

Egypt celebrate Tunisia's qualification

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 4 (AFP/Internet): Egyptian players and officials joined the Tunisian delegation to celebrate the latter's qualification for the quarter-final ahead of Morocco.

The Tahir Guest Palace which accommodates both countries was a beehive of activity Thursday night as the two teams, who are scheduled to clash on Monday, sang and danced in the hotel premises.

Egypt's coach Gerard Gilli explained that "Morocco would have been hard to crack if they had qualified and was delighted the Tunisians had knocked them out.

"My people are rejoicing with Tunisians because we feel they will be easier to handle. Morocco have not lost any match to an African side for over two years and that frightened us," Gilli said.

"We have seen them play and we shall approach the game with Tunisia with every seriousness because any slip will lead to our being knocked out. We are neighbours - that was why we celebrated with them. But on Monday we shall fight them to the finish," Gilli promised.

Sporting Kibria

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday kicked off a sports competition of customs officials saying defeats in games should be accepted "Sportingly" but warned that the government would not welcome failure in revenue collection in the similar spirit, reports BSS.

"Victory and defeat are part of sports, but we will not sportingly accept defeats in revenue collection," he said while opening the 13th inter-commissioner sports competition of Bangladesh Customs Krira Parishad at the Sher-Bangla National Stadium at Mirpur.

He, however, hoped that events like annual sports would boost the efficiency of officials and help accomplish their main job.

Chairman of the National Board of Revenue Abdul Muayeed Chowdhury attended the function as the special guest.



Members of the South African soccer team jog during a practice session at Kumasi on February 3. They meet Ghana in the African Nations' Cup on Sunday. — AFP photo

African Nations' Cup

Nigeria show Morocco the door



LAGOS, Feb 4 (AFP/Internet): Nigeria confirmed their status as favourites to win the African Nations' Cup with an impressive 2-0 triumph over Morocco Thursday that sealed first place in Group D.

Defeat proved particularly costly for Morocco as they were pipped for the second place in the knockout stages by Tunisia, who had a similar goal difference to the Atlas Lions but scored more goals.

TUNISIA-CONGO

Tunisia defeated Congo 1-0 in the northern city of Kano through a Radhi Jaidi goal after 15 minutes and stay there for a North African showdown

against defending champions Egypt Monday.

"I'm so happy we qualified for the next round. But it is all due to the Nigerians who spanned Morocco for us," Tunisia's El-Omer Chokri said.

Thabet Tarek added: "I thank Allah for making victory and qualification possible for us. I also congratulate Nigeria for beating Morocco for us to scale through."

For Congo's Christian Samba there was only disappointment.

"I feel terribly sad that we lost to the Tunisians. We had the game perfectly under our control but some how we could not score. I wish Tunisia luck," he said.

NIGERIA-MOROCCO

The Super Eagles will face surprise packets Senegal in Lagos the same day after a much-improved performance from a side jeered when held goalless by Congo last week.

Final George put the country that has won the cup twice ahead after 28 minutes and substitute Julius Aghahowa grabbed the second 10 minutes before the end of a match between two African football giants.

Nigeria began with a lot more purpose than shown in the drab deadlock with Congo and Tijani Babangida burst through after three minutes only to foiled by advancing goalkeeper Khalid Fouhami.

Morocco had a let off when Augustine Jay Jay Okocha floated a free kick from just outside the penalty area over

opening round, later found himself with plenty of space near the penalty area and his shot was saved by Ike Shorunmu at the foot of the post.

The Moroccan was replaced by Mohammed al-Badroui just before half-time and Nigeria introduced Gbenga Okunwo and Aghahowa for Furo Iyenemi and Benedict Akwuega at the break.

There was no change to the pattern in the second half with Nigeria pressing forward and Morocco soaking up the pressure in front of an increasingly vocal home crowd.

A slow Nigerian built up ended with livewire Okocha firing just over and Fouhami had to react quickly when a free kick from the Paris Saint Germain midfielder bounced awkwardly in front of him.

The giant Moroccan goalkeeper, who plays in Romania for Dynamo Bucharest, did superbly to push over a 30-metre drive from Babangida that seemed destined for the roof of the net.

Mutiu Adepoju, captaining the Super Eagles in the absence of Sunday Oliseh, was replaced by Garba Lawal as time ticked away and Morocco also took off their skipper with Rachid Ben-mahmoud coming on for Tahir al-Khalie.

Nigeria sealed victory when Tunisia-based Aghahowa burst between a couple of defenders, maintained control of the ball and lobbed it over Fouhami before celebrating with a series of cartwheels.

STANDINGS

Final group standings after completion of the first round of African Nations Cup finals on Thursday:

Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Ghana	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Ivory Coast	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Togo	3	1	1	1	2	3	4

Cameroon and Ghana qualify for quarter-finals.

Group B	South Africa	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	3	2	1	0	5	2	7	7
Algeria	3	1	2	0	4	2	5	5
DR Congo	3	0	2	1	0	1	2	2
Gabon	3	0	1	2	2	6	1	1

South Africa and Algeria qualify for quarterfinals.

Group C	Egypt	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	3	3	0	0	7	2	9	9
Zambia	3	0	2	1	3	5	2	4
Burkina Faso	3	0	1	2	4	8	1	1

Egypt and Senegal qualify for quarter-finals.

Group D	Nigeria	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	3	1	1	1	1	3	4	4
Morocco	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	4
Congo	3	0	1	2	0	2	1	1

Nigeria and Tunisia qualifying for quarterfinals.

Quarter final line-up:

Feb 6: Cameroon v Algeria (Accra, 1600 GMT).

South Africa v Ghana (Kumasi, Ghana, 1930).

Feb 7: Egypt v Tunisia (Kano, Nigeria, 1500).

Nigeria v Senegal (Lagos, 1800).

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