

Goodluck Super Eagles

AFP, Abuja

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan believes the country's team could make history by becoming the first African team to win the World Cup next year.

On Saturday, in the southern city of Calabar, Nigeria beat Ethiopia 2-0 for a 4-1 aggregate triumph to qualify for their fifth World Cup.

"As the team and its handlers bask in the glory of being the first African country to qualify for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, President Jonathan urges them to rededicate themselves to excelling on the global stage and reaching for heights never previously attained by the country at the World Cup Finals," read a statement by the president's media adviser Reuben Abati.

"The President believes that with the enormous pool of footballing talent available to the country, the Super Eagles can, with more hard work, dedication, resilience and further honing of their skills and tactics, fulfil the national dream of being the first African nation to win the World Cup."

Nigeria's best performance at the World Cup was in 1994 and 1998 when they reached the Round of 16, while they failed to go past the first round in 2002 and 2010.



(L) Didier Drogba celebrates Ivory Coast's victory over Senegal in their FIFA 2014 World Cup qualifying play-off second leg in Casablanca while (R) Nigeria forward Victor Moses celebrates after scoring from the spot against Ethiopia during their qualifying play-off in Calabar on Saturday.

PHOTOS: AFP

Ivory Coast, Nigeria qualify

AFP, Calabar



Ivory Coast joined Nigeria in the World Cup finals on Saturday after a 1-1 draw against Senegal gave them a 4-2 aggregate win on a tense night in neutral Casablanca.

Ivory Coast reached a third successive World Cup but they had to survive a tense conclusion to their play-off second leg clash after Senegal had gone ahead 1-0 on the night through a 77th-minute penalty by substitute Moussa Sow after the lively Sadio Mane was fouled by Didier Drogba.

Another goal would have put Senegal through on away goals but Ivory Coast finished on top when Salomon Kalou drew his team level in stoppage time courtesy of a quick counter attack just moments after Kara Modji failed to double Senegal's lead from six yards.

Earlier on Saturday, Nigeria qualified for a fifth World Cup after beating Ethiopia 2-0 at home in Calabar for a 4-1 winning aggregate.

In a match played in Casablanca after Senegal were punished for crowd trouble at home, Ivory Coast attacked from onset, forcing the Senegalese to concede two

corners in the first five minutes.

Idrissa Gueye of Senegal fired at the Ivorian goal from the edge of the box after 13 minutes, but the ball sailed wide.

In the 18th minute, goalkeeper Boubacar Barry did well to keep out a Senegal free-kick as the home team pressed for an opening goal.

Gervinho, from Italian club Roma, continued to be a serious threat to the Senegalese defence with his tricky down the flanks.

In the 34th minute, Papis Cisse fired at goal for Senegal, but his snap shot again did not trouble goalkeeper Barry.

Yaya Toure was denied a goal in the 42nd minute when he got into the box and fired at goal but a Senegal defender got his foot to block the shot for a corner.

Sadio Mane came close to giving Senegal the lead in the 63rd minute but his shot sailed wide off target.

Senegal continued to pile on the pressure after their penalty in the 77th minute for the goal that would have qualified them for the World Cup, but it was not to be.

"I am proud to be part of a team from a small country which has qualified for three World Cups in a row," said Ivory Coast star



striker Didier Drogba.

"We want to do something special at the World Cup. The last two tournaments were difficult.

"In Brazil, we hope to have a greater chance of at least making it out of the first round."

In Nigeria, Victor Moses gave the home team the lead after 20 minutes when he tucked away a penalty after Anyaleme Hailu handled the ball inside his box.

Substitute Victor Obinna doubled Nigeria's lead on 82 minutes when he fired home a free-kick to kill off the game and the tie.

The reigning African champions march on to their fifth World Cup finals having also featured at the 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2010 tournaments.

But the Super Eagles' display on Saturday inside the packed 15,000-capacity UJ Esuene Stadium in Calabar was laboured and, until Obinna's late goal, Ethiopia were still in with a chance.

CSKA Moscow forward Ahmed Musa said it was a dream come true to qualify for what will be his first World Cup, but he blamed the hot weather for the team's subdued outing.

"I thank God for the World Cup ticket, it

is a dream come true for me. It has been my dream to go to the World Cup and I have made it," Musa remarked.

"We would have done a lot better today but the weather was hot and this worked against us."

Celtic defender Efe Ambrose came close for Nigeria right at the start of the game and goalkeeper Sisay Bancha then made a one-handed save from Emmanuel Emenike from 10 yards out.

Ethiopia's Saladin Said saw a shot from a tight angle flash across the face of the goal before Moses calmly dispatched his penalty to put Nigeria ahead after Hailu was penalised.

Bancha denied Nigeria when Onazi's left-footed shot in the 43rd minute was kept out by the outstanding Ethiopia goalkeeper and Ideye could not put away the rebound.

Ethiopia had a penalty appeal turned down in the 51st minute before Nigerian goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama made a brave save at the feet of Shemeles Bekele.

Ethiopia played with a lot more urgency in the closing minutes but their hopes were ended when the power on Obinna's late free-kick proved too much for Bancha.

Italy await Nigeria

AFP, London

Nigeria will have precious little time to celebrate their qualification for the World Cup, with a friendly game against European heavyweights Italy scheduled to take place in London on Monday.

The fixture at Fulham's Craven Cottage stadium will kick off a little over 48 hours after the African champions won 2-0 against Ethiopia in Calabar on Saturday to qualify for next year's football extravaganza in Brazil.

Nigeria coach Stephen Keshi is expected to use Monday's match to test the depth of his squad.

Beaten semi-finalists at this year's Confederations Cup in Brazil, where Nigeria went out in the group phase, Italy are bidding to return to winning ways after a run of three successive draws.

Mario Balotelli is likely to have a new strike partner against Nigeria, with in-form Fiorentina frontman Giuseppe Rossi expected to come in for Dani Osvaldo but Juventus centre-back Andrea Barzagli will miss the game with an adductor injury.

Khedira a World Cup doubt

AFP, Berlin

Germany midfielder Sami Khedira runs the risk of missing next year's World Cup in Brazil after suffering a serious knee injury in Friday's friendly draw with Italy.

Khedira came off midway through the second half of the 1-1 draw with the Italians in Milan, and the German Football Federation (DFB) confirmed on Saturday that the 26-year-old had suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee.

"We hope that he will recover before the 2014 World Cup," the DFB said, without confirming exactly how long he will be unavailable.

It is a major blow both for Germany and for Khedira's club Real Madrid, where he is a regular starter in Carlo Ancelotti's side.

Depending on the gravity of the injury and whether or not it needs surgery, it typically takes a minimum of four months and sometimes up to eight months to recover from a torn cruciate knee ligament.



Jamaican duo Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce hold the IAAF male and female Athlete of the Year 2013 awards in Monaco on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

WORLD ATHLETES OF THE YEAR A Jamaican sweep

AFP, Monaco



Jamaican sprint duo Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce were on Saturday named as the IAAF's male and female World Athletes of the Year for 2013.

The 27-year-old Bolt, who also won the award in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012, successfully defended both his 100 and 200m titles at the World Athletics Championships in Moscow this summer, winning the latter in a 2013 world-leading time of 19.66 sec.

He concluded his world championships by anchoring a Jamaican quartet to the gold medals in the 4x100m relay.

Bolt also won 10 out of his 11 100m races (including heats), and was unbeaten in his five races over 200m.

He beat off strong competition from British distance runner Mo Farah, who followed up on his 5,000-10,000m double at the London Olympics with two golds at the Moscow worlds.

"Wow...another IAAF athlete of year award. I'm beyond honoured...Jamaica this one is for you guys," tweeted Bolt.

Fraser-Pryce, 26, regained her 100m title at those world champs, her winning time of 10.71 sec the fastest of the year. She also clocked the fastest 200m time of the year (22.13) at the Jamaican championships in June and went on to win world gold in Moscow.

Like her compatriot Bolt, she also anchored the Jamaican 4x100m team to victory, a national record and the second fastest time in history.

Both athletes received a prize of 100,000 dollars. The sole consolation for Farah was that his coach Alberto Salazar won the IAAF's coaching achievement award.

The Cuban-born American has guided the career of Farah as the Somali-born Briton stormed to a famous distance double-double.

Brazil humble Honduras

AFP, Miami



Impressive 2014 World Cup host Brazil humbled Honduras 5-0 on Saturday in an international football friendly, showing their Cup-qualified rivals the steep challenge they will face next June.

With typical Samba flair and flashy footwork, the Brazilians used pinpoint passing to humiliate a physical, hard-fouling Central American side before 71,124 spectators at the home stadium of American football's Miami Dolphins -- Florida's largest-ever football crowd.

Honduras bumped and fouled in the early going, with playmaker Neymar bearing the brunt of the exchanges, including a spiking from Wilson Palacios that drew a yellow card in the 17th minute.

Bernard opened the scoring in the 22nd

minute, charging into the heart of the penalty area from the left wing and taking a perfect centring pass from Paulinho at the right wing.

Dante headed home Brazil's second goal in the 55th minute off a Neymar free kick and Maicon netted his first goal since 2010 in the 66th minute to give Brazil a 3-0 edge.

In the 70th minute, Hulk delivered a deadly set-up pass from the left side of the area to Willian, who tapped the ball home from point-blank range for a 4-0 Brazil lead.

But Brazil's playmakers saved their best for last.

Willian, Ramires and Robinho each executed back-heel passes around Honduran defenders near the outer edge of the penalty area that set the stage for Hulk to hammer a left-footed shot into the back of the net from the heart of the area.

Brazil will face South American rival Chile, also bound for the World Cup, in another friendly on Tuesday at Toronto.

Spain edge Guinea

AFP, Equatorial Guinea



Spain edged Equatorial Guinea 2-1 in a friendly international on Saturday as the world and European champions fielded a new-look team on their short African visit.

Arsenal's Santi Cazorla, in the 13th minute, and Atletico Madrid defender Juanfran Torres, three minutes before half-time, were on target for Vicente Del Bosque's team.

Colombian player Jimmy Bermudez, who since May has played for the African team, grabbed a 36th minute consolation in a game which the Spanish were urged to cancel after Equatorial Guinea had been accused of abusing human rights.

Spain suffered a setback when Xabi Alonso, playing for the national side for the first time since March after suffering a series of injuries, limped off the pitch just before the interval.

With twelve players in their squad born in Spain and with a Spanish coach in Andoni Goikoetxea, Equatorial Guinea gave a good account of themselves.

Spain will now face South Africa in Johannesburg on Tuesday at the Soccer City arena where they were crowned world champions in 2010.

তুমি জাগলেই জাগবে বাংলাদেশ

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