

# Bahrain to face Philippines today

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Manama

**B**ahrain is set to take on the Philippines tonight in a crucial must win FIFA 2018 Asia World Cup qualifier tonight 6pm at the National Stadium in Riffa if they are going to have any chance to progress.

The two teams met last June in the Philippines and the team known as the 'Azkals' defeated tonight's hosts with a shock 2-1 victory on their home

soil. Bahrain under Argentine coach Sergio Batista need to bounce back quickly following last week's shocking 4-0 reversal to Uzbekistan at the National Stadium and have just three points from four games so far and are placed fourth presently.

The National team trail leaders North Korea (10 points), Uzbekistan (9) and tonight's opponent who have seven points after all five teams have played four matches each, with Yemen at the bottom

without a point. Bahraini will be relying on experienced defender and captain Hussain Ali Baba and goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaffar to keep the 'Azkals' at bay and hope strikers such as Sami Al Hussaini, Abdulla Yousef Helal and the player who replaced him against Uzbekistan Ismael Abdullatif fire in the goals.

Both sides have also met in a friendly last March with Bahrain managing a 2-1 win, so a similar result would at

least keep the Kingdom's hopes alive.

The Philippines though could have an advantage with a large and vocal support presence from the Filipino expatriate community and could change the atmosphere in the stadium, if they come in large numbers?

Under former US International Thomas Dooley, Philippines are having its best ever World Cup campaign and its key players come in the shape of its captain Phil

Younghusband, the record goalscorer with 42 goals, overseas players such as Neil Etheridge who plays in goal with English third tier side Walsall and Jerry Lucena who plays in Sweden for Esbjerg, others include local-based players, Amani Aquinaldo, Luke Woodland and Simone Rota.

Group leaders North Korea take on the basement team Yemen tonight in the other group match at the Kim Il Sung Stadium in its capital

Pyongyang. These matches also double as 2019 Asian Cup qualifiers and the eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the 2019 AFC Asian Cup finals in the United Arab Emirates and the final round of group qualifiers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The next best 22 teams from the preliminary stage of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining slots (11 + 1 UAE) in the 24-team 2019 Asian Cup.

## 2018 World Cup qualifiers

# Brazil eager to return

Montevideo

**B**razil and Argentina head into the second round of qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup today looking to get their campaigns back on track after opening round defeats which have left the South American giants in disarray.

The pall of gloom enveloping Brazilian football since their humiliation against Germany at the World Cup last year darkened last week when they were humbled 2-0 by Copa America champions Chile in Santiago.

Argentina, still struggling to shake off the disappointment of losing the Copa America final in July -- the team's second defeat in a major final in 12 months -- were stunned by a 2-0 reverse at home to Ecuador.

While there is still plenty of time in South America's marathon 2018 qualifying campaign for Argentina and Brazil to turn their fortunes around, the opening defeats have left both sides determined



Paraguay's players take part in a training session

to halt the slide. Brazil face Venezuela on Tuesday in Fortaleza, a game that in previous years would have been regarded as a straightforward assignment against opponents who have never qualified for the World Cup.

But in a sign of how far

Brazilian expectations have fallen, midfielder Willian revealed on Sunday that victory by a single goal would be viewed with satisfaction.

"To be honest 1-0 would be a good result for us," Willian said. "We want the three points.

Football today is different. All the teams are fit and well trained. Maybe in the past this game would have been a sure win for us, but today it's not like that -- we only beat them 2-1 in the Copa America after all," he added.

Willian insisted that Brazil

had done enough to earn a result against Chile until they were sunk by late second half goals on Thursday.

"We knew Chile would be difficult. But we marked them well for a lot of the game. We just couldn't take advantage of the opportunities we created."

Brazil badly missed the suspended Neymar against Chile, who remains banned for Tuesday's game against Venezuela.

Striker Hulk, who deputised in Santiago, said he understood the criticism of the team's attacking display.

"There is always pressure for anyone who plays as a forward for Brazil; it is our obligation because we have quality players. "We know the size of those demands and will try to answer in the best way possible," the Zenit St Petersburg striker said.

Argentina meanwhile travel to Asuncion to face Paraguay grappling a mounting injury crisis that has deprived them of their most lethal strikers.

## Jayawardene wants to keep things simple

Abu Dhabi

**E**ngland's batting consultant Mahela Jayawardene urged his new charges to keep things simple while countering Pakistani spinners and tough conditions in the three-match Test series starting in Abu Dhabi today.

The 38-year-old former Sri Lankan captain was hired to fast track England's preparation for the challenging series.

Jayawardene said he was sharing his experience in the sub-continent, boasting of an illustrious career of 149 Tests which yielded 11,814 runs.

He also retired from one-day cricket after the 2015 World Cup, having scored 12,650 in 448 matches.

"I am trying to give different ideas, share my experience. What you have to realise is that it's a process -- it's not going to happen overnight," Jayawardene told media on the sidelines of England's practice.

"The conditions -- it is going to be tough whether it be the weather or the wickets. It's about controlling what they can control and keep things nice and simple and then concentration and focus becomes much easier."

## Second innings

# Tendulkar bats for sanitation to save children

Colombo

**I**ndian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar launched an initiative in Sri Lanka yesterday to improve hygiene among children in South Asia, where hundreds of millions have no access to toilets.

The Indian superstar showed local children at a deluxe hotel in Colombo how to use soap and water to wash their hands before meals and avoid the risk of disease.

"A simple act of washing hands with soap can keep

children safe and healthy and protect them against these deadly (diarrhoeal) diseases," he told reporters.

Tendulkar, a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations children's fund UNICEF, was promoting the "wash in school" drive aimed at slashing the death toll from poor sanitation -- which kills some 1,800 children aged under five worldwide every day, according to the UN body.

UNICEF said South Asia



**Tendulkar launched an initiative in Sri Lanka yesterday to improve hygiene among children in South Asia**

had made considerable progress in the past two decades, with the proportion

of people using toilets increasing from 20 per cent in 1995 to 45pc by this year.

"The number of people not using a toilet in South Asia is still huge with 64pc of the world's open defecators living in the region. A total of 610 million people in South Asia do not have toilets," UNICEF said.

In Sri Lanka some 14pc of households in the nation of 20 million lack toilets, UNICEF said.