

STARSPORTS 1

India v Australia
4th Test, Day-2
Live from 10:00am
TEN 3
West Indies v Pakistan
1st T20I
Live from 11:30pm

SONY ESPN

FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Azerbaijan v Germany
Live from 10:00pm
Romania v Denmark
Live from 12:45am (Monday)

SONY SIX

FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
England v Lithuania
Live from 10:00pm
Montenegro v Poland
Live from 12:45am (Monday)

CRUYFF TO BE IMMORTALISED

Barcelona will pay tribute to visionary midfielder and coach Johan Cruyff by naming one of their new stadiums after the late Dutchman and his statue will also be erected at the Nou Camp. The club are planning to relocate their Mini Estadi, the home of their B team and occasional venue for their women's team, to their training ground and president Josep Maria Bartomeu said the new ground will be named the Estadi Johan Cruyff. "Cruyff broke down barriers, he was the man who made us lift our heads up and see that nothing is impossible," Bartomeu said at a presentation on Saturday, a day after Cruyff's first death anniversary. Bartomeu also revealed plans for a special space dedicated to Cruyff at the club's museum. Cruyff's son Jordi, said the family would donate his father's old jersey and the Ballon d'Or trophy he won in 1974 to the museum. Vice-president Jordi Cardoner said the club had asked the Barcelona city hall to rename one of the streets adjacent to the stadium after the Dutchman. —REUTERS



Italy captain Gianluigi Buffon marked a landmark 1,000th appearance in professional football by keeping his 426th clean sheet during Friday's 2018 World Cup qualifying match against Albania.

PHOTO: AFP

Buffon reaches 1,000

Italy cruise past Albania; Spain thrash Israel

AFP, Paris



Italy kept pace with Spain in European World Cup qualifying as goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon played his 1,000th professional match in a 2-0 victory over Albania on Friday.

A first-half Daniele De Rossi penalty and late second from Ciro Immobile was enough to earn the Azzurri three points but they remain behind Spain on goal difference at the top of Group G after La Rioja downed Israel 4-1.

Manchester City forward David Silva and Chelsea's Diego Costa were on the scoresheet alongside Vitolo and Isco, while Lior Refaelov netted Israel's consolation.

In Palermo it was a day for Buffon to savour as he won a European record 168th cap and helped Italy extend their unbeaten run in qualifiers to 55 matches (41 wins, 14 draws).

De Rossi converted the spot-kick on 12 minutes after Migjen Basha, one of six Albanians playing his club trade in Italy, brought down Andrea Belotti.

Albanian fans threw flares onto the pitch in disgust and when they did so again just before the hour mark, the game was suspended for five minutes.

Immobile made the game safe 10 minutes from time by heading home a Davide Zappacosta cross.

"At the start, there was too much tension, we tried to do too much and missed some fluidity," said Italy coach Gianpietro Ventura. "But we were never in danger."

Spain had their game wrapped up

by half-time in Gijon as Silva drove home a pass from Jordi Alba before Vitolo's shot in first half injury time squirmed under Israel goalkeeper Ofir Marciano.

Diego Costa headed home a Thiago Alcantara corner on 51 minutes.

Refaelov gave the visitors something to cheer with a left-foot effort on 76 minutes, just moments after Rami Gershon had struck the post with a header.

But Iago Aspas teed up Isco to put the gloss on a comfortable win two minutes from time.

Defeat saw Israel slip four points behind the two Group G heavyweights with five games left to play and only the pool winners guaranteed a place at Russia 2018.

"I am very happy with my goal, but the victory is the most important thing," said Silva. "We needed to win to stay ahead of the rest."

In the other group game, Macedonia got their first points of the qualifying campaign with a 3-0 win at Liechtenstein, who remain pointless.

Captain Seamus Coleman suffered a broken leg as the Republic of Ireland and Wales drew 0-0 in Dublin in Group D.

Neil Taylor was shown a straight red card for the scything challenge that left Irish defender Coleman clutching his shattered lower leg and screaming in pain as Shane Long tried to comfort him.

"It's been confirmed by our doctor that he's broken his leg," said Ireland boss Martin O'Neill. "It's a big, big loss."

It was a costly game for Wales who saw their captain Gareth Bale booked for a high boot on John O'Shea meaning he, like Taylor, will miss the next qualifier away to Serbia in June.

Serbia moved top of the group after coming from behind to win 3-1 in Georgia.

Nika Kacharava gave the hosts a fifth minute lead but Dusan Tadic equalised from the penalty spot on the stroke of half-time.

Aleksandar Mitrovic gave Serbia the lead before Mijat Gacinovic sealed the victory late on.

Serbia now lead the Republic on goal difference with Wales and Austria, 2-0 winners over Moldova, four points behind.

Croatia went three points clear at the top of Group I with a 1-0 victory over Ukraine courtesy of Nikola Kalinic's goal seven minutes from half-time.

Iceland moved up to second with a 2-1 win at Kosovo, whose wait for a first competitive victory goes on.

Bjorn Sigurdarson gave the visitors a 25th minute lead before Gylfi Sigurdsson doubled the advantage from the spot 10 minutes later after Benjamin Kololli had brought down Birkir Saervarsson.

But seven minutes into the second period Atthe Nuhui headed home a Herolind Shala corner to give Kosovo a lifeline — although it wasn't enough.

A brace from Cenk Tosun kept Turkey's qualifying hopes alive as they beat Finland 2-0 to stay fourth, five points off Croatia.

SA make 123 on rainy day

AFP, Hamilton

South Africa prepared themselves to bat long, through rain disruptions, to make the most of New Zealand's bungled use of the review system on day one of the third Test in Hamilton on Saturday.

"We've got a long way to go to get a good total," Hashim Amla said after his 50 and an unbeaten 33 from Faf du Plessis helped the Proteas recover from a disastrous start on a rain-disrupted day in which only 41 overs were possible.

From being five for two in the fourth over, South Africa were 123 for four at stumps while New Zealand had blown their review opportunities.

They have the advantage of knowing New Zealand have no reviews left before the 80th over which has already cost them the chance to remove du Plessis.

Just 13 balls after using up their second review they were powerless to react when the umpires missed a faint edge which should have seen du Plessis caught behind for 16.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: 123 for 4 (Amla 50, du Plessis 33 not out; de Grandhomme 43-2, Henry 25-2)

Kuldeep four-for turns it around

AFP, Dharamsala



Wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav said it was a dream come true to grab four wickets on debut and spin India right back into the game after Steve Smith hit his third ton of the series on Saturday.

Kuldeep was informed on the morning of the series-deciding match that he would be handed his Test cap with skipper Virat Kohli having failed to recover from his shoulder injury. But the 22-year-old showed few signs of nervousness, bewitching the Aussie batsmen with his guile and unorthodox action to return with figures of 4-68.

"I am very happy. It's a dream come true for me. In a Test match I could not have asked for more than this," Kuldeep said after the first day's play.

He also revealed he had learnt some tricks of the trade from none other than Aussie spin legend Shane Warne, after scripting a memorable debut against Australia in Dharamsala.

"If you see the first wicket, it was not a chinaman, it was a flipper that I have learnt from Warne," said Yadav. "It's fun to learn it for him and then dismiss batsmen from his own country. Warne is my idol and I have followed him since childhood, even now I watch his videos."

"It was a dream come true when I first met

and talked to him [Warne]. I have continued to follow his advice. Now he has promised me to meet again and hold a training session with me."

The visitors squandered a promising start to be bowled out for 300 just minutes before the close of play after winning the toss and electing to bat first.

The Aussies owed their total to Smith who smashed 14 fours in his fine 111-run knock to become the first Australian skipper to hit three centuries in a Test series in India. The 27-year-old also became only the second visiting captain to achieve the feat after England's Alastair Cook.

The Aussie looked firmly in control, having cruised to 131-1 at lunch but Kuldeep's scintillating spell meant the tourists lost their remaining wickets in the last two sessions.

At stumps, India had played out one over without scoring any runs.

"Credit to the Indians for bowling well, we had to grind ourselves to get to 300," said wicketkeeper-batsman Matthew Wade, who made 57.

"It was good to get some runs but it's 1-1 in the series and we need to play really well tomorrow (Sunday)."

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 300 all out (Warner 56, Smith 111, Wade 57; Kuldeep 4-68, Yadav 2-69)

INDIA: 0 for no loss (Rahul 0 not out, Vijay 0 not out)

Dempsey back in style

AFP, San Francisco



Clint Dempsey made a fairytale return to international duty with a hattrick as the United States reignited their 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign with a 6-0 thrashing of Honduras on Friday.

Dempsey, playing his first international since recovering from a heart problem that forced a six-month layoff, scored goals in each half as the Americans romped to a crucial victory at San Jose's Avaya Stadium.

The US had suffered back-to-back defeats in their opening two games of CONCACAF's final qualifying round in November, losses that led to the sacking of Jurgen Klinsmann and the reappointment of veteran coach Bruce Arena.

Arena had warned his players that nothing less than three points would do against the Hondurans and the Americans did not disappoint, producing a dominant display against the Central Americans.

Though Dempsey grabbed the headlines with his hattrick, Borussia Dortmund teenager Christian Pulisic was the heartbeat of a scintillating US performance, scoring one goal and creating three others during the rout.

Los Angeles Galaxy forward Sebastian Lletget and captain Michael Bradley scored the other American goals on a night when almost everything went right for the hosts.

The US effectively sealed victory with a devastating first half-hour which saw the home side race into a 3-0 lead.

Lletget opened the scoring after only five minutes, tucking away the rebound after Honduras goalkeeper Donis Escobar was unable to grasp Pulisic's low shot.

Lletget's maiden World Cup goal was soured by his exit barely 10 minutes later when he limped off injured following a rugged tackle from Ever Alvarado that earned the Honduras defender a caution.

In the 27th minute the USA doubled their lead when Bradley skipped clear of the Honduras defence before aiming an angled shot into the bottom corner for his 16th international goal on his 129th appearance.

Independence Day match today

SPORTS REPORTER

An Independence Day Exhibition T20 cricket match will be held at the BCB National Cricket Academy ground today.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced two separate teams comprising former cricketers for the match which will start from 10.30am.

SQUADS

BANGLADESH RED: Shahriar Hossain, Javed Omar, Akram Khan, Mushfiqur Rahman, Minhajul Abedin, Naimur Rahman, Khaled Mashud, Golam Nowsher Prince, Jamal Uddin, Mohammad Rafique, Hasibul Hossain, Hasanuzzaman, Shafiuddin Ahmed and Mahmudul Hasan.

Manager: Sajjad Ahmed.

Coach: Wahidul Gani.

BANGLADESH GREEN: Mehrab Hossain, Hannan Sarker, Jahangir Alam, Ehsanul Haque, Rafiqul Islam, Neeyamur Rashid, Harunur Rashid, Enamul Haque, Mohammad Selim, Saifullah Khan, Anisur Rahman, Alamgir Kabir, Talha Jubaier and Faisal Hossain.

Manager: Golam Faruque Chowdhury.

Coach: Dipu Roy Chowdhury.

ASIA CUP ARCHERY Team silver for women

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team won the silver medal in the compound event of the Asia Cup Archery's World Ranking Tournament in Bangkok yesterday, said a press release from the Bangladesh Archery Federation.

The Bangladesh team, comprised of Rokhana Akter, Sushmita Banik and Bonna Akter, settled for silver after losing to Chinese Taipei by 219-224 points in the final. They had beaten Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar in the earlier rounds to book their berth in the final.

Earlier, Shyamoli Roy had bagged a bronze medal in the women's individual recurve bow event by beating her Filipino counterpart in a medal-deciding match on Thursday.

The Bangladesh archery contingent is scheduled to return home today.

Shanghai player gets 6-month ban

AFP, Beijing



A Chinese player with Shenhua Shanghai has been handed a six month ban by the Chinese Football Association for stomping on Belgian international Axel Witsel, an action which has already earned him a hefty fine.

During a bad-tempered encounter on March 11, Qin Sheng received a straight red card for stomping on the left foot of Tianjin Quanjian's Witsel as they waited for a corner to be taken.

Qin has already been suspended for three matches in the Chinese Super League and his club has slapped him with a 300,000 yuan (\$43,000, 41,000 euro) fine, a huge sum for many Chinese footballers who do not command the inflated salaries of their foreign teammates.

But in a statement released Friday the football association said it had decided to increase the punishment by banning Qin from all CSL matches for six months, until September 11.

The CFA also handed him a further fine of 120,000 yuan for the "malicious" tackle which had "a huge and deplorable impact on society".

"The offending club must seriously strengthen the education of its players and officials, clean up morals on the ground, stop violations of the rules," Wang Xiaoping, head of the CFA's disciplinary committee, said.

Shanghai Shenhua had also denounced Qin's "abominable" behaviour and threatened to drop him for the rest of his career if he did not mend his ways.

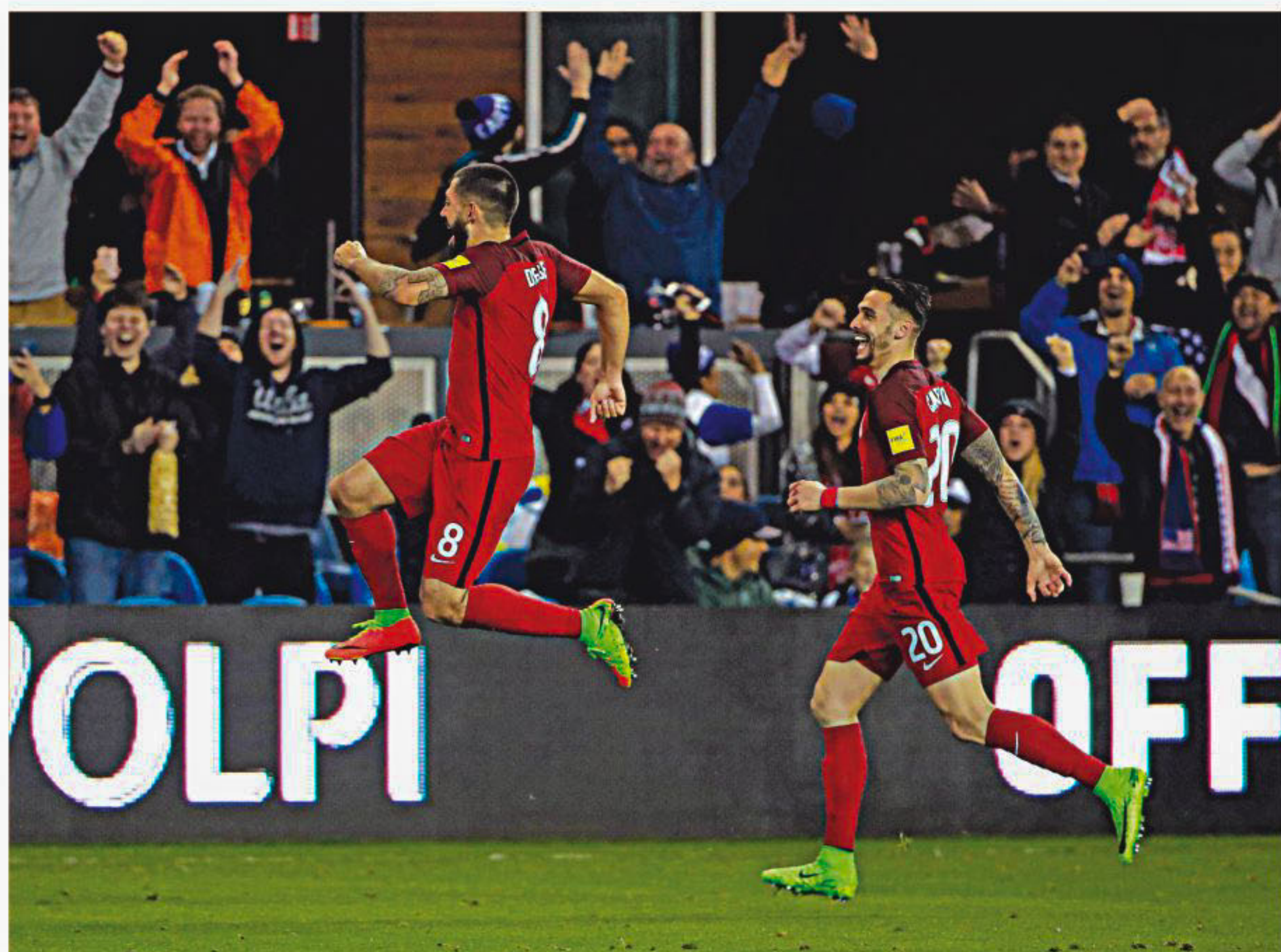
Beach v'ball from Mar 29

SPORTS REPORTER

The IFIC Bank National Beach Volleyball Championship will be held at the Sugandha Point of Cox's Bazar from March 29 to April 3, informed organisers at a press conference at the National Volleyball Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

The men's event will be competed by nine teams while the women's event will be competed by ten teams. Sponsors IFIC Bank's CEO and managing director Shah Alam Sarwar will inaugurate the championship as the chief guest on March 29.

Meanwhile, the press conference also informed that a 13-member contingent of Bangladesh under-19 volleyball team will leave for Myanmar tomorrow to take part in the 11th Asian Boys U-19 Volleyball Championship to be held at the Myanmar capital of Naypyidaw from March 28 to April 5.



United States forward Clint Dempsey (L) jumps for joy after scoring his third goal against Honduras during their 2018 World Cup qualifier at the Avaya Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP