



Lighter whistle helps fuel faster, fiercer WC

REUTERS, New York

A more lenient refereeing style that allows officials to prioritise the flow of the game over minor contact has emerged as one of the defining features of the World Cup, as the tournament heads into the knockout phase.

Referees have been encouraged to avoid whistling for trifling fouls, helping reduce stoppages and increase ball-in-play time in a tournament already marked by high-scoring matches and relentless intensity.

Experts in data science, physical preparation and refereeing say the approach has combined with the rise of stronger, faster players to produce a quicker and more physically demanding World Cup than ever before.

The changes have been widely welcomed, but specialists warn that players who are not fully fit — particularly those returning from injuries affecting explosive movements such as sprinting and acceleration — could struggle to cope with the demands of the tournament.

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French superstar Kylian Mbappe has the Golden Boot firmly in his sights as France take on Sweden in the FIFA World Cup Round of 32 in New Jersey tomorrow. The 27-year-old, who has already scored four goals at this tournament to become his country's all-time leading scorer, is hot on Lionel Messi's trail of six goals in the competition and the all-time record of 19.

PHOTO: AFP

Sweden in the firing line of France

REUTERS, New York

France's glittering attack carried them smoothly through the World Cup group stage, but coach Didier Deschamps still has issues to solve on the left side of his team before Tuesday's Round of 32 meeting with Sweden.

France finished top of Group I with a perfect record, scoring 10 goals in wins over Senegal, Iraq and Norway, with Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele and Michael Olise giving them arguably the most devastating attacking unit in the tournament.

Yet the left flank has looked less settled. Theo Hernandez has not fully convinced at left back, and Lucas Digne is expected to come into the side against Sweden, bringing more defensive security and a steadier delivery from wide areas.

Further forward, Bradley Barcola is expected to replace Desire Doue on the left of France's attack, with Deschamps looking for more direct running, pace in transition and natural width on the flank opposite the Olise-Mbappe-Dembele axis.

The adjustment would not change France's overall balance but could give them a more coherent left side against a Sweden team likely to defend deep, attack at set pieces and look to expose any space behind France's defence, which has sometimes been caught off guard.

The return of William Saliba in central defence will, at least, bring some stability back.

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Power outages persist, disrupt life, businesses

2 plants back online; rural areas bear the brunt

SHAMIMA RITA

Power outages continued to disrupt life and businesses in parts of the country yesterday despite the resumption of operations at two power plants that had shut down due to technical faults.

Power cuts forced factories to spend more on diesel for generators, disrupted students' studies, threatened shrimp farms by affecting aeration systems, caused sleepless nights and interrupted FIFA World Cup viewing, residents and business owners said.

Although the situation improved yesterday, power officials said supply shortages persisted in many distribution areas, particularly in rural areas.

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku told parliament that the country had largely recovered from Sunday's disruption, when the major power plants went offline, knocking around 3,000MW out of the national grid.

"Yesterday (Sunday) was bad. Today, we have been able to recover from that situation," he said, adding that electricity generation had risen to 14,500MW against a demand of 14,839MW, leaving a deficit of 339MW.

Despite the improvement, load shedding of 1,404MW at the substation level was forecast for yesterday evening's peak, with Mymensingh expected to face the largest

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Bangladesh still lacks proper identification of mosquito breeding and transmission clusters, as well as an effective early warning system.

Entomologist
GM Saifur Rahman

5 die in a single day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people died from dengue in the 24 hours till yesterday morning, the highest single-day death toll from the mosquito-borne disease this year.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, 124 new dengue patients were hospitalised across the country during the same period.

Of the five deaths, two were reported in Chattogram, while one each was reported in Dhaka North

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Dengue cases may surge in July

Experts call for urgent mosquito control measures



AT A GLANCE

Deaths rose from 1 in May to 18 by June 30

Cases increased from 714 in May to 5,924 in June

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen dengue control activities

Identify, destroy Aedes breeding sites

Set up early warning system to identify hotspots

Intensify larviciding operations in high-risk areas

HELEMUL ALAM

Dengue cases and deaths rose sharply in June compared with the previous month, raising concerns that Bangladesh could face a much larger outbreak in the coming weeks unless immediate control measures are taken.

Experts warned that dengue cases in Dhaka could double in July and rise three to four times by August compared with June if authorities fail to strengthen mosquito control efforts.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), dengue deaths rose from one in May to 18 by June 30, while reported cases increased from 714 to 5,924 during the same period.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said Bangladesh is likely to see a significant rise in dengue cases over the next two months, with the greatest concern outside the capital.

"Based on our forecasting model, a major surge is expected in August, particularly in districts under Barishal and Chattogram divisions, as well as several other parts of the country," he said.

In Dhaka, dengue cases are expected to at least double in July compared with June, while August could record three to four times as many cases as June, according to the forecast.

To prevent the projected surge, Bashar urged the Ministry of Local Government to immediately strengthen dengue control activities across all district towns.

"The priority should be eliminating Aedes mosquito breeding sites and intensifying larviciding operations," he said, adding that community participation is equally important.

Residents should regularly inspect their homes and surrounding areas to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds, he added.

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Make progress in killing, disappearance trials visible

Shafiqur also calls for reopening Ad-din hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday



called for visible progress in the trials over enforced disappearances, killings, and other alleged atrocities committed during what he described as "the country's fascist rule."

Speaking during the general discussion on the proposed national budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year in parliament, he also urged the government to increase allowances for all freedom fighters, reopen Ad-din Medical College Hospital on "humanitarian and logical" grounds, and put an end to what he called "the political practice of cutting the opposition into pieces."

Referring to the trials over enforced disappearances and

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Huge 'magma systems' found inside Mars

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

There are "vast hidden magma systems" inside of Mars, scientists say — and it could have major implications for the search for alien life.

The new findings indicate that Mars once had enormous systems of magma like those found on Earth, the researcher say, despite the fact that it does not have the plate tectonics that were thought to be required for them.

That in turn could have major implications for other rocky planets, including suggesting that more of them might be habitable than we thought.

Mars has been described as a "stagnant lid", because unlike our own Earth its surface is not broken up into tectonic plates that move. Those tectonic plates are responsible for the volcanoes and continents on Earth, which led researchers to believe that Mars could not have its own complex crust.

The new study, however, suggests that Mars could in fact have its own highly evolved crust, produced in a different way.



Sacks of unhusked paddy fill the banks of the Meghna river in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj upazila, where one of the country's largest trading hubs has come alive after the seasonal harvest. Regional farmers ferry freshly harvested paddy by trawlers to the market, with 80,000 to 100,000 maunds traded daily. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY



Ahsan Habib made acting NBR chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Ahsan Habib, a member of the National Board of Revenue, as the acting chairman of the country's apex tax authority.

According to a notification issued by the Public Administration Ministry yesterday, Ahsan, who is currently serving as the NBR's Member (Tax Administration and Human Resource Management), has been given the additional

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