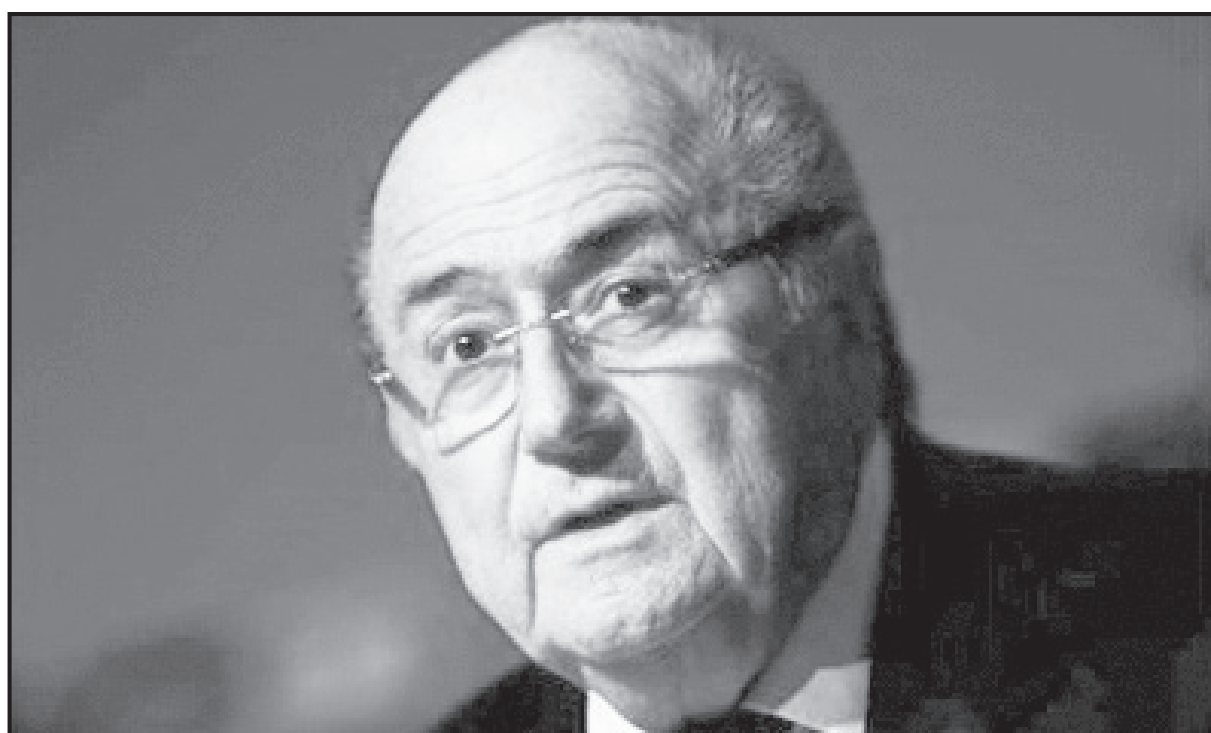


FIFA President Blatter Congratulates Iran Football Federation



FIFA President Sepp Blatter

TEHRAN (Persian League) - FIFA President Sepp Blatter congratulated head of Iran Football Federation (IFF) Ali Kaffashian for all good work the federation has done to promote football in the country.

"Many thanks for sending me a copy of the Iran Football Federation's Annual Report for the Year 2014 and congratulations for all the good work you are doing to promote football in your country.

"I have preserved fond memories of my visit to Iran one year ago, when I was able to visit your headquarters and see the first hand the high level of organization in your country at all levels," Blatter wrote a letter to Kaffashia

Gucci Among Strikers Set to Score A Bagful in Asian Cup



Reza Ghoochannejhad

TEHRAN (Persian League) - Iran's Reza Ghoochannejhad has been mentioned among the five strikers who could set Asia's biggest football tournament alight.

The 2015 AFC Asian Cup will be held in Australia from January 9 to 31.

Iran has been pitted against the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Bahrain in Group C of the tournament.

Iran striker Ghoochannejhad will vie with four more strikers to become the tournament's top goal-scorers.

When Carlos Queiroz became manager of Iran in 2011, he made an effort to bring members of the Iranian diaspora into the national team. One of these players was

Reza Ghoochannejhad, a striker who was born in Iran but grew up in the Netherlands.

After playing for the Dutch youth sides, Ghoochannejhad made his debut for Iran in 2012. Since then, the man nicknamed 'Gucci' has become a hit in Iran after scoring 10 goals in 11 matches for the national team. He played a crucial part in Iran's qualification for the Asian Cup, and scored Iran's only goal in the 2014 World Cup, afasiancup.com wrote.

Japanese striker Shinji Okazaki, Tim Cahill from Australia, South Korean Son Heung-min and Saudi Arabian Nasser Al-Shamrani are the other candidates, who could become the top scorer of the tournament.

Uzbekistan Striker Nasimov Joins Padideh

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Padideh signed Bakhodir Odimdjonovich Nasimov until the end of the season.

Uzbekistan striker Nasimov has joined Padideh football club for an undisclosed fee.

The 27-year-old striker has also

played for Rubin Kazan, Neftchi Baku and South China.

Nasimov made his debut for Uzbekistan in a 2011 Asian Cup qualifier against Malaysia on 18 November 2009 and scored the second goal in a 3-1 win.

Iran Martial Artists Crested in International Tournament

ANKARA (Press TV) - Iranian athletes have put on an impressive display of skills and stood on the top of the podium at the fourth edition of World Martial Arts Festival in Turkey.

The final day of the competitions in the city of Istanbul, Iran's Muay Thai team, consisting of Saeed Chahardeli, Moslem Lashni, Amin Ahmadi and Qaem Torkashvand, lifted the trophy at the Bağcilar

Olympic Sport Hall.

Host nation, Turkey, trailed the Islamic Republic of Iran and was followed by European powerhouse, Russia.

Muay Thai is a combat sport of Thailand that uses stand-up striking along with various clinching techniques. It includes combat on shins and is known as "the art of eight limbs." The discipline is characterized by the combined use

of fists, elbows, knees and shins.

Iranian vovinam squad also ended its campaign at the 4th World Martial Arts Festival with a well-deserved win, and was crowned as the champion of the discipline.

Turkish and Russian vovinam practitioners stood in the second and third spots respectively, behind their Iranian opponents.

Vovinam is a Vietnamese martial art, which uses force and reaction

of the rival. It also includes hand, elbow, kicks, escape- and levering techniques.

Also in the super fight discipline on Monday, Iran's Amir Hossein Qarakhnai stole the show and claimed the gold medal.

The fourth edition of World Martial Arts Festival opened in the Turkish city of Istanbul on October 24, and wrapped up on October 28, 2014.

Lakers Rookie Randle to Miss Rest of Season

WASHINGTON (China Daily) - Los Angeles Lakers could be without their rookie forward Julius Randle for the rest of the season after the seventh overall pick broke his right leg in the season opener on Tuesday.

"Randle is expected to make a full recovery, although it is anticipated that he will miss the remainder of the 2014-15 season," the Lakers said on their website.

The 19-year-old Randle sustained the injury in the first regular season game of his career in which the Lakers were beaten 108-90 by the Houston Rockets. Randle had a surgery on Wednesday.

The Lakers have been already without their veteran guard Steve Nash, who is expected to miss the entire season and possibly end his career for back problems.



Los Angeles Lakers forward Julius Randle (30) drives against Houston Rockets forward Donatas Motiejunas (20) during the second half at Staples Center in Los Angeles, Oct 28, 2014.

Austria's Matthias Brändle Breaks Hour Cycling Record



Brändle at the 2013 Tour de Romandie

BERN (The Guardian) - Austrian cyclist Matthias Brändle set a new hour cycling record in Switzerland on Thursday with a total distance of

51.85km (32.21 miles). Brändle broke the record previously set by German Jens Voigt who set the previous record of 51.1km (31.75 miles).

San Fran-Based Virgin America Flight Celebrates Giants' World Series Win

WASHINGTON (Yahoo Sport) - If you live somewhere on the flight path between Dallas and San Francisco, and you heard some screaming coming from the sky sometime last night, this might explain why.

Passengers on board Virgin America Flight VX717 from Dallas Love Field (DAL) to San Francisco International Airport (SFO) were watching last night's thrilling Game 7 World Series game, when the San Francisco Giants beat the Kansas City Royals 3-2 to claim its third World Series win in five years.

Virgin America, which is based in San Francisco and is the Giants' official airline, did its part to send good vibes to the home team the night of the big game. Flight VX717 began with some Giants trivia. And the flight crew handed out orange rally flags to the passengers.



What was louder: the engine or the cheers? Passengers on board this SF-based Virgin America flight celebrated the Giants' World Series victory.