

Sports

# Football-mad Cameroon ready at long last for Cup of Nations

## Cameroon take on Burkina Faso in Yaounde

YAOUNDE: The wait is finally over for Cameroon, which from today hosts the Africa Cup of Nations three years later than initially planned as its own Indomitable Lions measure up to the likes of reigning champions Algeria, the Senegal of Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah's Egypt. Cameroon was initially supposed to be the host nation in 2019, before being stripped of the tournament due to delays in its preparations, with Egypt replacing it. The 33rd Cup of Nations was then postponed last year because of the pandemic.

The Central African country of 27 million people was therefore determined to press on with the competition amid reports last month that leading European clubs wanted it postponed again due to COVID concerns. This time it does go ahead, starting today when Cameroon, coached by Portugal's Toni Conceicao, take on Burkina Faso in Yaounde, but the specter of the coronavirus is not going away.

Arsenal star Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and his Gabon team-mate Mario Lemina tested positive on Thursday and were in isolation in their hotel. Senegal, Africa's top-ranked national team, travelled to Cameroon without three members of their squad who had tested positive. "Unprecedented times," tweeted Egypt coach Carlos Queiroz on Friday

after reports emerged of positive tests in his squad's camp. "The more the situation becomes difficult, the more we stay together and strong," he added.

### COVID not the only concern

COVID, though, is far from the only concern in a country dealing with a conflict in the English-speaking west. Matches in Group F, featuring Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania and Gambia, are due to be played in Limbe, a coastal city close to Mount Cameroon which is also a hotspot of separatist unrest. Jihadist raiders also pose a problem in the north, at least beyond the city of Garoua where Salah's Egypt and Nigeria will play group games.

It is because of the health crisis that organizers have capped crowd limits at 60 percent of capacity, or 80 percent when the hosts play. Spectators must be vaccinated and have a negative test result, but only six percent of the adult population is inoculated. It therefore remains to be seen how many venues will come

close to filling the restricted capacity, in particular the vast new 60,000-seat Olembe Stadium in Yaounde and the 50,000-seat Japoma Stadium in Douala.

Cameroon, though, is football mad and many fans will be desperate to attend games in a country that has only hosted the Cup of Nations once before, in 1972 when there were just eight participants. The dream for Cameroon this time is to be in the final in the capital Yaounde on February 6, as they look to add to their five titles, a tally bettered only by Egypt, African champions a record seven times. "We know that Cameroonians have high hopes because the competition is taking place here," coach

Conceicao told the BBC.

### Senegal, Algeria the favorites

However, the nation that gave the world the likes of Roger Milla and Samuel Eto'o—the latter now president of the Cameroonian Football Federation—

no longer boasts the same level of stardust. They have Ajax goalkeeper Andre Onana and Bayern Munich striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and they should certainly qualify from a group also containing Ethiopia and Cape Verde, but the real superstars of the continent will be elsewhere.

Senegal, who face Zimbabwe, Guinea and Malawi in the western city of Bafoussam, boast not just Liverpool forward Mane but also Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, Napoli centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly and Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Idrissa Gana Gueye. Holders Algeria, unbeaten in 33 competitive games, will be led by Manchester City's Riyad Mahrez, while Morocco have PSG full-back Achraf Hakimi and Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, amongst others.

Little wonder some European clubs are not happy about losing such a calibre of player for up to a month mid-season. Nigeria, meanwhile, cross the border without Napoli striker Victor Osimhen, or Watford's Emmanuel Dennis, whose club said they received notice of his call-up too late. In any case this Cup of Nations is not just about the big names, as Gambia, ranked 148th in the world, and the Indian Ocean island state of the Comoros make their debuts, while South Africa are among those to miss out. — AFP



Specter of COVID not going away



Salmiya's Mahdi Dashti #19 runs with the ball during his team's match against Fahaheel on Wednesday. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait back on top as Kazma face tough test

By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: Several important matches highlight Kuwait Premier League this week as former league leaders Kazma look to bounce back from their 3-0 defeat against Qadsia, while Kuwait's hopes to stay on top of the standings will be put to test when they host titleholders Al-Arabi on Tuesday.

Kazma came into their match against Qadsia last Tuesday as the favorites to win following a strong performance in the previous couple of weeks, while the latter were reeling off a loss and a draw in their previous two matches. The win put Qadsia in fourth place with 16 points as they look to capitalize on their momentum when they square off against Al-Nasr tomorrow. Aside from Kuwait who returned to the top with 19 points after beating Al-Shabab on Thursday, Salmiya were the biggest winners of last week's competitions when they climbed to second place after beating Fahaheel 2-0 on Wednesday. Salmiya and Kazma both have 17 points, with the former only leading by goal difference ahead of their key matchup on Tuesday.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Dieumerki Mbokani #70 avoids a sliding tackle during his team's Kuwait Premier League match against Al-Shabab on Thursday.



Qadsia vs Kazma in action.

## The 'CAN effect': Africa Cup of Nations throws up jab dilemma

YAOUNDE: "If I get the jab, it's just for the Indomitable Lions. I'm ready to die for them," says Vincent Nengne as he receives a coronavirus vaccine to see Cameroon open Africa's top football tournament. In the week before today's first match in the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) in Cameroon, many fans have overcome reluctance and asked to be vaccinated. The African Football Confederation (CAF) has made vaccination mandatory to enter the stadium, along with a negative PCR test taken less than 72 hours before kick-off or an antigen test up to 24 hours before.

"There is clearly a CAN effect. We have gone from 10 people a day to more than 100 since Monday. This is increasing exponentially," Lucien Mama, coordinator of the Sports Palace of Yaounde vaccine centre, told AFP. "Until now, Cameroonians have refused to be vaccinated. The CAN has broken the psychological barriers and the hesitation," Mama added hopefully.

In the central African country of 27 million peo-

ple, just six percent of the population over the age of 18 has been jabbed, according to official statistics, and many people openly refuse to wear masks. But stringent stadium entry requirements imposed by CAF could still deter supporters from attending matches. On Tuesday, it was announced stadium attendances would be limited to 60 percent of capacity — increasing to 80 percent when the Indomitable Lions play.

### 'I will not go'

Next to the Sports Palace in the capital Yaounde, several dozen fans waited to get jabbed in tents. "I came to see how it goes," said Yaya Bachirou, 33. "I agree to be vaccinated only if I have my ticket for the match, and for the moment I do not have it yet." "For 15 minutes you sit and you don't talk," a nurse instructs a patient after the injection. "And you won't have sex today either," jokes her colleague.

Rumors that the vaccine causes sterility are widely believed, alongside several other myths. "The reluctance to be vaccinated is linked to a combination of factors," explains Larissa Kojoue, a researcher at Buea University in western Cameroon. "It is firstly linked to ignorance about this still-recent disease, to the sometimes chaotic handling of the epidemic in the country, and to disinformation," Kojoue said. "That has come mainly from Europe and the United States, and... reached a large part of the population, starting with the elites." — AFP

## Marseille end the 45-year wait for win at Bordeaux

PARIS: Marseille won away to Bordeaux in Ligue 1 for the first time since 1977 as Cengiz Under's first-half goal secured a 1-0 victory on Friday. The Turkey international punished a poor kick from goalkeeper Benoit Costil by scoring the game's only goal eight minutes before half-time at an empty stadium in Bordeaux. The home side opted to play the match behind closed doors in response to league officials turning down their request for it to be postponed because of a host of COVID-19 cases in the Bordeaux squad.

Only 5,000 fans are permitted at football matches

under new government restrictions introduced to try and curb spiralling daily infection rates fuelled by the Omicron strain of the virus. Bordeaux on Wednesday said they had 17 players unavailable. They have returned 21 positive test results over the past three weeks and were forced to field several reserve-team players in their French Cup game last weekend, which they lost 3-0 at Brest.

The win for Marseille was their first in Bordeaux in 37 attempts and sent Jorge Sampaoli's team above Nice into second place, 10 points back of leaders Paris Saint-Germain. "We are indeed very satisfied to end this long run," said Sampaoli. "It's a great success so congratulations to the players. It was well-known and we were made to understand it everywhere we went." Bordeaux sit just one point above the relegation play-off place. They have won only three times in 20 league matches under former Switzerland coach Vladimir Petkovic this season. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsia	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

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### Responsibilities:

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- Steered negotiation skills on contract terms and conditions to mitigate business risk and maximize financial objectives.
- Identifying, qualifying, securing business opportunities and coordinating business generation activities in terms of new avenues for business growth and leads.
- Success in qualifying opportunities involving multiple key decision makers and assembling customer profiles.
- Understanding the potential client needs by penetrating successful relationships with all clientele.
- Regularly communicating with contracting officers for existing and upcoming requirements
- Demonstrated ability to convert prospects, close deals, reporting both client's success and failures to the team.
- Other duties as assigned by the managers.

### Requirements:

- Required experience in dealing with Military bases and U.S. DOD & Affiliates contracts.
- University Degree and excellent MS office skills.
- Preferred U.S. national, but preference will also be given to other nationals.
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