

Iran Launches Bid to Host 2027 Asian Cup



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran will compete with India, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan for hosting right of the Asian Cup 2027, the Asian Football Federation (AFC) revealed.

“The AFC will now work with each Bidding Member Association on the delivery of the necessary bidding documentation in accordance with the bidding process and will announce the host for the 19th edition of the AFC Asian Cup in 2021,” said the

AFC in a statement late. AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa thanked the five-member associations for showcasing their support to the Asian Cup. “On behalf of the Asian football

family, I would like to thank all our Member Associations for stepping forward to express their desire and for sharing our ambitions to host a world-class stage for our players, teams, officials and fans and I wish all of them the very best in the bidding process,” he said.

Of the five countries expressing an interest, two nations have already hosted the tournament twice since its inception in 1956.

Reigning champions Qatar staged the competition in 1988 and 2011, as well as Iran, who are the only nation in Asian football history to have won the coveted crown twice on home soil in 1968 and 1976.

Three-time champions Saudi Arabia and India, who were recently awarded the hosting rights for the 2022 AFC Women’s Asian Cup, as well as Uzbekistan, this year’s host for the AFC U-19 Championship, are all vying to stage event for the first time.

Kazemi Wins FIBA Dunk of Decade Bracket

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian basketball player Arsalan Kazemi has claimed the FIBA Dunk of the Decade crown.

He won the accolade after his high-flying entry from the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament 2016 emerged victorious in the interactive fan voting.

The interactive bracket featured 32 entries from across all FIBA regions and a wide range of global and continental national team competitions, with a total of 699,188 votes cast over the period of 20 days.

Having received 80,658 votes for 55.8 percent in the Final matchup, Kazemi’s dunk over Ioannis Bourousis bested another highly popular candidate, Angola star Carlos Morais, who had the backing of 63,887 supporters for 44.2 percent, fiba.basketball reported.

On his path to overall victory, Kazemi eliminated Norvel Pelle of Lebanon, Rui Hachimura of Japan and Gabe Norwood of the Philippines in



Iranian basketball player Arsalan Kazemi

the Asian Conference before knocking out Rafael Mineiro of Brazil in the Semi-Final.

A runner-up in the overall standings, Carlos Morais’ windmill dunk from FIBA AfroBasket 2013 claimed the top honors in Africa, while Rafael Mineiro and Kristaps Porzingis won the regional conferences in Americas and Europe, respectively.

Barca Title Hopes Dim as Atletico Upstage Messi’s 700th Goal

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Barcelona have given up more ground to Real Madrid in La Liga’s title race after being held to a 2-2 draw at home to third-placed Atletico Madrid as a late penalty from Saul Niguez cancelled out Lionel Messi’s 700th career goal.



Barcelona’s Lionel Messi, center, kicks the ball in front of Atletico Madrid’s Angel Correa during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Atletico Madrid at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, June 30, 2020.

The draw meant the Catalans stayed second in the standings on 70 points and leaders Real Madrid, who have 71, will go four points clear at the top with five games left if they beat Getafe at home on Thursday.

Barca went ahead at an empty Camp Nou in the 11th minute when Atletico striker Diego Costa knocked Messi’s delivery from a corner into his own net.

Saul levelled soon after from

the spot after the referee ordered a re-take when Costa’s initial penalty was saved by Marc-Andre ter Stegen who had strayed from his line.

Barcelona then earned a penalty soon after the interval which Argentine Messi coolly converted for a remarkable 700th strike for club and country, only for Saul to strike again from the spot in the 62nd to earn a share of the points.

“It’s a real shame and the league title is looking much harder for us with each game,” said Barca coach Quique Setien, whose side have drawn three of their six games since the campaign resumed after the coronavirus stoppage.

Formula One Fires Up, Four Months Late, Without a Crowd



Dutch driver Max Verstappen steers his car in front of Red Bull’s French driver Pierre Gasly during the Austrian Formula One Grand Prix in Spielberg.

LONDON (Dispatches) - Formula One starts its season in Austria this week, nearly four months later than planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic and against a very different backdrop even if Lewis Hamilton’s targets remain the same.

The six times world champion can equal Ferrari great Michael Schumacher’s record seven while his Mercedes team are bidding for an unprecedented seventh successive drivers’ and constructors’ title double.

The Briton, who has used his profile to campaign for greater diversity in the sport and against racism, is raring to compete but aware he faces new and unexpected challenges.

“We are preparing the best way we can for what is going to be the most difficult season that Formula One and all of us have experienced,” the 35-year-old said in a Mercedes video.

Since the traditional Australian opener was cancelled in March, Formula One has agreed changes to help teams hard hit by COVID-19.

Driver moves for 2021 have been announced already, including the departure of Hamilton’s old rival Sebastian Vettel from Ferrari at the end of 2020.

This year’s only rookie, Canadian Nicholas Latifi, could find his Williams team are under new ownership before his first campaign is over.

FIFA Bans Former Top Official Kattner for 10 Years



In this Nov 24, 2015 file photo, then FIFA Acting Secretary General Markus Kattner listens during a conference in Moscow.

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Soccer’s world governing body FIFA has banned Markus Kattner, a former leading official in the Zurich organization, for 10 years and has fined him one million Swiss francs (\$1.06 million) after a probe into bonus payments.

“The adjudicatory chamber of the independent Ethics Committee has found Markus Kattner, former FIFA deputy secretary general and acting secretary general, guilty of conflicts of interest and having abused his position, in violation of the FIFA Code of Ethics,” FIFA said in a statement on Tuesday.

“The investigation into Mr Kattner

covered various charges concerning bonus payments in relation to FIFA competitions that were paid to top FIFA management officials (including Mr Kattner), various amendments to and extensions of employment contracts, reimbursement of private legal costs, and Mr Kattner’s duties as an official.”

FIFA said in June, 2016, that an internal investigation revealed that Kattner, FIFA’s former Secretary General Jerome Valcke and the organization’s ex-President Sepp Blatter had received 79 million Swiss francs (US\$81 million) in compensation over five years, calling them “massive payouts”.

UEFA Says Fully Committed to Champions League Finale in Lisbon

BERN (Dispatches) - UEFA has said it was fully committed to staging a Champions League Final Eight tournament in Lisbon in August despite several suburbs of the city preparing to go back into lockdown as novel coronavirus cases climb again.

European soccer’s governing body said in a statement that its president Aleksander Ceferin had held a video conference with Portugal’s Prime Minister Antonio Costa to discuss plans for the eight-team mini-tournament.

“During the meeting, all par-



The Luz stadium will be the venue for the final match of the Champions League Final on Aug 23, 2020, UEFA announced on June 17, 2020.

ties underlined they are fully committed to working together in a collaborative manner in order to deliver a successful event in Lisbon,” UEFA said.

Last Thursday, the Portuguese government said that those people living in the affected areas of the capital - 19 parishes not including downtown Lisbon - would be allowed to leave home only to buy essential goods or to travel to and from work.

The measure will be in place from July 1-14 and will then be reviewed.

Lorenzo Shoots Down Rumors of 2021 Ducati Return

MADRID (Dispatches) - Three-time premier class champion Lorenzo retired from racing at the end of the 2019 campaign following a miserable debut season on the factory Honda, and has since returned to Yamaha as its official test rider in the winter.

Lorenzo was due to make his race return as a wildcard at the Catalan Grand Prix with Yamaha, before the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the race being postponed and MotoGP banning wildcard outings for this year to cut down on paddock numbers.

Linked briefly to a potential Petronas Yamaha move for 2021, Lorenzo has since been rumoured to be in the frame to rejoin Ducati - with whom he raced in 2017 and 2018, and won three races - amid slow talks between the Italian marque and Andrea Dovizioso.