



DAMMAM: Kuwait's player scores a goal against Somalia during the Arab Futsal Cup tournament in Dammam in Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait overwhelm Somalia 9-2

Arab Futsal Cup: Morocco hammer Mauritania 13-0

DAMMAM: Kuwait beat Somalia 9-2 on Wednesday to reach the quarterfinals of the Arab Futsal Cup being held in Dammam in Saudi Arabia. The Blues will accompany the Moroccan team to the next round. Morocco defeated in the group stages all their three opponents, namely Kuwait (6-4), Somalia (16-0) and

Mauritania (13-0), taking the lead in the group. Morocco is the defending champion of the Arab Cup that was held in Egypt.

Morocco's Futsal team also won 6-4 against Kuwait in the opening match. With yesterday's win, the Moroccan team have moved to the top of Group A,

with nine well-deserved points. Being the titleholders, Morocco's Atlas Lions started the game with a noticeable determination to clinch a much-needed victory to mount a campaign to win the precious competition for the second time in a row.

Morocco comprehensively defeated Somalia 16-0

on the second day of the 2022 Arab Futsal Cup at the Ministry of Sports Hall in Dammam. The 10-team tournament will run until June 28. After three rounds of matches, the Moroccans lead the table with nine points, while Kuwait is in second with six. Somalia remain at the bottom of the table with no points. — Agencies

Matthews wins NHL MVP award

MIAMI: Toronto Maple Leafs ace Auston Matthews was named as the NHL's Most Valuable Player on Tuesday, scooping the prestigious Hart Trophy after a prolific goalscoring campaign. Matthews also earned the Ted Lindsay Award as most outstanding player in voting by the NHL Players Association earlier Tuesday. The two awards followed a 60-goal season from Matthews which led the NHL. Matthews has scored at least 34 goals in each of his six seasons in the league, and was top-scorer in 2021 as well as 2022. "I want to thank the Toronto Maple Leafs, top to bottom," Matthews said after receiving the MVP.

"I want to thank the fans, Leafs Nation, there is nothing like playing in front of you." Matthews beat out competition for the Hart Trophy from Edmonton's Connor McDavid and New York Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin. In other awards handed out Tuesday, the Colorado Avalanche's Cale Makar scooped the Norris Trophy for best defenseman. Makar was instrumental in helping Colorado top the Western Conference in the regular season with 28 goals.

The Avalanche are currently battling the Tampa Bay Lightning in the Stanley Cup finals with game four set for Wednesday. The Detroit Red Wings' Moritz Seider won the Calder Trophy for the NHL's rookie of the year. The 21-year-old led rookie defensemen in assists (43) and points (50) over the season. The Rangers' Shesterkin meanwhile won the Vezina Trophy for best goalie, beating the Calgary Flames' Jacob Markstrom and Nashville's Finnish shot-stopper Juuse Saros. — AFP



TAMPA: Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs speaks after being awarded the Hart Memorial Trophy for the most valuable player during the 2022 NHL Awards on June 21, 2022. — AFP

1.2 million World Cup tickets sold

DOHA: About 1.2 million tickets have been sold for this year's World Cup in Qatar, organizers said on Wednesday, putting a figure on sales for the first time. Chief organizer Hassan Al-Thawadi said there had been "record-breaking" demand for the November-December World Cup, the first held in the Middle East. "I think about 1.2 million tickets have already been purchased," he told the Qatar Economic Forum. "So people are actually buying and people are excited to come there. There's no doubt about that."

The figure was confirmed by organizing committee officials, who said there were about 40 million requests in the two phases of online sales. Two million tickets will be sold in total, with another one million reserved for world body FIFA and sponsors. The Qatari capital Doha, with a population of about 2.4 million, is bracing itself for the huge influx of visitors, with hotel accommodation extremely scarce.

'Saudi's good': UK's Joshua ducks 'sportswashing' jab

JEDDAH: Britain's Anthony Joshua deflected concerns over "sportswashing" on Tuesday as he appeared in Saudi Arabia to promote his heavyweight boxing world title fight against Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine. The August 20 rematch was announced after the launch of the controversial, Saudi-funded LIV Golf, which has threatened the regular tours by luring top players with huge prize pots.

The fight and the golf are the latest in a series of Saudi events to draw accusations of sportswashing, or attempting to detract attention from the country's human rights record. But when asked about sportswashing at a "Rage on the Red Sea" launch

The 32-team tournament will be held at eight stadiums in and around the capital, putting major pressure on infrastructure. Qatar says there will be 130,000 rooms in hotels, apartments, cruise ships and desert camps, where there will be 1,000 traditional tents. It has promised shared rooms for as little as \$85 a night. To limit the number of fans, only people with match tickets will be allowed to enter the tiny, gas-rich country during the World Cup, officials announced last month.

More than 160 round-trip shuttle flights a day will bring in fans from neighboring countries, easing the pressure on accommodation, while capacity has been doubled at Doha's two international airports. But Al-Thawadi admitted it was "tricky" reining in accommodation prices, which are soaring in line with demand. "We want to avoid price gouging," he said. "Obviously market forces always mean that as long as there's a lot of demand, prices skyrocket. We're trying to create an environment where the business community benefits but at the same time, it is affordable and accessible for the fans as well."

Al-Thawadi also played down the prospect of protests in Qatar, after steady criticism over the treatment of foreign laborers in a country that has the world's highest GDP per head. He did not say

event in Jeddah, Joshua laughed: "I don't know what that is. I'm here to win the heavyweight champion of the world. I like Saudi. I think Saudi's good. I'm having a good time here. I'm treated really well."

"All that allegation stuff, for me, I'm not caught up in any of that stuff. I'm here to have a good time, mix with the local people, bring entertainment to Saudi." The Jeddah clash will be the second in Saudi Arabia for Joshua, 32, who avenged a shock loss to Andy Ruiz Jr in Riyadh in December 2019. The towering Briton is out for revenge once again after losing his WBA, IBF and WBO belts last September in London to Usyk, who has since been shaken by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

'My friends have died'

Usyk, 35, returned home to fight for his country before being given a special exemption from military duty. But he dismissed any notion that the war had given him extra motivation. "My friends, people close to me, have died in the war. When so many people are suffering I don't have any idea how it



whether protests would be allowed in Qatar, where demonstrations are rare, or whether fans could brandish the rainbow flag, representing the LGBTQ community. "Everybody's welcome. But in appreciating where you're coming from, we have a very rich culture. We ask for people to respect our culture," he said. Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar and authorities are struggling to convince lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer fans that they will be safe. — AFP

can influence anything positively," Usyk said. "I was there for one month, I saw with my own eyes what happened there: rockets flying and fighter jets flying. It's horrible."

Joshua also paid tribute to Ukraine and said he had been in touch with Wladimir Klitschko, the former heavyweight whose brother and fellow boxer Vitali is now the mayor of Kyiv. "Big up to Usyk, the Klitschko brothers, everyone in Ukraine. I know it's been tough, but tough times don't last," Joshua said.

"Keep your heads up, the world's watching. The world's in support... anyone that's going through tough times we're always with them so especially the Ukrainian people right now." He added that he had no concerns about the receding chances of his long-touted all-British super-fight with WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury, who retired after his April victory over Dillian Whyte. "I'll fight anyone, that's never been an issue. When the time's right, if he wants to fight we're here for it, definitely," Joshua said of Fury. "But no, if he wants to fight I'm here. Whenever he's ready I'll be available." — AFP