

CAF gives SA thumbs-up for Afcon

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PRETORIA: The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has given South Africa the thumbs-up for organising a seamless Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) tournament.

Speaking just three days before the final match on Sunday, 10 February, CAF Secretary-General Hicham El Amrani had only good things to say about South Africa's 2013 Afcon so far when asked about CAF's overall impression of the tournament.

"We are greatly satisfied with the hosting of this tournament so far and we are hoping to continue enjoying the remaining games, which include the runners-up and the final match.

"As CAF, we are satisfied with the progress of the tournament. We are satisfied with the infrastructure (stadiums and roads) as well as the support from the South African government," he said.

El Amrani was addressing reporters in Johannesburg on Thursday, 7 February 2013, at the final CAF media briefing before the 29th edition of the Afcon wraps up on Sunday with a clash between Nigeria and Burkina Faso at the National Stadium outside Soweto.

The CAF Secretary General, who declined to comment on claims that Issa Hayatou intended to resign soon as CAF president, also praised the Afcon Local Organising Committee (LOC) for ensuring that the tournament was a success. Hayatou has been serving as CAF president since 1987.

Asked whether there was a chance the controversial red card given to Burkina Faso's forward, Jonathan Pitriopa, by Tunisian referee Slim Jdidi during the semi-final match against Ghana, El Amrani said CAF and the LOC did not have the power to change the referee's decision, unless the referee admitted on his official report that he had made a mistake.

He said the CAF executive committee would meet on Friday to review the entire tournament, adding that Pitriopa's controversial red card would also be tabled for discussion.

"The CAF executive committee is meeting (on Friday) but you have to understand that the referee's report is final. If he doesn't make mention of having made a mistake on his official report, it stays that way."

Burkina Faso has since lodged an official appeal to CAF to have the controversial red card against their key player rescinded.

According to El Amrani, the continental football governing body has since suspended the Tunisian referee for his poor handling of the semi-final match, which Burkina Faso won 3-2 in the penalty shoot-out to reach their first ever Afcon finals.

Afcon LOC CEO Mvuzo Mbebe urged football fans to arrive early at the stadium so that they can witness the closing ceremony, which will start after 6:45pm.

"We are appealing to all match ticket holding fans to be at the stadium at 4pm. Together with the City of Johannesburg and Passenger Rail Agency South Africa, we've made special transport arrangements to transport fans to the stadium," he said.

Tickets for the final match between Nigeria and Burkina Faso have been sold out.

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