

## AFC Asian Cup 2019 Qualifiers

# India confirm finals berth

Bengaluru, India

**'Sleeping giant'** India woke up on Wednesday, securing their passage into the 2019 AFC Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates with a rousing 4-1 win against minnows Macau at the Sree Kanteerava stadium yesterday.

A fourth straight win in Group A saw the 'Blue Tigers' cement a top-2 finish in the qualifying round along with a berth in the main draw of the second oldest continental football championship in the world. India last played in the tournament in 2011 when they qualified after winning the AFC Challenge Cup. This is India's fourth qualification after 1964, 1984 and 2011.

With over 4,000 fans watching on a rainy day in the Garden City, the hosts



Indian players celebrate their victory

made heavy weather of their

world No. 182 opponents, who put forth a brave challenge by playing some compact

formations.

Macau troubled India till the hour mark when skipper Sunil Chhetri gave finishing touches

to a brilliant run by super sub Balwant Singh, who had scored both the goals in the away leg last month. It took a while

after changing ends to soak up the pressure as the visitors attacked in tandem through Carlos Fernandes and nippy

midfielder Lam Ka Seng.

India broke the deadlock in a fast counter, catching the Macau defence unawares. Sent through by Jeje, Balwant - who was subbed in at the start of the second half - was off in a flash and Chhetri went up through the other side. With the only the 'keeper to beat, Balwant unselfishly relayed the ball to Chhetri who fired in past Ho Man Fai in the 60th minute.

Macau were then done in by an own goal, ten minutes later. Holicharan Narzary came up with a probing cross from the right and Lam Seng's clearance ballooned into the top right corner of the post. It was cat and mouse from then on but India's lack of finishing denied them more goals to showcase their superiority. (TOI)

## Nehra to retire from all forms of cricket

New Delhi, India

**Ashish Nehra** will end his 18-year international career with the T20I against New Zealand on November 1 at his home ground, the Feroz Shah Kotla. The 38-year-old Nehra was one of the few remaining active internationals among those who began their career in the 1990s. He is also set to retire from domestic cricket and the Indian Premier League, which played a key role in paving the way for his international comeback in 2016.

Through his career, Nehra had to fight injuries. It was a marvel he played as long as he did after 12 surgeries and many other small setbacks. He often jokes that the injuries aren't on his body, but that his body is stuck somewhere among the injuries.

Nehra's many comebacks and his awareness of his body is spoken of as an example by his contemporaries. Despite all the injuries, he made comebacks at important junctures: he was a World Cup winner in 2011 and led India's attack to the semi-finals of the World T20 in 2016.

(espnricinfo)



Ashish Nehra (file pic)

## Uefa appoints Luis Figo as football advisor

London

**Former Barcelona** and Portugal striker Luis Figo has joined Uefa as a football advisor.

The 44-year-old's role at European football's governing body will include technical aspects and laws of the game.

During his 20-year playing career, which also included spells at Real Madrid and Inter Milan, Figo won eight league titles and the Champions League.

"I believe I can have a positive influence in passing on my knowledge," said the 2000 Ballon d'Or winner.



Luis Figo (file pic)

"I have learned so much from football that I am now really looking forward to giving something back," he added.

Uefa president Aleksander Ceferin said: "Luis Figo was a fantastic player who was exemplary in the way he conducted himself both on and off the pitch.

"He is a highly respected figure within the game and I am very pleased he is joining our team. His tremendous football experience will be a very valuable asset to Uefa."

Figo joins former Germany midfielder Nadine Kessler and ex-Serbia midfielder Dejan Stankovic, who started working at Uefa as football advisors earlier this year. (BBC)

## Nick Kyrgios fined for quitting match

London

**Nick Kyrgios** has been fined \$10,000 (£7,573) for unsportsmanlike conduct after he quit his first-round match at the Shanghai Masters.

Kyrgios was booed as he left the court on Tuesday after he lost the first set on a tie-break against Steve Johnson.

He had earlier received a warning for smashing two balls out of court in frustration at a line call.

The Australian has also not been allowed to collect his \$21,085 (£15,967) prize money.

Kyrgios was unable to collect his prize money

because he failed to get signed off for a medical afterwards to prove he was unwell or hurt.

The 13th seed had already been given a point penalty for an audible obscenity when he was heard to say he

would quit against Johnson if he lost the tie-break.

After his opponent served an ace on his first set point, Kyrgios walked over to shake hands.

Umpire Fergus Murphy asked the Australian if he needed medical help before the player walked off court to boos from spectators.

At the same tournament last year he was fined for his behaviour and banned.

He later posted an apology to fans on social media, saying he had been struggling before the match with a stomach bug. (BBC)



Nick Kyrgios (file pic)