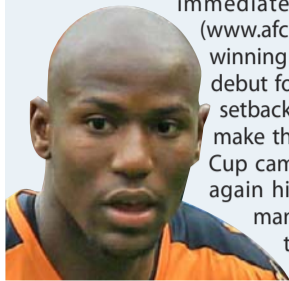


## AFOBE GETS CLEARANCE TO PLAY FOR BOURNEMOUTH

**LONDON:** Bournemouth striker Benik Afobe will not be stopped from playing for his club during the African Nations Cup finals after electing to miss the tournament in Gabon. His club said yesterday they had received clearance from the Democratic Republic of Congo to use Afobe, who pulled out of selection for the tournament in order to cement his place with Bournemouth. "AFC Bournemouth have received clearance from DR Congo, which will enable Benik Afobe to resume playing for the club with immediate effect," the club said in a statement on their website (www.afcb.co.uk). Afobe, who switched international allegiance after winning under-21 caps for England, had been expected to make his debut for the Congolese next week and his withdrawal was a huge setback for the team. They would have been entitled to ask FIFA to make the 23-year-old Afobe sit on the sidelines until their Nations Cup campaign was over but have chosen not to. Afobe's decision again highlighted the contentious club versus country dilemma many players have faced with the Nations Cup taking place in the middle of the European club season. — Reuters

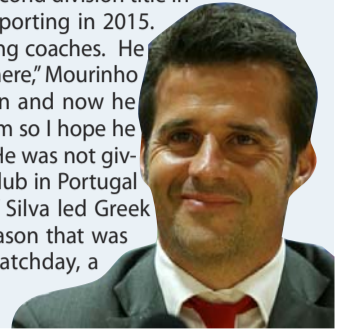


## WAHBI KHAZRI CLEARED TO COMPETE AT NATIONS CUP

**TUNIS:** Tunisia's Wahbi Khazri will be fit to play at the African Nations Cup despite suffering an ankle injury in a friendly international on Sunday, the Tunisian Football Federation said yesterday. The 25-year-old Sunderland winger was carried off on a stretcher in Cairo on Sunday when his team lost to Egypt in a warm-up match before the weekend start of the tournament in Gabon, raising an alarm about his availability. "It's not a serious injury. It's a benign ankle sprain, he will be able to play in Gabon," the federation said in a statement on its website. Khazri is one of Tunisia's best hopes for the tournament despite a lack of game time for his Premier League club over the last few months. Tunisia face Senegal, Algeria and Zimbabwe in Group B at the Nations Cup. They face Senegal in their opening game on Sunday. — Reuters

## MOURINHO BACKS SILVA TO SUCCEED AT HULL

**OLD TRAFFORD:** Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho vouched for fellow Portuguese Marco Silva's competence and backed the new Hull City head coach to succeed ahead of first leg of EFL Cup semi-final between the teams at Old Trafford. Critics have questioned the process behind Hull's appointment tomorrow of the 39-year old, who guided Portuguese club Estoril to second division title in 2012 before winning the Portuguese Cup with Sporting in 2015. "He is known in Portugal as one of the good young coaches. He went to Greece and nobody knows what he did there," Mourinho said of Silva. "Nobody knows he was a champion and now he comes to the big one. It's a big opportunity for him so I hope he loses three matches and wins every (other) one. "He was not given a top job immediately. He did well at a small club in Portugal then he went to Sporting, one of the top three." Silva led Greek side Olympiacos to their 43rd league title last season that was capped by a run of 17 victories from the first matchday, a European record in the 21st century. — Reuters



## INDIA'S OLYMPIC BODY SEEKS TO CLARIFY CONTENTIOUS AWARDS

**NEW DELHI:** Already threatened with being suspended and stripped of its government funding, the Indian Olympic Association has stepped back from a proposal to appoint two tainted former officials as honorary life presidents. Tirlochan Singh, a senior IOA official, said IOA president N. Ramachandran wrote a letter to the sports minister on Monday explaining that the honorary awards, which caused a furore within the Indian sports community, were just a proposal and not been bestowed. India's sports ministry earlier said government recognition of the IOA would be revoked unless the honorary positions for Suresh Kalmadi and Abhay Singh Chautala were withdrawn. Kalmadi and

Chautala, former IOA presidents, had been unanimously proposed for the positions, which were largely ceremonial and did not give any voting rights, during an annual IOA meeting last month in Chennai. There was no immediate comment by India's Sports Minister Vijay Goel yesterday. Kalmadi spent time in jail on corruption charges relating to the 2010 Commonwealth Games before being released on bail. Chautala is facing trial on finance-related matters. While Kalmadi said he would not accept the IOA's honorary post until he was cleared in court, Chautala reportedly said he'd leave a decision on the award to the International Olympic Committee. — AP



## NO 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD CLINCHES VICTORY AT GT500 CLASS RACE WINS 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT SERIES

**TOKYO:** A strong and consistent run by the No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD, driven by Heikki Kovalainen and Kohei Hirate, in Round 8 of the 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT series kept the Lexus camp in the driver's seat throughout the final leg of the GT500 class race. The final round was held at the Twin Ring Motegi in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan, where other Lexus racers too put up a strong fight for the big prize.

Pole positions in the final race were dominated by Lexus cars as No. 6 LEXUS RC FWAKO'S 4CR and No. 19 LEXUS RC FWeds Sport ADVAN took the second and third spots. No. 36 LEXUS RC Fau TOM' Sand No. 37 LEXUS RC F Kee Per TOM'S battled fiercely to take the fourth and fifth positions.

Round 8 came at the back of a historic rescheduling, when the aftermath of the Kumamoto Earthquakes pushed Round 3 from its original date, leading to a reshuffle that saw both the Round 8 qualifier and race taking place on the same day. The changes had little impact on No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD's performance as it extended its pole position from Round 3 to the Round 8 qualifier.

The No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD was in command from the onset, with close contest coming from No. 6 LEXUS RC FWAKO'S 4CR and No. 37 LEXUS RC F Kee Per TOM'S in the initial half. Competitor car No. 1 lost its shine and was left starting in the eighth spot. Smooth work at the pit stop meant that No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD was back to the racing track in the leading position, as driver Heikki Kovalainen braced for the final laps of the all-important race. A brief moment of worry for the lead racer emerged in the form of No. 6 LEXUS RC FWAKO'S 4CR when the car started to close in, but driver Heikki Kovalainen's expert skills ensured that the he sped past the checkered flag like a tracer bullet. The second pole finisher came in just behind 0.472 seconds.

The celebrations were special for Heikki Kovalainen who recorded his first win after he started competing in the previous season of SUPER GT. Adding to this, the victory also handed the pair of Heikki Kovalainen and Kohei Hirate the season's Drivers Championship title.



Kohei Hirate expressed his emotions: "I am happy to have won the championship, but more than anything, I wanted to end the season with a win, and I am very happy that goal was realized."

Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are beaming with pride and happiness after having witnessed a decisive win by the No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD. What makes this victory special is the strong and consistent performance that the team carried from the previous round (Round 3), where five Lexus teams dominated the top positions, from the sixth all the way up to the runners-up spot. Throughout the final race, our Lexus teams were a force to reckon with as the winning pair gave their competitors few chances to dislodge them from the leading position. We congratulate the racers and support staff for their tireless efforts throughout the competitive season." Yoshitsugu added: "We would like to take this

opportunity to thank our fans for their constant support. Motorsport events are an important training ground, where our engineers work closely with racers to process their feedback and incorporate the on-field experience into the cars. This dedication and collaborations with sports personalities, car enthusiasts and valued customers inspire us on a quest for creating 'ever-better' cars."

### Race Notes:

- No. 39 LEXUS RC F DENSO KOBELCO SARD (HeikkiKovalainen and KoheiHirate)
- Race: 1st, 53 laps
- Best Lap: 1'39.971
- No. 6 LEXUS RC FWAKO'S 4CR (Kazuya Oshima and Andrea Caldarelli)
- Race: 2nd, 53 laps
- Best Lap: 1'40.272
- No. 19 LEXUS RC FWeds Sport ADVAN (YuhiSekiguchi and Yuji Kunimoto)
- Race: 3rd, 53 laps
- Best Lap: 1'40.621

## KENYA SETS UP DOCTORS NETWORK TO FIGHT DOPING

**NAIROBI:** Athletics Kenya (AK) has drawn up a list of accredited doctors who will be responsible for examining samples from elite athletes and ensure they are not tempted to use banned drugs, AK's chairman said yesterday.

The initiative is part of Kenya's effort to clean up its image after a series of doping cases brought the nation to the brink of being barred from the 2016 Rio Olympics. After last-gasp measures to reassure the international authorities, Kenyan athletes were allowed to participate in Brazil and secured the biggest haul of medals by a nation renowned for middle and long distance runners.

"This plan is such that a first sample of trusted and skilled Kenyan doctors has been identified to form the Kenyan

Doctors Network," AK Chairman Jackson Tuwei told reporters. "Their responsibility is to take care of Kenyan top-level runners and limit bad medical practices and doping promotion behaviour by some Kenyan health professionals," he said.

AK has prepared a list of 109 top athletes who would benefit from support by the doctors and drafted regulations that would make it mandatory for the elite athletes to use the network.

"Failure to comply will result in impossibility for the athletes to represent Kenya in international competitions," he said. The new rules will come into effect later this month. "We therefore ask the athletes, coaches, officials, managers and health professionals to follow this strictly," Tuwei said. — Reuters



**LA PAZ:** Peugeot's French pilot Sebastien Loeb works on his car at the bivouac in Uyuni, Bolivia, after Stage 7 of the 2017 Dakar Rally between La Paz and Uyuni, on Monday. — AFP

## REIGNING CHAMP EXTENDS DAKAR LEAD IN BOLIVIAN MUD

**UYUNI:** Frenchman Stephane Peterhansel won Monday's Dakar Rally special after narrowly edging Peugeot teammate and compatriot Sebastien Loeb in the first part of the rain-hit seventh stage between La Paz and Uyuni in Bolivia.

Reigning champion Peterhansel was just 48 seconds faster over the 161km route but almost doubled his overnight lead in the overall standings on Loeb, to 1min 57sec.

The 2009 champion, South Africa's Giniel de Villiers, in his Toyota was third some 3mins 33sec behind Peterhansel over the special. "It's the second stage won on the rally. You take everything you can get. We'll tally up the numbers after," said Peterhansel, a record six-time Dakar winner in both the car and motorbike categories. "It's going to be a scrap but it was already like that last year. With Seb but also with Cyril (Despres), who isn't far behind (fourth at 14min 01sec). And then there's Nani (Roma) who remains super quick and navigates well." Spaniard Roma, the 2014 win-

ner and a former motorbike champion, is third overall at 11min 07sec in his Toyota.

American Ricky Brabec became the sixth different winner in as many stages in the bikes race as he finished close to two minutes ahead of Portugal's Paulo Goncalves.

KTM rider Sam Sunderland was 4mins 43sec down on Brabec in third on the day, but the Briton remains the overall leader after gaining time on Chile's Pablo Quintanilla.

Sunderland is 17min 45sec clear of the Husqvarna rider. Bolivia's stages in the gruelling 9,000km race have been badly affected by the weather with Friday's run from Tupiza to Oruro shortened, Saturday's stage cancelled and Monday's run cut from 320km to 161km after more torrential rain.

Organisers confirmed yesterday's stage due to feature a 492km timed section would also be altered slightly due to flooding that has left a section of the route impassable, shaving around 70km off the planned special. — AFP

