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## England pitch concerns for World Cup opener

12/06/2014



There are major concerns over the state of the pitch at the Arena da Amazonia in Manaus ahead of the World Cup clash between England and Italy on Saturday, reports The Independent.

Images have emerged which show the playing surface has many bare and sandy patches. The head groundsman described the pitch as being in bad shape, and unlikely to be in good condition in time for the game on Saturday, despite the attempted implementation of an emergency plan.

The quality of the pitch in Manaus, which is due to host four World Cup matches, is said to be one of seven that Fifa are unhappy about. It is thought that the stadium roof has not allowed enough light to reach the turf and aid with growth, with rumours also rife that the stadium managers have refused requests to use artificial overnight lighting in a bid to speed up improvement.

However, whatever concerns there may be, the pitch has been passed as fit following a Fifa inspection and the match between England and Italy will take place as planned at the weekend.

Jose Melo, the governor of Amazonas state, has also sought to play down any fears that the pitch could cause problems, claiming that the teams who have played on the surface so far this year have been universally positive in their reactions to it.