



**Joint media release on behalf of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), Football Association of Maldives (FAM), All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) and Football Federation of Sri Lanka (FFSL)**

Football authorities in Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka are uniting in support of proposals to review the FIFA international match calendar as we jointly believe that the debate can only be positive for football's modernisation.

Fans of our sport across our four member associations are well-versed in the clubs, players and traditions of leagues and competitions in Europe, but football is a truly global sport, and Asia is an equal stakeholder in that.

Our aspiring players, coaches and officials should have a dream of playing their part in a truly global sport. Equally, if we are to grow as footballing nations, then our fans should be as inspired by the achievements and potential of their heroes in our national teams as in worldwide stars performing overseas. That is why we (along with 162 other members) voted in favour of a review of the international match calendar at the 71st FIFA Congress earlier this year.

Increasing global competitiveness is the key to developing the sport across and we happy add our voice for a debate in view of making the worldwide calendar fit for the modern age. The four-year cycle of the FIFA World Cup has been set in stone ever since 1930, the inaugural tournament, where no Asian nation was represented, and at a time that actually pre-dates the foundation of our four associations.

Four-year gaps between FIFA World Cups is too great - and the window of opportunity too small – to preclude whole generations of talent. Less than a quarter of current AFC member associations have been represented in almost a century of FIFA World Cup finals in a situation where these tournaments are the real drivers of development.

Also, fundamentally important as elite events are the foundations for youth football and the consistency that regular competition brings.

Annual youth tournaments would only aid that development and we welcome Arsène Wenger's support in bringing those arguments to the fore during this debate. Every talent - every country - deserves a chance.

**Kazi Md Salahuddin**

**BFF President**

**Bassam Adeel Jaleel**

**FAM President**

**Karma Tsering Sherpa**

**ANFA President**

**Jaswar Umar**

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