

Iran, Turkey Football Federations to Sign MoU



TEHRAN – Iran and Turkey football federations will ink a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen sports cooperation between two countries.

Mehdi Alavi, the spokesperson of the Iran football federation, said that President Mehdi Taj will travel to Istanbul this week and the Iranian delegation is going to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Turkish counterpart.

According to Alavi, Iran and Turkey football teams will meet in a friendly match in 2025.

The MoU aims to facilitate the exchange of opinions about the technical issues, friendly matches in all national levels and holding training camp.

Leverkusen Stun Hosts Dortmund 3-2 to Close on Leaders Bayern

DORTMUND (Reuters) - Champions Bayer Leverkusen battled past hosts Borussia Dortmund 3-2 with two goals from Patrik Schick to move within a point of leaders Bayern Munich with a sixth straight league win.

In a frenetic opening the visitors struck three times in the first 19 minutes as they enjoyed a perfect start to the year with the league resuming following a three-week winter break.

Dortmund, who twice cut the deficit, had fielded a largely makeshift team due to flu and injuries in what was their first home loss of the season.

A last-minute backline had to be cobbled together after defenders Waldemar Anton, Emre Can, Ramy Bensebaini and Nico Schlotterbeck were all ruled out along with long-time injured Niklas Sule.



Dortmund's goalkeeper Gregor Kobel dives but fails to save the goal from Leverkusen's Nathan Tella during the German Bundesliga soccer match.

It showed instantly with Leverkusen winning possession after some high pressing and Nathan Tella completing the move to give the visitors the lead after 25 seconds.

Dortmund had no time to regroup with Leverkusen scoring

again in the eighth minute and striker Schick sliding in to complete a textbook counter-attack.

The hosts briefly recovered and pulled a goal back through Jamie Gittens four minutes later but Schick restored Leverkusen's two-goal cushion in the

19th with a fine finish at the far post after yet another quick break.

The Czech international, who had also scored four times in the last game of the year against Freiburg on Dec 21, has now bagged 11 league goals this season.

The hosts hardly had any chances in the second half but were thrown a lifeline when Serhou Guirassy converted a 79th minute penalty.

Leverkusen survived late Dortmund pressure thanks mainly to some superb defending by Edmond Tapsoba and Piero Hin-capie, to hold on and move up to 35 points, one behind leaders Bayern, who travel to Borussia Moenchengladbach on Saturday.

Dortmund's first home loss of the campaign kept them anchored in sixth on 25 points.

Foolad Defeat Ajman in Friendly Match



TEHRAN – Iran's Foolad football team defeated Emirati side Ajman 2-1 in a friendly match on Friday night.

Amirmasoud Sarabadani and Amin Qaseminejad were on target for the Iranian team.

The match was held in Dubai, where Foolad holds a training camp.

Foolad, headed by Yahya Golmohammadi, is a favorite to win Iran football league for the third time.

The Ahvaz-based team sits fourth in the table, four points adrift of leader Tractor.

Foolad is scheduled to play one more friendly match in its training camp.

Azmoun Scores as Shabab Al Ahli Beat Al Ain



TEHRAN – Shabab Al Ahli secured a crucial 1-0 victory over Al Ain on Friday night at Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in the UAE Pro League.

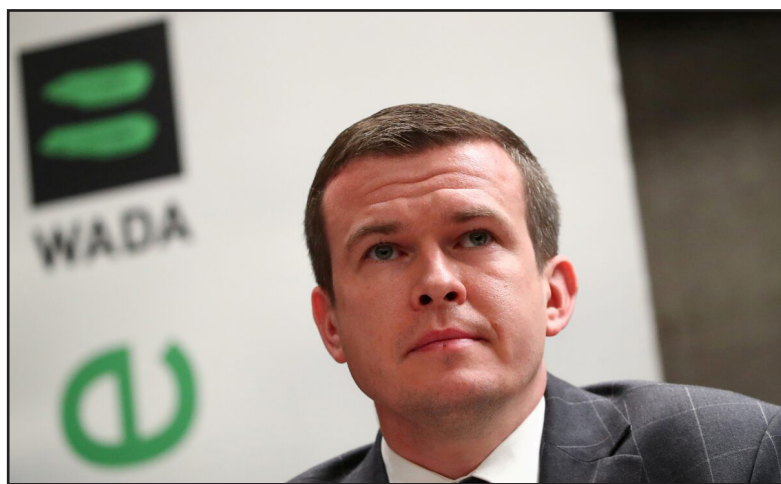
Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun scored the winner in the 34th minute.

The win marked a significant achievement for Shabab

Al Ahli, as it triumphed over its host Al Ain with a clean sheet, earning three important points in the league.

With the result, Shabab Al Ahli moved to the top of the table standings with 29 points, while Al Ain remained in sixth place with 19 points.

WADA Confirms U.S. Loses Executive Committee Seat for Unpaid Funding



BEIJING (AFP) - The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has confirmed that the United States automatically loses its seat on the organization's executive committee for refusing to pay its annual funding.

WADA said the U.S. failed to pay its contribution of \$3.62 million for 2024, which accounted for 14 percent of WADA's budget.

"The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) confirms that it did not receive the agreed contribution to WADA's 2024 budget from the

Government of the United States by the deadline of 31 December 2024," WADA said in an email.

According to Article 6.6 of the WADA Statutes, "Public Authority representatives from a country which has not paid its dues are ineligible to sit on the Foundation Board or the Executive Committee."

Therefore, the U.S. will lose its seat in the executive committee.

WADA's overall budget for 2025 has been approved at \$57.5 million.

Poland Win Handball Four Nations Cup

WARSAW (Xinhua) -- Poland men's handball team won the Four Nations Cup tournament with three victories in a row after they beat Tunisia 33-24 on home ground in Plock on Friday.

The host outplayed Austria 31-19 and beat Japan 30-29 in the previous rounds.

On Friday, pivot Kamil Syprzak led Poland to the triumph with six goals, while winger Mikolaj Czaplinski and left back Damian Przytula poured in five each. Winger Aymen Toumi delivered five for Tunisia.

Polish players set a high pace from the very beginning, leading 19-12 after the first half en route to their third consecutive victory. Japan defeated Austria 28-27 earlier in the day and took a silver medal with two wins. Austria rounded out the podium, while Tunisia was fourth.

The Four Nations Cup is the final tune-up event ahead of the 2025 World Men's Handball Championship, which starts on January 14 in Croatia, Denmark and Norway.

Bulls Beat Wizards 138-105 for 5th Win in 7 Games

CHICAGO (AP) — Zach LaVine scored 33 points and the Chicago Bulls beat the Washington Wizards 138-105.

Nikola Vučević had 23 points and 13 rebounds, and Coby White and Jalen Smith each scored 15 points for the Bulls. Chicago got its fifth win in seven games and evened a 125-107 loss to the Wizards on Jan. 1.

LaVine had 18 points in the first half to help Chicago take control.

Jordan Poole, who missed three straight games with a left hip contusion, returned and led the Wizards with 22



points. Jared Butler added 18 points for Washington, which dropped to an NBA-worst 6-30.

The Bulls spotted their guests the opening basket

but took the lead for good a few possessions later. Up 68-58 at halftime, they turned the game into a rout with a 9-0 run midway through the third quarter.

Clément Noel Wins a World Cup Slalom

ADELBODEN, Switzerland (AP) — Clément Noel skied through the fog to win a World Cup slalom race Saturday and deny Brazil a first-ever victory by just 0.02 seconds.

The 2022 Olympic champion rose from third place in the first run to get his third win this season and beat Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, the Norway-born racer who now represents his mother's home nation Brazil.

Henrik Kristoffersen, Braathen's former teammate, placed third, trailing Noël by 0.14, and leads the slalom standings from his French rival.

First-run leader Manuel Feller had already lost his time advantage before skiing out on the steep final slope. The Austrian star has now failed to finish four slalom races this season in defense of his World Cup title.

Pinheiro Braathen matched Brazil's best result in World Cup skiing after being runner-up last month in a gi-

ant slalom at Beaver Creek, Colorado.

Conditions were difficult all day on the Chuenisbaergli hill. Steady snowfall in the morning slowed the later starters, and racers could barely be seen in thick fog for parts of the second run in the afternoon.

The slalom typically scheduled on Sunday was moved forward one day because the weather and visibility risked forcing a giant slalom to be canceled.

The classic Adelboden giant slalom — a permanent fixture on the men's World Cup circuit since the first week of racing in January 1967 — was pushed back to Sunday.

Marco Odermatt, who leads the World Cup overall and giant slalom standings but skips slalom, will be favored Sunday to win a fourth straight time in a race that is a signature sports event for his home country Switzerland.