

## SPORTS

## Gamba fined over Nazi flag

TOKYO, May 11, (AFP): Japan's professional football J-League on Thursday announced a fine of two million yen (\$17,500) on Gamba Osaka after the club's supporters waved a flag similar to Nazi SS insignia.

The flag, which bore a double 'S' in the style of the Nazi paramilitary force, was seen during Gamba's 2-2 draw against city rivals Cerezo Osaka on April 16.

Gamba said late last month that it had told the supporters' group responsible to disband, and slapped an indefinite ban on the display of all banners by the team's fans.

On Thursday, J-League officials said it decided to punish the club for failing to prevent the incident from happening.

The club "immediately identified the supporter group in question and took swift and appropriate measures," the J-League said on its website.

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"However, the club's efforts to establish a system of monitoring supporter activities and enlightening them is not enough to meet its important responsibility of preventing discriminatory action from happening," it said.

Malaysia's football chief on Thursday said he was worried about players being deliberately poisoned if their controversial Asian Cup qualifier goes ahead in North Korea's Pyongyang.

Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) president **Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim** called for the game to be moved to a neutral venue, saying he was concerned over player safety.

The match, which was postponed during a furious diplomatic row over the murder of the North Korean leader's half-brother in Malaysia, has been rescheduled to June 8.



Players of Colombia's Atletico Nacional lift the trophy after winning the Recopa Sudamericana final soccer match against Brazil's Chapecoense in Medellin, Colombia on May 10. (AP)

## Atletico lift Supercup

Atletico Nacional lifted the South American Supercup on Wednesday after two goals each from Andres Ibarqueno and Dayro Moreno gave them a 4-1 victory on the night and 5-3 aggregate win over Brazilian side Chapecoense.

It was a losing return to Medellin for a club who saw many of its players and staff wiped out in a plane crash last November.

The small club from southern Brazil were to have played Atletico in the final of the Copa Sudamericana, South America's equivalent of the Europa League.

However, their plane crashed on approach to the Colombian city, killing 71 of the 77 people on board,

including all but three of the club's players and staff.

Chapecoense were later awarded the trophy and that took them into the 2017 Recopa, or Supercup, against Copa Libertadores winners Atletico. Chapecoense won the first leg in Brazil 2-1 in April but were outclassed against a more experienced team playing at a packed home stadium on Wednesday.

"They got an early goal and that played into Atletico's hands, they had the time to play the ball about," Chapecoense coach Wagner Mancini told Fox Sports after the game. "We had our chances to make it 2-1 but they got a third and a fourth." (RTRS)

## Victory vs WBA will deliver title

## Party atmosphere at Chelsea

WEST BROMWICH, United Kingdom, May 11, (AFP): Defender Gary Cahill admits there was a party atmosphere at Chelsea this week with the Premier League leaders 90 minutes away from clinching a second title in three years.

A "buzzing" Chelsea head to The Hawthorns to face West Bromwich Albion on Friday knowing victory will deliver the championship in coach Antonio Conte's first season in charge.

The fiercely demanding Italian has revived the fortunes of a side who ended last season 10th and is expected to be rewarded with an improved contract and assurances about the club's spending plans during the coming transfer window.

But the immediate priority is to deliver the Premier League trophy and Tottenham Hotspur's defeat at West Ham United last week together with Chelsea's defeat of Middlesbrough on Monday significantly eased the pressure during the run-in.

Should Conte's side beat a West Brom team with little to play for they will become champions with two games to go.

"It's one more to go, we have two home games and one away so we're in a very good position now," England centre-back Cahill told the club website.

"If anything, we should be enjoying it. After the Tottenham result, naturally spirits were high in training and everybody was buzzing.

"Everyone went out and enjoyed themselves and there was a little bit of pressure off, although that can sometimes be bad when you relax and don't do the right things."

Cahill, 31, insisted that there was no complacency: "It's going to be a tough game at West Brom, it always is.

"It's never comfortable and we need to be aware of that, but we're looking forward to getting the job done."

Jose Mourinho was in charge two years ago and Cahill, whose form has improved markedly under Conte, says the experience of becoming champions then has helped.

West Brom will take on the champions-elect with their spirits boosted by a 2-2 draw at Burnley which ended their four-match losing run and saw Salomon Rondon end his 19-game goal drought.

Attentions at The Hawthorns are already turning to next season, with



Cahill

## Zizou excited by special Juve final

## Glorious failure for Atletico

MADRID, May 11, (RTRS): Zinedine Zidane was thrilled to steer Real Madrid to a second consecutive Champions League final in which his team will bid to defend their title against his former club Juventus.

Real's French coach played for The Old Lady between 1996 and 2001 and his portrait hangs on the walls of the Italian club's stadium in Turin.

After a 2-1 defeat at the Vicente Calderon on Wednesday, which sent Real through 4-2 on aggregate, Zidane explained what the game in Cardiff will mean to him.

"It's special, for sure, (Juventus) gave me everything," he told reporters. "But I'm with Real Madrid, another club of my life. It will be a beautiful final. We know the path is long and hard and that they deserve to be there and I think we do too."

Although Madrid were defeated by their city rivals, Zidane was pleased with the way they reacted after an opening salvo from Atletico that sent them two goals up in 16 minutes.

Cristiano Ronaldo's first-leg hat-trick had helped his team put one foot into the final but when Saul Niguez and Antoine Griezmann struck for the hosts, Real could have buckled.

"With tranquility and patience, we knew we were going to get chances," Zidane said. "After 25 minutes it all changed. In the second half we found our game."

"Isco got between the lines and like always with his quality, he does damage to the opponent."

It was the Spanish midfielder who netted Madrid's only goal on the night, but his brilliant work in midfield in the second period helped his side cope

with Atletico's pressure.

Zidane's side reached the European Cup final for the 15th time and are looking for their 12th victory.

The coach, who took charge of the team in January 2016, steered the club to victory last season against Atletico in the final.

"I'm happy as the coach as it means that what I'm doing, I'm doing well, but this squad have all been phenomenal," Zidane said. "It is those on the pitch who play, run, fight and always give everything they can. But we haven't won anything yet."

In the dying minutes of their Champions League semifinal second leg against Real Madrid, a thunderstorm rolled in and drenched Atletico Madrid's Vicente Calderon stadium.

Atletico manager Diego Simeone relished it, roaring and urging the fans to raise their volume for the final stages of their fourth consecutive Champions League elimination by their neighbours.

At the end he raced on to the sodden pitch as if Atletico had won.

They did beat Real 2-1 on Wednesday but lost the tie 4-2 on aggregate. A fittingly glorious failure on the final

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European night their stadium since 1966 will play host to.

The 3-0 first-leg defeat gave Atletico little hope of a comeback, although in the days prior to the semifinal the Argentine coach and his players insisted they could overcome their city rivals and reach the Cardiff final.

The fans believed too, with over 500 appearing outside the team hotel the night before the game to show their support and the Calderon enjoying one of the loudest and most impressive atmospheres in its 51 years as Atletico's stadium.

Next season they move to the Wanda Metropolitano, to the north-east of the city, away from their traditional stronghold, and it will take some doing to be anywhere near as intimidating a stadium for opponents.

However, Simeone has faith the fans will bring their new home to life.

"The emotions will move over. The same people that are here will be at the Metropolitano, the passion and hope is not negotiable," he told reporters.

Real Madrid taunted Atletico with a banner display in last week's first leg, reading "Tell me how it feels", making reference to their Champions League final victories over their city rivals in Lisbon (2014) and Milan (2016).

Atletico responded with a banner of their own. "Proud to not be like you" was their response. But when they leave the ramshackle, rusting but beloved Calderon, they will take a step closer to being like Real, one of Europe's super-clubs with a state-of-the-art stadium to match.

The fans pushed the hosts on from the start and after 12 minutes Saul Niguez headed home. Antoine Griezmann added the second from the penalty spot four minutes later, sending the stadium into overdrive.



Real Madrid's defender Sergio Ramos (left), vies with Atletico Madrid's forward Fernando Torres during the UEFA Champions League semifinal second leg football match Club Atletico de Madrid vs Real Madrid CF at the Vicente Calderon Stadium in Madrid on May 10. (AFP)

## Tuchel future unclear

## Dortmund seek to nail down third

BERLIN, May 11, (Agencies): When Thomas Tuchel took over at Borussia Dortmund in 2015 he was hailed as the country's top coaching talent who could carve out his own era at the Ruhr Valley club just like his predecessor, Juergen Klopp, did.

Less than two seasons on, however, Tuchel's team is battling to secure an automatic Champions League group spot with two games left in the season amid an ongoing dispute between the 43-year-old coach and club bosses.

Neither the club nor the coach himself have said Tuchel would definitely be seeing out his contract to 2018 at Dortmund, who are preparing to defend third spot and their two-point advantage over Hoffenheim with a trip to Augsburg on Saturday.

"I am the head coach of Dortmund in Augsburg, that's for sure," is all Tuchel would say earlier this week when asked if he would be coach next season.

The cause of the dispute between CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke and Tuchel is the decision to play last month's Champions League quarter-final first leg against AS Monaco a day after it was postponed due to a bomb attack on the team bus that injured one player.

Dortmund played the game the following day, losing 3-2, and then went out following another defeat in the away leg. Tuchel had argued at the time the game should not have been set for the next day with his team still in shock while Watzke said there was choice given the busy match calendar towards the end of the season.

"It is his right (to say it), he is the boss," Tuchel said. "I do not comment on this. We have two more games to play as well as a (German) Cup final."



Tuchel

Club officials have tried to play down the dispute, saying disagreements were part and parcel of the daily operations at a club but have not said whether Tuchel would stay on.

"We are all working professionally and hard together, especially at this crucial phase of the season," said Dortmund sports director Michael Zorc.

"We never discuss about the coach in public. We did not do it over seven years with Juergen Klopp and not since Tuchel has been in charge either."

"We will sit down together after the end of the season and analyse it and rate it."

Second-placed RB Leipzig, six points clear of Dortmund and already sure of a top three finish, host champions Bayern

## Leipzig vs Bayern beIN SPORTS 5HD

16:30 local (Saturday)

## Augsburg vs Dortmund beIN SPORTS 6HD

16:30 local (Saturday)

Munich, who secured their record-extending fifth straight league crown two weeks ago.

At the other end of the table, former European champions Hamburg SV, sitting in the relegation playoff spot, travel to Schalke 04 in desperate need of points to protect their unbroken 54-year Bundesliga presence.

Marc Bartra says he has a renewed passion for football as he prepares to play again after fracturing his wrist in the bomb attack on the Borussia Dortmund team bus.

The centre-back returned to training on Wednesday — 29 days after surgery on his right wrist having been hit by flying glass when three bombs blasted the Dortmund team bus last month on the way to a Champions League home match.

## Everton vs Watford beIN SPORTS 12HD

21:45 local

## West Brom vs Chelsea beIN SPORTS 2HD, 11HD

22:00 local

## Man City vs Leicester beIN SPORTS 2HD, 11HD

14:30 local (Saturday)

## Middlesbrough vs Southampton beIN SPORTS 8HD

17:00 local (Saturday)

## Bournemouth vs Burnley beIN SPORTS 12HD

17:00 local (Saturday)

## Stoke vs Arsenal beIN SPORTS 12HD, 11HD

19:30 local (Saturday)

## Palace vs Hull beIN SPORTS 2HD, 11HD

14:00 local (Sunday)

## West Ham vs Liverpool beIN SPORTS 2HD, 11HD

16:15 local (Sunday)

## Spurs vs Man U beIN SPORTS 2HD, 11HD

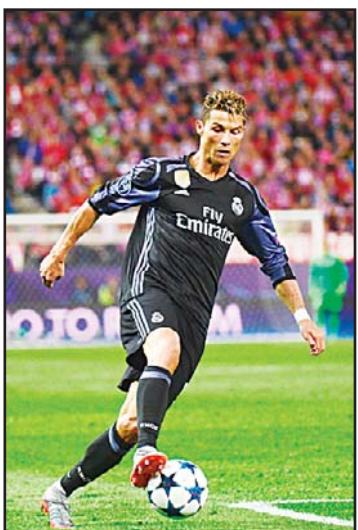
18:30 local (Sunday)

coach Tony Pulis close to agreeing a deal to sign out-of-contract defender Charlie Taylor from Leeds United.

They have three games remaining including a trip to Manchester City on Tuesday as they chase the five points they need to reach their target of 50 and comfortable mid-table safety.

Meanwhile, Arsene Wenger hailed Alexis Sanchez's unique qualities after the Chilean opened the scoring in Arsenal's 2-0 victory at Southampton and then created a second goal for substitute Olivier Giroud.

Wednesday's victory took Arsenal to within three points of the Premier League top four and keeps alive the possibility of a 20th successive season of Champions League football for the north London club. Sanchez broke the deadlock in the 60th minute at St Mary's, gathering Mesut Ozil's pass and leaving two defenders sprawling before firing home his 20th goal of the league campaign.



Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo controls the ball during the UEFA Champions League semifinal second leg football match Club Atletico de Madrid vs Real Madrid CF at the Vicente Calderon Stadium in Madrid on May 10. (AFP)