

Sports

# Indonesia in FIFA talks after U-20 WCup Zionist protests

## Bali's governor calls for Zionists to be thrown out of the cup

**JAKARTA:** Indonesian President Joko Widodo said Tuesday he was sending the country's football association chief for talks with FIFA about its hosting of the Under-20 World Cup after the draw was nixed following protests over Zionist participation. The two countries do not have formal diplomatic relations, and support for the Palestinian cause in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation runs high, fuelling local opposition to hosting the Zionist team.

Widodo said he had dispatched Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) head and minister for state-owned enterprises Erick Thohir as uncertainty

swirled over the competition's location. "I have sent PSSI chief Erick Thohir to meet with the FIFA team to look for the best solution," Widodo said in a live-streamed speech. He did not specify when Thohir - a former chairman of Inter Milan - would fly or which FIFA officials he would meet.

The meeting will take place in Qatari capital Doha, PSSI official Eko Rahmanto told AFP Wednesday. Indonesian officials initially said he would meet with FIFA in Zurich, Switzerland, where the world football governing body is headquartered. Fixtures for the 24-nation tournament beginning in May were due to

be chosen on Friday in Bali, but FIFA cancelled the event without offering a reason or setting a new date.

Indonesian officials said Bali's governor calling for Zionists to be thrown out of the cup because of its policies towards the Palestinians was likely behind the draw's cancellation. Around a hundred conservative Muslim demonstrators also marched in the capital Jakarta this month to protest Zionist involvement. FIFA is yet to comment on the tournament and where it will be held after the draw was nixed. The Indonesian president said sport and politics should not clash after the calls for Zionists to be removed from the tournament.

"I guarantee the participation of Zionists has nothing to do with the consistency of our foreign policy to Palestine. Because our support to Palestine is always strong and firm. So don't mix sports with politics," he said in the video. Widodo's intervention came as fears grew that Indonesia could face sanctions and isolation on the global football stage if it could not guarantee Zionist participation. The country would also be holding the tournament under the cloud of one of the worst stadium disasters in the sport's history after 135 people died in an East Java stadium stampede in October. —AFP

## Rybakina books semis at Miami

**MIAMI GARDENS:** Elena Rybakina moved into the semi-finals of the Miami Open with a confident 6-3, 6-0 win over Italy's Martina Trevisan at Hard Rock Stadium on Tuesday to extend her winning streak to 12 matches. American world number three Jessica Pegula had to dig deep to come back from a set down to beat Russian Anastasia Potapova 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), saving two match points, in a match which finished at 1:30 am.

Wimbledon champion Rybakina, who competes for Kazakhstan, remains in strong contention for the "Sunshine Double" of Indian Wells and Miami WTA titles after she beat Aryna Sabalenka in California earlier this month. Sabalenka is the biggest obstacle to Rybakina triumphing again with the Belarusian in impressive form in South Florida.

Sabalenka powered past Barbora Krejčíková in straight sets in her fourth-round match on Monday and faces Romanian Sorana Cirstea in the last eight on Wednesday. Rybakina took charge of her match with Trevisan when the Italian double-faulted to hand her opponent a break and a 3-1 advantage in the first set. Although Trevisan broke back to get back on serve at 4-3, Rybakina took full control and won the remaining eight games to wrap up the win in 69 minutes.

The world number seven said she was feeling the pace of her tough schedule. "It would be better to feel better on the courts physically, but this is something I have to play with, and for now I am getting through, which I'm happy with," she said. "I didn't serve that well, the percentage of the first serve, but in the important moments like 30-all, 30-40 and so on, I was serving aces," added the Moscow-born player. "I think it's just important to find these moments and to push, and for now I'm doing well even not being super fresh."



**MIAMI GARDENS, FLORIDA:** Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan plays a forehand to Elise Mertens of Belgium in their fourth round match at Hard Rock Stadium on March 27, 2023 in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

### Flying starts

Pegula has got off to flying starts in her matches in Miami and she broke early again to go 2-0 up in the first set, but Potapova struck back winning the next five games with some aggressive winners and then holding to take the set. Pegula was in control in the second but Potapova was determined in the third and put herself in position to win the contest but she couldn't convert on her two match points and was forced into a tie-break.

The American looked exhausted, but she found the energy for a strong finale, winning the breaker

7-2. "I don't know how I turned it around," said Pegula after the victory. "I just kept going. It's a huge win. I haven't been that physically tired in a really long time. Just the humidity was taking so much out of me. It was just really tough, so really it was just pure will," she added. Pegula will have a day off before she has to face Rybakina and she says she is relishing the chance. "She's been playing some great tennis. I feel like her and Sabalenka are the ones to beat right now. It is going to be a great test and I think it is a deserved semi for a tournament like this," she said. —AFP

## Alcaraz sets up Fritz clash

**MIAMI GARDENS:** World number one Carlos Alcaraz charged into the quarter-finals of the ATP Miami Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tommy Paul on Tuesday but second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was knocked out by Russian Karen Khachanov. Alcaraz, the defending Miami champion and also the winner at Indian Wells earlier this month, will face another American in the last eight when he comes up against Taylor Fritz.

Paul came into the match having won his last 12 encounters with Spanish players, including wins over Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal last year, but he was unable to get a foothold in the contest. It was the ninth straight victory for the 19-year-old Spaniard, who delighted a supportive South Florida crowd with his powerful strokes from the baseline and readiness to move forward, once again making use of his increasingly effective drop shot. "I moved well and defended well and I counter-attacked and I think if I play at that same level I will have a lot of chances to get through," said Alcaraz.

"I feel at home here. It is easy to play here in Miami with all the energy I receive every day." Tsitsipas had

to wait a week for his first contest in Miami, beating Chilean Cristian Garin on Monday, but he came unstuck against Khachanov, losing 7-6 (7/4), 6-4. The Greek has been troubled by a shoulder injury in recent weeks but Khachanov ended his six match losing streak against Tsitsipas and 23 match barren spell against top ten opponents.

His serve was reliable throughout and broke Tsitsipas' serve to love in the fifth game of the second set and kept his cool to see out the win. "Both of us were serving pretty well in the first set... Then I took it to the tie-break, and in the second set as soon as the opportunity came, I had to take it," he said. In a clash of top-10 players, American Fritz defeated Denmark's Holger Rune 6-3, 6-4 to reach to the last eight in Miami for the first time in his career.

Fritz, who won at Delray Beach last month, beat Emilio Nava and Denis Shapovalov in straight sets before Tuesday's encounter and he was pleased with the way he was able to go on the attack. "I couldn't play aggressively in my first two matches because my opponents were hitting every ball as hard as they could. (Rune) still crushes the ball but it was nice to feel I had some more time," Fritz said. "The first two rounds, it was impossible to play my game, I just had to make balls. Today when I got the chance to be aggressive I was and I just wanted to serve well and try not to give him many free points." —AFP



**MIAMI GARDENS, FLORIDA:** Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a backhand against Tommy Paul of the United States in their fourth round match at Hard Rock Stadium on March 28, 2023 in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

## Cameroon shocked as Senegal, S Africa, Burkina Faso qualify

**JOHANNESBURG:** Defending champions Senegal, South Africa and Burkina Faso qualified for the Africa Cup of Nations in matchday four on Tuesday while Namibia are close to joining them after a shock win over Cameroon. Reigning African Footballer of the Year Sadio Mane set up Boulaye Dia to score in the first half and give Senegal a 1-0 win over Mozambique in Maputo and an eight-point Group L lead.

Mihlali Mayambela pounced on a loose ball to score the winner as South Africa defeated Liberia 2-1 in Monrovia and join shock 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco as the Group K qualifiers. Burkina Faso needed one point from a visit to Togo to qualify and they drew 1-1 with Dango Ouattara giving the visiting side an early lead that Kodjo Laba cancelled out in Lome. Captain Peter Shalulle opened the scoring for Namibia, who replaced Cameroon as Group C table-toppers by winning 2-1 in Soweto near Johannesburg.

Senegal, whose penalty shootout victory over Egypt last year brought the Cup of Nations trophy to Dakar for the first time, stretched a perfect group record to four wins. But it was a much closer contest against Mozambique than last week when the Teranga Lions romped to a 5-1 victory at home. Mozambique remain second, but will be overtaken if Rwanda win at home to Benin in Kigali on Wednesday. South Africa ground out a win as Zakhele Lepasa put them ahead, although William Jebor leveled for Liberia before half-time after a blunder by captain and goalkeeper Ronwen Williams.

### Goalkeeping howler

Another goalkeeping howler, this time by Liberian Thomas Songo, gifted Mayambela the crucial goal eight minutes into the second half. "It was difficult, but 90 minutes of perseverance got us through," said South Africa coach Hugo Broos. "Coping with the physicality of the Liberians was a real challenge. Fortunately, we chose the right players in the right positions and coped." Morocco, the first African or Arab nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals, did not play because scheduled opponents Zimbabwe were barred due to government interference in the sport. Cameroon football boss and former star Samuel Eto'o looked on from the stand as a team lacking injured forwards Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Karl Toko Ekambi came off second best. Shalulle and Absalom Iimbondi scored in the second half for the Brave Warriors before Vincent Aboubakar snatched an added-time consolation goal for the Indomitable Lions.

Namibia have five points and Cameroon four, and both must face Burundi, who have only one point but are not out of the running for a top-two finish. Algeria clinched qualification from Group F on Monday, but who accompanies them as runners-up is wide open after Uganda upset Tanzania 1-0 in Dar es Salaam through a late Rogers Mato goal. Tanzania and Uganda have four points each and Niger two with two rounds to come, in June and September. Liverpool star Mohamed Salah netted as Egypt hammered Malawi 4-0 in Lilongwe to join Guinea at the top of Group D. —AFP

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Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
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Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

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Shuwaikh	24814507
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Nuzha	22526804
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