

## 'VILLA COULD RETURN'

David Villa's international career is not necessarily over and the striker could return to the squad and extend his Spain scoring record, coach Vicente del Bosque said on Tuesday. It was widely assumed the New York City player, who has 59 goals in 97 games for La Roja, had played for the last time at the World Cup in Brazil last year although the 33-year-old never said he was quitting the national team. Del Bosque told Spanish radio that Villa still had a chance of reaching 100 caps. - REUTERS



## Abahani hold Uzbeks

SPORTS REPORTER



Uzbekistan U-23 team played a warm-up match against Abahani which ended in a goalless draw at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday.

Uzbekistan, ranked 72nd in the FIFA rankings are the favourites among the four teams of Group E, struggled in the scorching heat during the match but there was no doubt about their competence regarding ball possession, skills, quick movements and standard of play though they did not break the deadlock against Abahani that fielded five foreign players.

The Uzbeks initially used two flanks but were denied by Abahani's two central defenders Nigerian Ubom Henry and Ghanaian Samad Yussif.

In the second half, Uzbekistan tried with a new set of players in which Abahani enjoyed a little bit better ball possession and went close to breaking the deadlock once.

It was a good opportunity for the coaching staff of Bangladesh to watch the Uzbekistan before facing them in their second match on March 29. Many senior national players also turned up to watch the match.

'You never judge the opponents in a

practice match because no one could give their full effort in such matches. It was a good result though Uzbekistan enjoyed the lion's share of ball possession that meant they had full concentration on the match,' said Bangladesh's Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif after watching the match at the Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday.

De Kruif supposed that Abahani's formation of 5-3-2 in the first half and 4-4-2 in the second half worked well to hold Uzbekistan and their five foreign players played key roles in the match.

De Kruif also noted that Uzbekistan have four to five dangerous players who can change the fate of the game.

Meanwhile, India had their first training session under the floodlights at the Bangabandhu National Stadium ahead of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers.

India had one hour training as they also set their sights on qualification for the final round.

'Every team came here for qualifying to the final though we don't know what will happen but we will surely give our 100 percent effort,' said Indian coach Savio Madeira.

India came here with just two weeks preparation with the players who mostly reserves for their respective clubs in the Indian League but Madeira is hopeful with his charges.



An Uzbekistan under-23 player jostles for possession during their practice match against Abahani at the Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday. (Inset) Bangladesh under-23 team coach Lodewijk de Kruif (L) shares his opinion with national team's captain Mamunul Islam (C) from the sidelines.



PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

## Costa blow for Spain

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain forward Diego Costa will miss the holders' Euro 2016 qualifier at home to Ukraine on Friday and friendly away to Netherlands four days later due to a hamstring injury sustained playing for Chelsea at the weekend.

Spanish soccer federation (RFEF) medical staff confirmed the injury in tests in Madrid and Costa has withdrawn from the squad, the RFEF said on Spain's official website on Tuesday.

"Diego Costa will return to Chelsea where he will undergo the corresponding medical treatment," the federation added.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque has already drafted Juanmi in as cover, the 21-year-old Malaga forward winning his first call-up after representing Spain at junior level.

With four matches played, Spain are second in Group C on nine points, three behind leaders Slovakia and level with Ukraine.

## Goal-king plans coaching career



AFP, Berlin

Germany's record World Cup goal-scorer Miroslav Klose plans to become a coach, as he contemplates retiring, and harbours dreams of working in the Bundesliga again.

"The Bundesliga will be my goal, because I can't imagine that I'll always be a youth team coach," Klose, who retired from international football after the World Cup, told German magazine Kicker.

"When I work towards my coaching licence I will really go for it, just like most things I do.

"Coaching at the German Football Association (DFB) is one possibility.

"Hansi Flick (the DFB's sports director) and I will certainly sit down and talk.

"I have seen many of Germany's national youth teams play and it would be exciting to work with them."

The 36-year-old set a new record of 16 World Cup goals when he scored in Germany's historic 7-1 win over the hosts in the semi-finals of Brazil 2014 and is the first player to have appeared in four consecutive World Cup semifinals.

Having played for Kaiserslautern, Werder Bremen and Bayern Munich in Germany's top flight, Klose currently plays for Italian side Lazio but his current contract expires at the end of the season and he is considering retiring from all football.

"It will be a spontaneous decision, I will talk to my family first, as always, and there are a few other things to consider," he said.

"Lots of things are possible, maybe even a return to the Bundesliga, but there has been no specific contact."

## Brazil probes graft claims

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazil said Monday it has ordered an investigation following allegations that the subsidiary of a German company paid bribes to officials in connection with World Cup contracts last year.

The justice ministry told AFP that Justice Minister Jose Eduardo Cardozo would examine some \$6.5 million worth of contracts with German engineering firm Bilfinger involving alleged compliance violations.

Earlier, reports in Germany quoted Bilfinger as saying it was investigating possible violations of the Group's compliance regulations regarding orders for the supply of monitor walls and software for security control centres at several Brazilian sites.

The firm cited suspected bribery payments from employees of Bilfinger subsidiary Helmut Mauell to Brazilian public officials and employees of state companies.

The firm, indicating its compliance system met international standards, promised to take action if violations are officially confirmed.

## Chess teams leave for Nepal tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have set their sights on winning both men's and women's titles in the Asian Zonal Chess Championship, beginning from March 27 in Nepal, as a 16-member contingent flies to Kathmandu tomorrow.

Bangladesh team, comprising 10 male and 6 female chess players, will compete against hosts Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka in round-robin system. The champions of this zone will qualify for the World Chess Championship scheduled to be held at the end of the year.

The men's team players are: GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Niaz Murshed, GM Abdullah Al-Rakib, GM Enamul Hossain Razib, IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, FM Khandaker Aminul Islam, FM Debaraj Chatterjee, CM Sohail Chowdhury and IM Abu Sufian Shakil.

The women's team consists of WIM Shamima Akter Liza, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva, WIM Rani Hamid, WFM Zakia Sultana, WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin and Mahmuda Hoque Chowdhury Moly.

## UEFA predicts bumper revenue

AFP, Vienna

UEFA expects a bumper revenue of 4.6 billion euros (\$5.05 billion) for 2015-2016 when the European Championships in France will more than double revenues from the Champions League, a top official said Tuesday.

The European governing body's finance director Josef Koller told the UEFA congress the figure would be 66% higher than for 2011-12 when the last European Championships were held in Poland and Ukraine.

## Win wasn't

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There is one drawback for Elliott in all this. He will now have to skip his sister's big day.

"She's got a wedding on Friday. Unfortunately I will miss her wedding. I'm sorry. She's pretty happy for me but I'm going to have to get her a special gift I think."

It is only fair, surely, that his teammates chip in as well.

## Sturridge, Lallana out

AFP, London

England manager Roy Hodgson suffered a double injury blow on Monday as the Football Association confirmed Liverpool duo Daniel Sturridge and Adam Lallana had withdrawn from his squad for the forthcoming matches against Lithuania and Italy.

Sturridge was forced to return to Liverpool after scans showed the striker wouldn't be fit to feature in Friday's Euro 2016 qualifier against Lithuania at Wembley and next week's friendly against Italy in Turin.

The 25-year-old was reported to have sustained a hip problem during Liverpool's 2-1 defeat against Manchester United at Anfield on Sunday.

With Sturridge, who scored in the United match, already having been ruled out for several months after suffering a thigh injury while training with England earlier this season, Hodgson and his medical team were understandably keen not to take any risks with the player's fitness.

"Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge has left the England squad and returned home to his club on Monday evening," an FA statement confirmed.

"This follows a scan on an injury that he sustained during Liverpool's game against

Manchester United on Sunday.

"The England medical team took the decision on Monday evening having assessed Daniel following the squad's arrival at St. George's Park on Monday afternoon."

Sturridge's absence could mean a first cap for in-form Tottenham striker Harry Kane, who took his goal tally for the season to 29 with a hat-trick against Leicester on Saturday.

Kane is in the senior England squad for the first time and will be competing with

Arsenal's Danny Welbeck for the job of partnering captain Wayne Rooney in Hodgson's forward line against Lithuania.

To add to Hodgson's misfortune, Liverpool midfielder Lallana also withdrew from the squad after suffering a groin injury against United that forced him to come off at half-time.

Lallana was replaced by Tottenham's emerging young midfielder Ryan Mason, who was called up for the first time.

The 23-year-old, who has enjoyed a breakthrough season in central midfield for Tottenham, will also provide cover for Aston Villa midfielder Fabian Delph, who is suffering from a stomach bug.

Mason was loaned to third tier club Swindon last season, but he has played 29 times for Tottenham under new boss Mauricio Pochettino this term.

## 'Remember the name...

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could get his wicket. I have been playing him since the Under 19 level. There was nothing personal in my aggression against him. Although there was a time when we had our exchanges; but all that is just cricket.

TDS: Do you think you can put in a similar performance against Pakistan?

Rubel: I will want to continue this run of mine. I believe that as a team we can beat Pakistan next month. It will be a very good gift to our fans.

TDS: You had a rough time prior to the World Cup. Are you glad with the turnaround?

Rubel: My life did go through a huge storm before the World Cup and I don't want to talk about it. But I never really had those things on my mind when I played cricket. I just wanted to do something so that the people of Bangladesh could remember the name Rubel Hossain!

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