



India awarded hosting rights of 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup

Press Trust Of India

KUALA LUMPUR: India will host the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup as the sport's continental body on Tuesday awarded the showpiece to the country with an aim to maximise the promotion of the game.

India was awarded the tournament by the Asian Football Confederation's Women's Committee here as part of the AFC's commitment to grow the women's game.

It was felt that India, which will also have the experience of hosting the FIFA Women's U-17 World Cup later this year, was best placed among the three bidders Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan were the other competing candidates to maximise the promotion of the women's game.

The venues proposed by India D Y Patil Stadium, Trans Stadia Arena and Fatorda Stadium are also being used in the FIFA tournaments, the AFC said.

India was the host of the AFC U-16 Championships in 2016 and the FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017 and the committee agreed the country could continue raising the standards of the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

AFC's Women's Committee Chairperson Mahfuza Akhter Kiron said: "India offers the best opportunities to build the event commercially as well as increasing the value and India is also committed to developing the women's game and while all three were strong bids, India stands out."

The committee decided that the expanded AFC Women's Asian Cup -- from eight to 12 teams -- will be played in three groups of four teams with a minimum of 25 matches with eight teams

qualifying for the newly introduced quarter-finals.

"This is the most important competition in women's football in Asia. The last edition was a major step forward. It was played in Jordan, the first time a West Asian nation had hosted the event. Now we are looking to build on that legacy," Akhter added. The committee agreed that the minimum length of the competition would be 17 days and that the administration would be mandated to organise the relevant play-off matches depending on the AFC slots at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

The dates of the tournament are likely to be in late October and early November 2022 and the match schedule will be worked out keeping in mind the start of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The committee also discussed about the phased introduction of the AFC Women's Champions League, following the successful AFC/FIFA pilot championship in the Republic

of India.

The pilot programme will continue in 2020 with a maximum of six invited clubs.

In 2021 and 2022, there will be eight invited clubs and by 2023 and 2024, this will grow to a minimum of 12 which will be open to all member associations and in 2025.

VIRATH KOHLI

says workload takes toll, but ready to play

Press Trust Of India

WELLINGTON: India captain Virat Kohli is preparing himself for a "rigorous three years" of playing all three formats after which he might reassess his workload amid a "transition phase" setting in.

The world's premier batsman is looking at the "bigger picture" in Indian cricket with two T20 and one 50-over World Cup in the next three years after which he might decide on playing two of the three formats. "My mindset is on the bigger picture as I prepare myself for a rigorous three years from now and after that we might have a different conversation," Kohli replied when asked if he is having second thoughts about quitting at least one format after the 2021 World T20 in India. The skipper was speaking to the media ahead of the two-Test series against New Zealand starting on Friday. He didn't mince any words while admitting that fatigue and workload management are issues that need to be discussed at all forums.

"It's not a conversation you can hide away from in any manner. It is around eight years now that I have been playing 300 days a year, which in-

cludes travelling and practice sessions. And intensity is right up there all the time. It does take a toll on you," the Indian captain was forthright in his reply. Kohli, who will turn 31 this year, agreed that periodic breaks have worked well for him. "It's not that the players are not thinking about it all the time. We do choose to take lot more breaks individually even though the schedule might not allow you to. Especially from guys, who play all the formats."

For Kohli, it is not just about his performance alone but also the leadership which needs him to have his brain ticking all the time to devise strategies.

"It's not easy being captain, having that intensity in the practice sessions. It does take a toll on you. Periodic breaks seem to work pretty okay for me."

"At a time where the body can't take anymore, maybe when I am 34 or 35, we will have a different conversation. For the next two to three years I have no issues at all," he said. The skipper understands his presence and peak performance is crucial till the 2023 World Cup after which he understands that the next phase of transition will set in. "I can keep going on with the same intensity and also understand that the team wants a lot of my contribution in the next two to three years, so that I can ease into another transition that we faced five-six years ago," he said referring to the retirements of Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.



Henry called into New Zealand's first Test squad as Wagner's cover

Press Trust Of India

WELLINGTON: New Zealand on Wednesday called in pacer Matt Henry for the first Test against India as cover for Neil Wagner, who is awaiting the birth of his first child. Wagner is among New Zealand's senior pacers alongside Trent Boult and Tim Southee. The left-arm fast bowler has an impressive record in Tests, having taken 204 wickets in 47 games at an average of 26.63.

"Neil Wagner will not be joining the squad in Wellington ahead



of the first Test as he and his wife Lana await the birth of their first child. Wagner will remain in Taunanga until the birth. Matt Henry joins the squad tonight as cover," the Black Caps tweeted.

Though Kyle Jamieson is in line to make a Test debut, Henry, who has played 12 Tests and 52 ODIs, is also in the mix.

Henry, however, doesn't have much of a record to boast about in the five-day format, having picked up 30 wickets in 12 games at an average of 50.16.



PCB chief hints at Pakistan giving up Asia Cup hosting rights

Press Trust Of India

Karachi: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ehsan Mani on Wednesday indicated that the country might give up its hosting rights for the Asia Cup T20 tournament this year.

Speaking at the launch of the Pakistan Super League trophy at the National Stadium, Mani said that venue of the Asia Cup would

be decided after taking into account the majority view of all the stakeholders in the Asian Cricket Council. "We have to ensure that earnings of the associate members are not affected. It is not so much about the full members but about the associate members," Mani said.

The ACC is due to meet in first week of March where Mani said venues and other details of the Asia Cup would be finalised.

Mani's statement comes in the backdrop of India's refusal to travel to Pakistan for the tournament and insistence on playing its share of matches at a neutral venue.

India has not toured Pakistan since 2008 while it has also not played a full Test bilateral series with Pakistan since 2007 due to strained political and diplomatic relations. Pakistan did visit India in 2012 to play a short limited-overs

series. Wasim Khan, the Chief Executive Officer of the PCB, also indicated that Pakistan would be willing to forego its hosting rights if it can't hold the full tournament at home.

He said most a neutral venue acceptable to all teams would be finalised. The last Asia Cup in 2018 was held in UAE after the Indian board said it couldn't host Pakistan in India.

Liverpool confirm Delhi as next stop for interactive roadshow LFC World

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Top English Premier League club Liverpool FC has confirmed Delhi as the next stop for its interactive roadshow, LFC World. The unique fan experience will arrive at the city's Select Citywalk Mall on March 7, bringing Liverpool FC directly to supporters in India via the LFC World hub.

LFC World is now in its fourth season, having met thousands of fans in eight countries across the

world since 2016. Liverpool legends Emile Heskey and Jason McAteer will be in town for the event, giving local fans the opportunity to meet former players as well as take part in a range of engaging and interactive activities. Premier League: Liverpool extend perfect start; Aubameyang fires Arsenal Reds in Delhi can also have their photograph taken with one of the most prestigious trophies in world football the UEFA Champions League trophy, which LFC won for the sixth

time last season and various iconic recreations of Anfield such as the Shankly Gates, This Is Anfield sign and the players' dressing room.

Emile Heskey said: "LFC World Delhi is the place to be for Reds in India. We know not all our fans can get to Anfield, so we want to bring the club closer to them."

"We're really looking forward to visiting Delhi and meeting all of our supporters out there it will be a fantastic experience for us and them!"



PSG's Neymar hits out at club after Borussia Dortmund loss

Agencies

PARIS - Paris St Germain were plunged into fresh turmoil following their 2-1 Champions League defeat at Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday with Neymar criticizing the club for not giving him time to get his sharpness back after injury ahead of the last 16 tie. The French champions, who have been knocked out at the same stage of Europe's elite club competition for the past three seasons, looked unusually ponderous, with Neymar a pale shadow of his brilliant

self despite scoring PSG's only goal.

The Brazil forward was playing his first game in more than two weeks after being rested due to a minor rib injury and he thought the club had been overly cautious. "It's hard not to play for four games," Neymar told reporters. "Unfortunately it was not my choice, it came from the club, the doctors, they're the ones who made the decision, one that I did not like. "We've had a lot of discussions on that. I wanted to play, I was feeling well but the club were

afraid, and in the end I'm the one suffering."

Coach Thomas Tuchel, who is likely to come under fire for not bringing on strikers Edison Cavani or Mauro Icardi in the final stages despite trailing, said Neymar "lacked rhythm and competitive action". Last week, PSG sports director Leonardo fumed at the "negativity" surrounding the club ahead of the tie. With Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, "two of the four best players in the world", in their ranks, PSG should not fear anyone, he argued.

But while the pair combined for PSG's goal on Tuesday they were off the pace for most of the game and ended up being outshone by Norwegian teen Erling Haaland, who netted a double to give Dortmund the advantage heading into the second leg in Paris on March 11.

The result also brought back memories of previous embarrassing exits for PSG, who have splashed out more than a billion euros on transfers since Qatar Sports Investment took over in 2011. Last season they were elimi-

nated by Manchester United when they lost the return leg 3-1 after winning 2-0 at Old Trafford, and in 2017 a humiliating 6-1 loss at the Nou Camp followed a resounding 4-0 home win against Barcelona. Tuchel, who said they "played with too much fear," has drawn criticism for his unexpected 3-4-3 system, though centre back Presnel Kimpembe said the coach was not at fault.

"The defeat has nothing to do with tactics," said Kimpembe. "We are the ones on the pitch."