

England score off the field

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta: England and Iraq will lock horns in their last group-phase game of the Fifa U-17 World Cup on Saturday in a tie that would decide who tops Group F.

Both teams had their set of priorities the day after they registered victories over Mexico and Chile, respectively.

England skipped practice on Thursday, with six of their players paying a visit to The Newtown School to meet and play football with local and school children.

Iraq, though, had a two-hour at the training ground of the Salt Lake Stadium.

Joel Latibeaudiere, Angel Gomes, Curtis Anderson, Jadon Sancho, George McEachran and Danny Loader spent time doing drills and talking about their experiences so far with the children at The Newtown School.

Joined by coach Steve Cooper, the group also took photographs, distributed gifts and signed autographs for over 80 children.

"We've enjoyed so much being here in Calcutta and it was important for us to reach out to the community whilst we were here. We have all enjoyed spending time with the local children and I think the players were impressed with their football skills. It has been a day we will all remember," Cooper said.

"We look forward to playing our final group-stage game here

on Saturday," he added.

Manchester United player Angel Gomes, who scored a stunning goal from a free-kick against Chile, was also happy.

"Playing football with the local kids was an amazing experience," he said.

Apart from the students of The Newtown School, there were also children coming from the Kolkata Goalz programme — a Premier Skills project, which helps build positive relationships between young people in high deprivation areas and the local authorities through sport.

England's next opponents, Iraq, meanwhile, are optimistic of a favourable result on Saturday.

"England are a very good team and have talented players. Each match has its own circumstances and we will play differently than how we played against Mexico and Chile," coach Qahtan Chitheer said after the victory versus Chile.

Mohammed Dawood, the most talked about player of the Iraqi side, will again be crucial to their prospects against England. But Chitheer would not like to say anything about any particular individual.

"We play as a team. Dawood is good and talented, but each player has his own skills," he said.

On the other hand, Japan and New Caledonia, who face each other in Saturday's Group E match here, arrived in the afternoon.



Jadon Sancho