

'FIFA are not world doping police'

AFP, Berlin

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has ruled out taking the 2018 World Cup from Russia in the wake of the latest findings of the McLaren report.

"FIFA is not the world police and certainly not the world doping police," the head of world football's governing body told German magazine Der Spiegel.

"Our disciplinary bodies will take care of anything in the McLaren report which has anything to do with football.

"Boycotts and bans have never solved any problems," Infantino added as he ruled out stripping Russia of the 2018 World Cup finals.

The McLaren report, the second part of which was announced ten days ago, revealed systematic doping in Russia between 2011 and 2015 which involved more than 1,000 athletes in several sports, including football.

# Salahuddin brushes aside allegations

Media report claims a detective report on BFF's graft

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday brushed aside a media report which, quoting an alleged investigation report prepared by a government agency and sent to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), made accusations of graft against him and the federation. The BFF boss termed the media report as 'false and fake' while saying 'he is not aware of any detective report by any government agency,' during an impromptu press briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

"I have learnt of this from the media. I do not yet know anything officially about any investigation report," Salahuddin said of the alleged detective report. "You can always write a [media] report with accusations, but those accusations need to be backed by evidence. You have the accusations, not the evidence."

The report, titled 'Football drowning in corruption: investigative agency reports', printed on Sunday's edition of Bengali daily Jugantor, claimed to have quoted a few accusations of graft against the incumbent


BFF chief from a detective report submitted to the PMO recently. As per the news, the detective report points out a few reasons behind the current state of the country's football: namely, graft related to the prize money of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup 2016, graft related to the purchase of broadcast equipment for the same tournament, graft related to illegal sale of tickets of Euro 2016 matches, graft related to the BFF football academy in Sylhet, and graft related to the former FIFA president Sepp Blatter's visit to Bangladesh, among others. The report, as per the news piece, lays the blame on Salahuddin as well as BFF's women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron and the federation's chief financial officer Abu Hossain.

The Jugantor report said that after receiving the detective report, the PMO directed the Ministry for Youth and Sports to investigate the allegations and prepare a detailed report on the investigation.

When contacted last night, secretary of the ministry Quazi Akhtar Uddin Ahmed said he heard about the media report even though he has not himself received any such directive from the PMO as yet.

# Messi dazzles in Catalan derby

REUTERS, Barcelona



Lionel Messi proved his ability to excite has no foreseeable expiry date by producing a virtuoso display as Barcelona thrashed Espanyol 4-1 in a local derby on Sunday and teammates and opponents were equally enthralled by his magic.

The five-time world player of the year produced two exhilarating solo runs in the space of a minute in the second half which lead to Luis Suarez and Jordi Alba scoring and capped his stunning display with a deserved goal late on.

"In the second half we saw the most spectacular version of our attacking players, particularly Messi, and we should never stop praising him," said Barca coach Luis Enrique.

"It looks routine but we should not get used to it because it's something unique."

Messi's brilliance inflicted the heaviest defeat since August on Espanyol, who went into the game boasting the most in-form La Liga defence, having conceded once in their previous six games.

After the Argentinian was finished with them, they had shipped as many goals as

they had in their last nine games.

"Messi is capable of constantly changing every game he plays in, he's the only player you could imagine scoring a hat-trick in every game," said Espanyol coach Quique Sanchez Flores, who approached the forward after the game.

"I congratulated him for his humility, he never complains, he gets kicked, he gets thrown to the floor, it's amazing. We have a good relationship, I've lost count of how many times people have asked me to get hold of his shirt."

Messi, 29, will return to Argentina on Monday after Luis Enrique gave permission to his maestro plus Suarez, Neymar and Gerard Pique, to miss Wednesday's King's Cup, last 32 second leg at home to Hercules so they can travel to South America.

The first leg against the third-tier side finished 1-1.

Suarez laid on the pass for Messi's late goal and said he felt guilty about scoring the second, which was created by his strike partner's mesmeric run past five defenders.

"I would have preferred for him to have completed his amazing move rather than me scoring it, it was like a PlayStation move," he said. "Messi is a unique player."



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Espanyol during their La Liga match at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

## Kolkata beat Kerala to win ISL

AFP, Kochi

Kolkata won the Indian Super League title Sunday after beating Kerala Blasters 4-3 on penalties.

Atletico de Kolkata midfielder Jewel Raja Shaikh clinched the club's second title after gliding the ball past Graham Stack to stun Kerala's packed Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

Cedric Hengbart failed to give title favourites Kerala a lead after hitting a straight shot that was booted out by goalie Debjit Majumder before Shaikh scored on the last penalty kick.

The teams had been locked 1-1 at the end of normal time. Forward Mohammed Rafi's header in the 37th minute gave Kerala an advantage but it was followed by an equaliser from Henrique Sereno Fonseca.

The second half saw both teams largely playing a defensive game, with neither side getting a breakthrough.

Kolkata, co-owned by former Indian cricketer Saurav Ganguli, won the first season of the tournament in 2014 after beating the Blasters, which is co-owned by former teammate Sachin Tendulkar.

Kolkata, coached by former Spanish footballer Jose Francisco Molina Jimenez, finished fourth in the league table but qualified for the finals by defeating table toppers Mumbai city FC in the semifinals.

Kerala, who have ex-English footballer Steve Coppell in charge, qualified for the finals by beating the Delhi Dynamos.

Last season's champions Chennaiyin FC bowed out of the tournament at an early stage.

PHOTO: AFP



Chittagong Abahani's Bhutanese striker Chencho Gyetlshen manoeuvres the ball during his side's JB Bangladesh Premier League fixture against Team BJMC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Chencho scored twice as the port city side won 3-0.

PHOTO: BFF

# Chencho keeps Ctg Abahani in the race

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong Abahani striker Chencho Gyetlshen bagged a brace to drive his side to an emphatic 3-0 win over Team BJMC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday -- a win which narrowed the gap with league leaders Abahani.

Chittagong Abahani, who now have 43 points, are still three points short of Abahani's tally. Therefore any hopes of tasting their maiden professional football league title rests on one equation -- the port city side have to beat Muktijoddha Sangsad and Brothers Union in their two remaining matches while Abahani must drop four points from their two remaining matches against lightweights Uttar Baridhara Club and Rahmatganj MFS.

Chencho provided the breakthrough in the fourth minute after flicking a Rubel Mia cross home from the edge of the six-yard box.

BJMC attempted to stage a comeback as they launched two good attacks in the 20th and 25th minutes but unluckily failed to equalise the margin as Bayebeck saw his goal-bound header cleared by Mamunul Islam while Abdullah Parvez frustrated his team further by floating a shot well over

CTG ABAHANI	3 - 0	TEAM BJMC
ARAMBAGH	0 - 0	FENI SOCCER

## British FAs fined over poppy tribute

REUTERS, Zurich

The Football Associations of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have been fined for displaying poppies during World Cup qualifiers last month, world soccer's governing body said on Monday.

England were fined 45,000 Swiss francs (\$44,000) for what FIFA described as the "display of a political symbol" on players' shirts and around the stadium during the 3-0 win over Scotland at Wembley, plus crowd misconduct.


Scotland were fined 20,000 Swiss francs for displaying the same political symbol as well as crowd problems.

Wales were fined 20,000 Swiss francs and Northern Ireland 15,000 for displaying political symbols in the home games against Serbia and Azerbaijan respectively.

The matches were all played in November around Remembrance Sunday when Britain pays tribute to soldiers who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

# Guardiola ready to pounce

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said his side will be ready to pounce if Premier League leaders Chelsea falter following their impressive 2-1 comeback victory over title rivals Arsenal.

Chelsea have streaked clear at the summit thanks to a storming run of 11 consecutive victories.

City trail Antonio Conte's side by seven points, having climbed to second place by coming from behind to beat Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday, and Guardiola says the

leaders are in their sights.

Asked if the win, secured by second-half goals from Leroy Sane and Raheem Sterling, would give City a psychological boost, Guardiola nodded and replied: "A lot."

"Seven points is a huge distance and when a team can make 11 victories in a row, you just can say congratulations."

"But at least to be there as much possible, and waiting if the opponent fails sometimes, and waiting until the last part of the season to be there, to fight for the title."

Since Guardiola's arrival in England, following stellar stints at Barcelona and Bayern Munich, there has been huge interest in whether his

passing principles will prevail in the pell-mell Premier League.

The City manager triggered his team's comeback by moving Kevin De Bruyne up front at half-time and switching Sterling to the right flank, but he played down the significance of the decision.

"Because we won, now the trainer is a genius!" said Guardiola, who faced criticism following recent one-sided losses to Chelsea and Leicester City.

Guardiola said he had apologised to John Stones after benching the centre-back, a £47.5 million (\$59.3 million, 56.8 million euros) recruit from Everton, for the second game running.

# Acid test for Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich face an acid test of their status as Bundesliga leaders in Wednesday's crunch showdown when they host second-placed RB Leipzig, who know they have nothing to lose.

The Bavarian giants have won the Bundesliga title at a canter in each of the last four seasons, but Leipzig, who were only founded in 2009, have torn up the form book in their first season in Germany's top flight.

Just like Bayern, they have won 11 of

their 15 league games, with three wins and a single defeat.

Both clubs have 36 points, but Munich are top on goal difference.

A shock 1-0 defeat to Ingolstadt ten days ago is the only blot on Leipzig's record having so far beaten the likes of Dortmund, Leverkusen, Schalke and now Hertha Berlin, following Saturday's 2-0 home win.

"Quick, compact and greedy -- they are the best opponent we have faced so far," was Hertha coach Pal Dardai's appraisal of Leipzig, who had gone a record 13 matches unbeaten at the start of their debut Bundesliga season.

The Bundesliga breaks for winter

after this round of mid-week matches and the Allianz Arena showdown is the standout tie.

Having led for three weeks until early December, Leipzig knocked Bayern off the summit for 24 hours after their impressive win over Hertha before Munich's 1-0 victory at bottom side Darmstadt put them top again on Sunday.

Last month, Bayern's president Uli Hoeness dubbed Leipzig their "second enemy" in Germany alongside Borussia Dortmund before withdrawing the comment, but the Bavarians clearly feel threatened by Leipzig.

# 4-star Mertens

AFP, Milan



Dries Mertens put four goals past England's Joe Hart as rampant Napoli completed a memorable 5-3 win over Torino to move up to third place in Serie A Sunday.

Mertens has been pushed into the main striker's role by coach Maurizio Sarri to fill in for missing centre-forward Arkadiusz Milik, who is scheduled to return from a knee ligament injury in January.

The diminutive Belgium forward has seized the day in astonishing fashion for the southerners, who continue to thrive following the departure of 36-goal hero Gonzalo Higuain to Juventus last summer.

At the San Paolo on Sunday, the 29-year-old completed his hat-trick, including one from the spot, by the 22nd minute as Napoli laid the foundations for a win that moved them up to third, eight points behind leaders Juventus.

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Good Luck Bagerhat to Gopalganj 65 k.m.

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