FA’S CREDIBILITY AT STAKE OVER ABUSE

LONDON: Accusations that abuse by coaches was covered up have rocked English football, damaging the multi-billion pound sport’s image and earning it comparisons with scandals in the Catholic Church and the BBC. Over 20 victims have come forward since the floodgates were opened when Andy Woodward spoke out to The Guardian newspaper about the way he had been treated by former Manchester United youth coach Peter Crompton who was given a three-year suspended sentence in 2003.

“Finally someone in authority might say ‘yes, we were at fault. We are accountable,’” Ackley told The Times. — AFP

TOURNOI: Benoit Cheyrou #8 of Toronto FC celebrates a goal with teammates during the second half of the MLS Eastern Conference Final, Leg 2 game against Montreal Impact at BMO Field. — AFP

Toronto down Montreal to reach MLS Cup final

Toronto FC became the first Canadian club to reach Major League Soccer’s championship game here Wednesday after overpowering Montreal Impact 5-2 in a seven-goal thriller after extra-time. Toronto, who had trailed 3-0 in last week’s first leg in Montreal before recovering to score two crucial away goals, will now host the Seattle Sounders in the MLS Cup final on December 10.

A pulsating duel at a rain-swept BMO Field was effectively settled in the first half of extra-time, when goals from Benoit Cheyrou and Tosaint Ricketts put Toronto 5-2 ahead on the night, 7-5 on aggregate. “It was a crazy match. The score line has been at 5-2 in a cup final was amazing,” said Ricketts, a Canadian international who joined Toronto in June.

“I am so proud of the guys. We battled back many times in the game and showed so much character. It was a very special moment for all of us.”

The defeat marked the final chapter in Didier Drogba’s MLS career. The former Chelsea and Ivory Coast star is leaving Montreal in the close season. The extra-time drama came after an action-packed 90 minutes which saw Montreal take a 1-0 lead — 4-2 on aggregate — with a swift counter-attacking goal midway through the first half. Patrice Bernier outmuscled Toronto’s US international captain Michael Bradley near halfway and quickly released Matteo Mancosu, who in turn picked out Dominic Oduro.

The veteran Ghanaian striker dribbled into the box and tucked away a low finish past Clint Irwin. Toronto, however, were handed a lifeline on 37 minutes when a Sebastian Giovinco corner was met with a powerful header by Nick Hagglund. Hernan Bernardello cleared off the line but only as far as Armando Cooper who lashed home the rebound. Cooper might have had a penalty moments later, when he rounded Montreal goalkeeper Evan Bush. But instead of going to ground Cooper stayed on his feet and penalty appeals were waved away by referee Jair Marrufo.

“All for the fans”

On the stroke of half-time, though, Toronto took the lead, and again it came from a setpiece, Giovinco curling an outswinging corner to the near post where an unmarked Jozy Altidore glanced in a firm header. “It’s fantastic,” Altidore said of Toronto’s run to the title match—a first for a club that until this year had never notched a playoff win in its 10-year existence. “It’s all for the fans. They’ve suffered a long time. After the type of season we’ve had this year, hopefully we can give them one more celebration.”

The momentum appeared to be firmly with Toronto but within eight minutes of the restart, Montreal were back in front on aggregate when Ignacio Piatti bundled in a scruffy low finish to make it 2-2 on the night. Once again Toronto responded with a setpiece goal. A quick freekick allowed Justin Morrow to escape to the byline and the fullback’s cross picked out Hagglund whose thumping header beat the diving Bush to make it 3-2 and 5-5 on aggregate, ultimately sending the tie into extra-time. — AFP

KANE SIGNS NEW DEAL UNTIL 2022

LONDON: England striker Harry Kane has become the latest star to commit his future to Tottenham Hotspur, signing a new contract at the Premier League club until 2022. The deal replaces the five-year contract he signed in February 2015 and will reportedly earn the 23-year-old captain £80,000 ($101,000) a week.

“It’s amazing. Everyone knows how much I love this team and what I feel for this club,” Kane, who finished top scorer in the Premier League last season with 25 goals and has hit the net five times already this term, told Tottenham’s website yesterday. “To sign another contract is a special feeling. We’ve got a great, young squad and the club is moving in the right direction.” After coming through Tottenham’s academy, Kane made his debut in 2011 but it was towards the end of the 2013-14 campaign that he first made an impact. The following season he scored 21 goals in the league and he now has 70 for Spurs in 137 appearances. Kane has only recently returned from a seven-week absence with an ankle injury but has scored four goals in his last four matches. Kyle Walker, Christian Eriksen, Eric Dier, Danny Rose and Dele Alli have all extended their deals at Spurs. — AFP