



SAO PAULO: Argentina's Lionel Messi (left) and Brazil's Neymar are seen after employees of the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) entered to the field during the South American qualification football match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 between Brazil and Argentina at the Neo Química Arena in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday. — AFP

FIFA 'regrets' chaos at Brazil vs Argentina match

Uproar as clash abandoned following COVID controversy

LAUSANNE: FIFA said yesterday it regretted the chaotic scenes that preceded the suspension of the World Cup qualifier between Brazil and Argentina and a decision on possible disciplinary action would be taken "in due course".

The match at Sao Paulo's Neo Química Arena on Sunday was halted when Brazilian health officials ran onto the pitch seven minutes after kick-off, triggering a melee involving team officials and players from both sides. The officials intervened just hours after health authorities in Brazil said four England-based players in Argentina's squad should be placed in "immediate quarantine" for breaching COVID-19 protocols. The sides were just seven minutes into the match, which was played in front of only 1,500 spectators because of coronavirus restrictions.

"FIFA regrets the scenes preceding the suspension of the match between Brazil and Argentina for the CONMEBOL qualifiers of the FIFA World Cup 2022 which prevented millions of fans from enjoying a match between two of the most important football nations in the world," football's world governing body said in a statement.

"The first match official reports have been sent to FIFA. This information will be analyzed by the

competent disciplinary bodies and a decision will be taken in due course," FIFA added. Brazil's National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA) said the Argentinian Premier League players — Giovanni Lo Celso and Cristian Romero of Tottenham, and Aston Villa's Emiliano Martinez and Emiliano Buendia — had given "false information" when they entered Brazil.

Romero, Lo Celso and Martinez were all in Argentina's starting lineup for Sunday's game, prompting the intervention of ANVISA officials. In scenes of confusion on the pitch, Argentina captain Lionel Messi and his teammates left the field while Brazil's squad began a practice game.

After the game was abandoned, Messi criticized the intervention of the Brazilian officials. "We've been here for three days, why are you doing this just now?" he said on Argentina's TyC network. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni told reporters that "at no time were we told that they could not play

the game". The Argentina team arrived back in Buenos Aires early yesterday.

The controversy comes after nine Brazilians based in the Premier League failed to travel to South America following objections from their clubs.

'Series of breaches'

Brazilian officials were unrepentant about the decision to halt the game, however. "We got to this point because everything that ANVISA directed, from the first moment, was not fulfilled," ANVISA director Antonio Barra Torres said on Brazilian



Premier League players "breached quarantine"

television.

The four players "were directed to remain isolated while awaiting deportation, but they did not comply. They went to the stadium, and they entered the field, in a series of breaches," the official added.

A government order dating from June 23 prohibits the entry into Brazilian territory of any foreign person from the United Kingdom, India or

South Africa, to prevent the spread of variants of the coronavirus.

"ANVISA considers that this situation represents a serious health risk and recommends that the local health authorities (of Sao Paulo) order the immediate quarantine of the players, who are prohibited from taking part in any activity and from remaining on Brazilian territory," the agency said in a statement earlier Sunday.

The agency also said Argentina's delegation had been warned in a meeting on Saturday that the players at the center of the controversy must be quarantined and should not play any part in Sunday's game. South American football's governing body CONMEBOL said in a statement that the game had been "suspended" but did not say when or if the match would be replayed, or whether either team would forfeit the game.

"By decision of the match referee, the match organized by FIFA between Brazil and Argentina for the qualifiers for the World Cup is suspended," CONMEBOL said in a statement. "The referee and the match commissioner will submit a report to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee, which will determine the steps to follow. These procedures adhere strictly to current regulations." — AFP

India win fourth Test after England collapse

LONDON: Ravindra Jadeja and Jasprit Bumrah sparked a dramatic collapse as India beat England by 157 runs to win the fourth Test at the Oval yesterday and take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series. The tourists bounced back in style following their innings defeat in the third Test at Headingley and cannot now lose the series.

England, set 368 to win, were relatively well-placed at 141-2 after lunch on the last day but Jadeja and Bumrah both struck twice as England lost four wickets for six runs, slumping to 147-6. There was no way back from there. England lost two more wickets before tea including captain and star batsman Joe Root, bidding for a fourth hundred in successive Tests, who played on to recalled all-rounder Shardul Thakur for 36.

Umesh Yadav, in for the dropped Mohammed Shami, then cleaned up the tail to the delight of India fans among a capacity crowd reveling in the south London sunshine. Yadav, who took six wickets in the match, ended proceedings when he had James Anderson caught behind off the new ball shortly after tea.

England have little time to regroup

before the fifth Test at Old Trafford starts on Friday. India's victory came 50 years on from their first Test — and series — win in England at the Oval in 1971. Left-arm spinner Jadeja, again preferred to star off-break bowler Ravichandran Ashwin, was eventually rewarded for a probing spell on a wearing pitch.

Haseeb Hameed, 43 not out overnight, added just 20 more runs in 108 balls yesterday. Jadeja pierced his defense with a delivery that pitched just outside leg stump and turned to clip the top of the opener's off stump.

Ollie Pope, who made 81 in the first innings, was bowled for two by Bumrah giving the fast bowler, gaining significant reverse swing, his 100th Test wicket. Bumrah then took his second wicket in five deliveries when a brilliant yorker clean bowled Jonny Bairstow for a duck.

Ali was powerless to prevent further collapse, the all-rounder also falling for nought when he deflected a Jadeja delivery that turned and bounced out of the rough straight to short leg. England had earlier resumed on 77-0, with Rory Burns 31 not out.

History, however, was against the home team as the most they have made to win in the fourth innings of a Test is 362-9, requiring 359, against Australia at Headingley in 2019. Burns and Hameed had denied India an early breakthrough Sunday after the tourists had piled up 466 in their second innings, with player of the match Rohit Sharma scoring 127 — his first Test century outside of India.



LONDON: England's James Anderson (center) reacts after losing his wicket during play on the fifth day of the fourth cricket Test match between England and India at the Oval cricket ground in London yesterday. — AFP

Thakur strikes

Yadav and Bumrah opened the attack yesterday, with the pair both bowling a significantly fuller length and straighter line than on Sunday. However, it was all-rounder Thakur — playing in his first Test since suffering a hamstring injury in the drawn series opener in Nottingham

— who ended the opening stand.

With just his fourth ball of the innings, and one delivery after Burns had completed a fifty to take England to 100, Thakur's excellent leg-cutter to the left-hander took the outside edge and was caught by wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

Hameed completed a 123-ball fifty —

his fourth in five Tests — before he mistimed a needless slog-sweep off Jadeja only for Mohammed Siraj to drop a routine catch at mid-on. But Dawid Malan, slow to respond to Hameed's call, was run out for five by substitute fielder Mayank Agarwal's throw from cover to Pant. — AFP