

## SOUTH ASIA TO BACK PLATINI

**NEW DELHI:** A senior South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) official has said its seven members will vote for Frenchman Michel Platini in next year's FIFA presidential elections.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) chief Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa has already backed Platini as his preferred candidate for soccer's top job in the February elections, which have been forced by the worst crisis in FIFA's 111-year history.

SAFF general secretary Anwarul Huq told Reuters on Wednesday that his organisation would follow the AFC's lead. "The AFC chief has already backed Platini. We will go with the AFC," he said. "At the end of the day, voting is an individual thing but we will go with AFC as we always do," the Bangladeshi official added after the draw ceremony for the ninth SAFF Cup to be held in India later this year. Swiss Sepp Blatter beat Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan to win a fifth term as FIFA president in May but four days later announced his decision to step down following the arrests of FIFA officials and others two days before the election.

Prince Ali has again joined the race for the FIFA top job, while former Asia vice-president Chung Mong-joon of South Korea is also in the fray. Chung has accused the AFC of sending unsolicited letters to its members urging them to support Platini but FIFA has dismissed his complaint. All India Football Federation general secretary Kushal Das echoed Huq's view on SAFF's stance on the election. "We'll go by what AFC says. Of course, there have to be more meetings before that. But whoever is elected, it won't be a problem for us," he added. The South Indian city of Thiruvananthapuram will host the ninth SAFF Cup from Dec. 23 to Jan. 3, the eight-team tournament securing a title sponsor in Suzuki for the first time since it started in 1993. —Reuters



## QATAR BEGINS WORK AT WORLD CUP FINAL VENUE

**DOHA:** Qatar has begun construction work at the site where the 2022 World Cup final will be played, tournament officials said yesterday. Preparatory work, including the stationing of site offices and five kilometres of hoarding, have gone up at the site in Lusail, north of the capital, Doha. As well as the final, the opening game of the 2022 tournament will also be staged at the 80,000-seater Lusail Stadium.

Mubarak Al-Khulaifi, the stadium's project director, said in a statement that organisers were "very pleased to have initiated a presence on the site, which has a special significance for us all".

Lusail is the sixth venue currently under construction for the World Cup, the first to be played in the Middle East. The stadium is being designed by British architects Foster and Partners.

Earlier this month, Qatar announced it will complete work on the first tournament venue to be used in the competition by 2016. Up to 12 stadiums will be used for the World Cup in 2022, which for the first time in its history will be played during the months of November and December.

A final decision on the number of venues will be made by the end of this year. Work for the finals in seven years' time has progressed despite an ongoing Swiss investigation examining in part how the tiny Gulf state was awarded the tournament. This was launched in the fallout over corruption allegations engulfing football's governing body, FIFA. —AFP

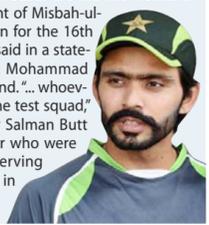
## PAKISTAN RECALL FAWAD ALAM

**KARACHI:** Pakistan recalled batsman Fawad Alam from Test wilderness yesterday while paceman Wahab Riaz returned from a hand injury to find a place in the 15-man squad for the three-match series against England starting next month in the United Arab Emirates.

Left-handed Fawad, who played his third test in New Zealand in 2009 before being dropped from the side, was rewarded for his rich form in domestic cricket.

The 29-year-old, however, cannot take his place in Pakistan's crammed middle order for granted with captain Misbah-ul-Haq, former captain Younus Khan and one-day skipper Azhar Ali being the automatic choices. Their bowling department has been strengthened by Wahab's return from a hand injury he had sustained during the recent tour of Sri Lanka.

Leg-spinner Yasir Shah and left-arm spinner Zulfiqar Babar are the two frontline spinners in their slow bowling department. "In the light of Misbah-ul-Haq recommendations, we have kept the options open for the 16th player in the test squad," chief selector Haroon Rashid said in a statement, referring to left-arm spinners Zafar Gohar and Mohammad Asghar who would play practice matches against England. "... whoever among the two performs well would be added to the test squad," he added. Pakistan ignored the trio of former skipper Salman Butt and pacemen Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir who were cleared earlier this month to return to cricket after serving bans for their involvement in a 2010 spot-fixing scandal in England. —Reuters



# CUBS TOP PIRATES, NATIONALS WIN

**PITTSBURGH:** Jon Lester limited the Pittsburgh Pirates to five hits while picking up his first complete game of the season and the Chicago Cubs earned a doubleheader split with a 2-1 win on Tuesday night.

The Pirates took the first game 5-4 when Pedro Florimon scored on Starling Marte's sacrifice fly in the eighth, but they couldn't complete the sweep as the Cubs pulled back within four games of Pittsburgh for the top spot in the NL wild-card race. Lester (10-10) walked one and struck out nine while picking up his 12th career complete game. David Ross and Javier Baez had two hits each for the Cubs.

JA Happ (9-8) had his five-game winning streak end. Happ pitched in and out of trouble, allowing two runs on eight hits in 5 2-3 innings. Aramis Ramirez had two hits but Pittsburgh's rejuvenged lineup mustered little against Lester.

### NATIONALS 4, PHILLIES 0

Stephen Strasburg gave up one hit and equaled a career-best with 14 strikeouts in eight dominant innings and Bryce Harper hit two homers as the Nationals beat the Phillies.

Strasburg (9-7) allowed only a single to Cody Asche leading off the bottom of the fifth - a hard grounder to right field. He has 27 strikeouts in his last two starts. The hard-throwing righty struck out the side twice and fanned eight of the last 12 batters he faced. He was still firing 96 mph fastballs in the eighth. Blake Treinen tossed a 1-2-3 ninth to complete the shutout. The Nationals have won three straight, but it seems too late to catch the NL East-leading New York Mets.

### MARLINS 9, METS 3

Jacob deGrom was hit hard during a rare dud at home against one of his favorite opponents, and the Marlins stopped the Mets' eight-game winning streak.

Mets nemesis Dee Gordon homered and had four hits to back Tom Koehler, who plunked Yoenis Cespedes in the first inning and then helped silence the streaking slugger the rest of the way. New York's commanding lead in the NL East was trimmed to 8 1/2 games over Washington, which beat Philadelphia 4-0. The magic number remained 10 for the Mets to clinch their sixth division title.

Christian Yelich had three hits and two RBIs following a surprise meeting with his "Saturday Night Live" doppelganger, and Justin Bour also had three hits and two RBIs.

### RANGERS 6, ASTROS 5

The Rangers overtook the Houston Astros for first place in the AL West, winning another tense Texas showdown on Mitch Moreland's sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth inning.

Adrian Beltre's fourth hit put the Rangers in position to win a night after Prince Fielder pulled them within a half-game of the Astros with a tiebreaking two-run home run in the eighth. Houston had been in first place since July 28.

Fielder opened the ninth with a single to left off Oliver Perez (2-3), and pinch-runner Drew Stubbs went to third on Beltre's third single. Moreland sent a 1-0 pitch from Will Harris to Colby Rasmus in shallow center field, but Rasmus' throw was off target and bounced, allowing Stubbs to score easily.

Texas closer Shawn Tolleson (6-3) pitched a scoreless ninth as the Rangers (77-67) moved into first place for the first time this year, at a season-high 10 games over .500. Houston (77-68) holds the second AL wild card.

### ROYALS 2, INDIANS 0

Kris Medlen pitched five-hit ball over 6 1-3 innings and Alex Rios hit a home run that launched some unintentional fireworks, leading the Royals to a win over the Indians.

Medlen (4-1) stifled the Indians before Royals

manager Ned Yost turned things over to his top-ranked bullpen. Ryan Madson struck out two in the seventh, Wade Davis got through the eighth and Greg Holland worked around a two-on, no-out mess he created in the ninth for his 31st save.

Rios homered in the fifth inning off Josh Tomlin (5-2) for the Royals, who won for just the third time in 11 games as they close in on a probable AL Central title. The Indians, who pulled back to .500 for just the second time since April by winning the series opener, fell to 13-6 since Aug. 25.

### RAYS 6, YANKEES 3

Nick Franklin hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the sixth inning and the Rays beat the AL wild-card leading Yankees. Hobbled Alex Rodriguez and Greg Bird homered for the Yankees, who remain three games behind AL East-leading Toronto, which lost 3-2 at Atlanta.

Franklin, who entered when shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera left after four innings with a left knee strain, put the Rays up 4-3 on his homer off Nick Rumbelow (1-1). J.P. Arencibia made it 6-3 on a two-run single in the eighth. Rodriguez hit his 32nd homer this season and 686th of his career off Jake Odorizzi (8-8) in the first hours after the team learned he is playing with a bruised left knee. Rodriguez moved past Craig Biggio into sole possession of 21st place all-time with his 3,061st hit.

### BRAVES 3, BLUE JAYS 2

Andrelton Simmons' tiebreaking RBI single in the ninth inning snapped a 12-game home losing streak and the Braves beat the AL East-leading Blue Jays. Toronto began the night with a three-game lead over the New York Yankees, but the Blue Jays, despite the majors' best record since the All-Star break, have lost two straight.

The Braves ended the longest home skid in franchise history. They began the game 14-46 overall since July 8. Aaron Sanchez (7-6) took the loss, allowing four hits, one run and striking out one in 1 1-3 innings. Arodys Vizcaino (3-1) faced the minimum in the ninth to earn the win. Blue Jays sluggers Josh Donaldson and Jose Bautista went a combined 0 for 8 with four strikeouts. First baseman Edwin Encarnacion, Toronto's other big bat, missed his second straight game with an injured finger.

### TIGERS 5, TWINS 4

Victor Martinez had three hits and two RBIs, and the Tigers beat Phil Hughes and the Twins. James McCann also had three hits for Detroit, and Alfredo Simon (13-9) pitched into the seventh inning. Bruce Rondon allowed a run in the ninth before finishing for his fifth save.

The Tigers (66-78) were officially eliminated in the AL Central after winning the division title each of the last four years. Minnesota (75-69) is contending for an AL wild card, but Hughes (10-9) lasted just three innings in his return from a month-long stint on the disabled list with a back injury.

### ATHLETICS 17, WHITE SOX 6

Josh Reddick homered and drove in four runs during a 10-run fourth inning to power the Athletics to a rout of the White Sox.

Billy Butler had three hits and three runs batted in, and Eric Sogard and Jake Smolinski each had a pair of RBIs as the Athletics snapped a six-game losing streak against Chicago.

Reddick had a two-run homer and a two-run single in the big inning. The 17 runs were the most by the A's since they scored 18 on Sept. 11, 2013, against the Minnesota Twins. Aaron Brooks (2-3) allowed six runs on 10 hits in six-plus innings for the win. Brooks had been 0-3 with a 14.14 ERA in his last five games in the majors with an opponents' batting average of .439 before Tuesday. Melky Cabrera had a homer and



**PITTSBURGH:** Chicago Cubs second baseman Starlin Castro (13) takes the wide throw from catcher David Ross as Pittsburgh Pirates' Andrew McCutchen (22) steals second during the first inning. — AP

three RBIs and Alexei Ramirez had a solo homer for the White Sox.

### ORIOLES 6, RED SOX 5

Chris Davis singled in the winning run in the 13th inning, and the Orioles got home runs from Manny Machado and Steve Pearce in a victory over the Red Sox on Tuesday night.

The Orioles have won six of seven to keep alive their narrow shot of earning the second AL wild-card spot. Gerardo Parra led off the 13th by drawing a walk from rookie Jonathan Aro (0-1). Machado singled, advancing Parra to third, and Robbie Ross came in to face Davis.

Davis lined a 2-1 pitch past the drawn-in infield and into right field to collect his 107th RBI and end the 4-hour, 20-minute marathon. Chaz Roe (3-2), the seventh Baltimore pitcher, worked the 13th to get the win. Boston used nine pitchers, limiting the Orioles to one hit from the sixth inning through the 12th.

### CARDINALS 3, BREWERS 1

Jason Heyward hit a line drive two-run homer in the 10th inning to lead the Cardinals to a victory over the Brewers. St. Louis has won consecutive games following a 2-8 skid and increased its lead in the NL Central to three games over second-place Pittsburgh.

Kevin Siegrist (7-1) pitched the ninth and Trevor Rosenthal the 10th for his 44th save. Carlos Martinez matched a season high by going eight innings. He struck out nine and gave up one earned run and four hits, as the team improved to 16-4 in his last 20 starts.

Milwaukee lost its fourth straight game and has just 10 victories in its last 36 home games against St. Louis. Matt Carpenter led off the 10th and reached on an error on by first baseman Adam Lind. With one out, Heyward connected off Tyler Thornburg (0-2) for his 12th homer.

### ANGELS 4, MARINERS 3

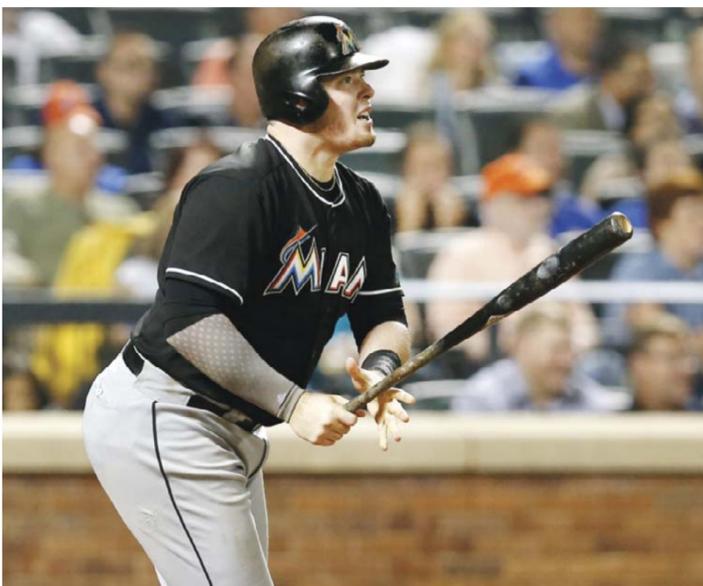
David Murphy hit a three-run homer and Mike Trout added a solo shot to power the Angels to a victory over Felix Hernandez and the Mariners.

Murphy, hitting leadoff for the first time this season, hit his ninth home run off the top of the wall in right field in the third inning. Hernandez (17-9) had hit David Freese to open the inning and Carlos Perez, who had three hits, reached on an infield single. Trout connected for his 36th homer in the sixth on an 0-2 pitch from Hernandez, who went seven innings, allowing four runs and five hits, striking out five and walking two. Nick Tropeano (2-2), in his fourth stint with the Angels and making his fifth start this season, worked five innings for the victory, allowing two runs and four hits with five strikeouts and three walks. Joe Smith finished the ninth for his third save.

### DIAMONDBACKS 6, PADRES 4

AJ Pollock's three-run homer led the Diamondbacks to a victory over the Padres. Pollock drove the first pitch from reliever Kevin Quackenbush into the left-field seats. Quackenbush had just entered the game for losing pitcher Bud Norris (1-2).

The Diamondbacks scored five runs in the inning and batted around off four Padres relievers, spoiling a good performance from Padres starter Tyson Ross, who struck out nine and allowed a run on four hits in six innings. Randall Delgado (6-4) got the win in relief, ending the seventh with a strikeout of Wil Myers, the only batter he faced. Down 3-1, the Diamondbacks



**NEW YORK:** Miami Marlins' Justin Bour watches his fifth inning, RBI single off New York Mets starting pitcher Jacob deGrom during a baseball game. —AP



## PALMER REPRIMANDED FOR DOPING VIOLATION

**SYDNEY:** Olympic relay gold medalist Kylie Palmer has been reprimanded for a 2013 doping violation, Swimming Australia said yesterday, clearing the way for her to compete at next year's Rio Games. World governing body FINA had initially cleared Palmer in 2013 after the "low levels of a prohibited substance" found in her in-competition sample at the Barcelona world championships did not show up in other tests conducted around the same time.

In February this year, however, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) obtained details of the case and subsequently asked the Court of Arbitration of Sport to order FINA to treat the case as an anti-doping violation. Palmer then voluntarily withdrew from the Australian team for last month's world championships in Kazan and accepted a temporary suspension.

FINA's doping panel ruled on Tuesday she should receive only a warning and reprimand, with her results and prize money on the date of the test in 2013 annulled, Swimming Australia said. The world governing body did not strip her of the 4x200m freestyle silver medal she won at Barcelona. "Swimming Australia fully supported the process once the matter came before the FINA Doping Tribunal and accepts the findings," the governing body in Australia

said in a statement. "Palmer voluntarily accepted a provisional suspension until the matter was determined by the FINA Doping Panel. As such she is now able to compete whenever she decides to return."

Swimming Australia had previously said it was concerned at the two-year delay between the test and notification. Palmer, who strongly denies knowingly ingesting any banned substances, was a 4x200m freestyle relay champion at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and a silver medalist in the same event four years later in London.

"I am very pleased that the decision of the panel means that I can return to competitive swimming immediately," she said in a statement. "My number one goal is to represent Australia at the Rio Olympics in 2016 and I cannot wait to get back on track to achieving that dream. I sincerely hope that this process is now over. It has been a distressing few months since I was first notified of the positive test back in April 2015," added Palmer.

The case had denied her the chance to swim for Australia at the world championships in Kazan and that was something she could never get back. "I cannot get back that opportunity to represent my country internationally but I am now looking to the future," she said. — Reuters