

## NAT'L FOOTBALL C'SHIP Sylhet ready for final round

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet is all set to host the final round of the National Football Championship at the local stadium from tomorrow.

"The pavilion is under construction but we will try to complete the rest of the work before the meet," said Sylhet District Sports Association secretary Ahmed Aref at a press conference yesterday at the BFF Bhaban.

The 12-team meet will open with the match between Dhaka and Magura.

Dhaka, Magura, Khulna, Joypurhat, Noakhali, Tangail, Gaibandha, Comilla, Dhaka University and Bangladesh Navy emerged zonal champions to join auto-qualifiers and holders Narayanganj and hosts Sylhet in the finals.

Four group champions will play semifinals on August 31 and September 1 while the final will be played on September 3.

## Bashar returns from Bangkok

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Habibur Bashar returned home yesterday after check up on his damaged left fifth metacarpal in Bangkok.

"The specialist at Bumrungrad Hospital preferred surgery but it take long time to go back in the field. That's why I have preferred medicine and they assured me that it would hardly matter with the surgery," said Bashar, who left Dhaka on last Sunday.

"If I wanted to operate the finger than I have to miss the ICC Champions Trophy," he added.

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## U-17s end on a sour note

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh finished their campaign in the AFF Under-17 Football Championship with a disappointing note when they suffered a 3-1 defeat against Myanmar in the third and final match in Vietnam yesterday.

It was second defeat for the Bangladeshi boys in the four-nation competition as they earlier lost their first game against hosts

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh midfielder Arman Mia (R) tries to get away from a Qatar player during their AFC Asian Cup qualifying match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

## Qatar complete formalities

Football

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Ctg

Even a ten-man team was good enough for the visiting Qatar side to secure a comfortable 4-1 victory against Bangladesh at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

By winning this match the formidable Asian side earned 9 points in Group F of the AFC Asia Cup Qualifying Round.

The Qatar team geared up when they scored the first goal in the 5th minute of the match via a penalty converted by Wesam.

The Yemen-born referee, Al Yarimi, decided to blow the whistle when Pervez of Bangladesh illegally barred Mazz's progress.

The referee was in the thick again soon as he brandished the red card against the Qatar goalkeeper Abdulaziza when he caught the ball to protect a goal, outside the area, in the 18th minute of the match.

From an Arman through ball

Moni was advancing when the goalkeeper raced out to block his progress and earn himself a sending-off.

From the resulting freekick, Arman took the opportunity and curled in a stunning effort over the wall and into the net to tie up at 1-1.

But Qatar soon showed their supremacy.

Adel made no mistake in the 35th minute of the match as he converted a nice pass by Khalfan (2-1). The Bangladesh goalkeeper Aminul was completely ruffled at the pace of the ball.

Khalfan got himself on the score-sheet only two minutes later capitalising on a Hasan miss-pass before the breather.

And Khalfan doubled his tally by scoring the fourth for his team in the 29th minute of the second half from a kick from near to the goal post.

Bangladesh missed a great chance near the end when Alfaz passed to Farhad but the forward's crisp volley was comfortably gripped by the alert Qatar goalkeeper.

Qatar coach Dzemaludin

Musovic expressed his satisfaction over the performance of his team and said that they realized their target.

"We easily earned our desired three points," he said. Bangladeshi players need more practice and physical fitness, he advised.

On the other hand, Bangladeshi coach Hasanuzzaman Bablu said Bangladeshi players tried with their heart and soul.

"I think they played better considering that they practiced for only five or six days," he said.

"We have limitation and our most of the players are aged," he added.

**TEAMS**  
**QATAR:** Abdulla Abdul Aziz (Al Dosari Amor), Adam Maaz, Ibrahim Al Ghanim, Rajab Billal, Al Khalfan, Saad Al Shammri (captain), Younus Ali (A Mesbah), Abdel Majid, Abdullah Meshaal, Abdel Mohd and Siddiq Majidi.

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## Lacklustre Bangladesh held by Afghanistan



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh put in yet another lacklustre show as they prodded to a goalless draw with Afghanistan in yesterday's first match of the 10th SA Games here at the Sugathadasa Stadium.

The unfancied Afghans, who came to the match flying high after holding India, also 0-0, had the physical advantage over the Bangladeshis but lack of experience and sharp finishing kept them at bay.

As was predicted, lanky striker Hafizullah proved the danger man and tormented the Bangladesh defence with his fleet-footed runs. The Afghans created the first real chance in the 27th minute but Ali Ahmad's sidevolley from seven yards on a lob by fullback Saleem was parried by goalkeeper Shakil. He was as brilliant under the bar as in the last game barring a clumsy challenge in injury time that had awarded Nepal a penalty in the 1-1 draw in both sides' opener in Group B.

He made another spectacular

save in the second half to keep Bangladesh in contention for a berth in the last four. Bangladesh, who play India in their last group match on August 19, are level with Afghanistan on two points.

Diego Cruciani's boys, however, should have gone ahead five minutes from halftime when debutant Robin raced past three defenders down the right flank. The striker chipped the ball nicely over the last defender but much to the horror of his teammates, Emily misheaded the chance with the keeper standing helplessly.

Bangladesh started in a surprise 4-3-3 formation with the Argentine coach keeping Siraji, Waly, Ariful and Titu in defence. Arman Aziz played as the holding midfielder with Zahid Hossain and Faisal Mahmud covering the flanks while Emily had Robin and Zahed Parvez beside him in the attack.

After the break, Faisal and Zahid Hossain threatened to score in the second minute after a one-two but the Afghans defended superbly. The pair, which combined in Bangladesh's lone goal in the meet against Nepal, came alive again in the 63rd minute but the unmarked Faisal's header went wide after he met a cross from right.

The two changes made by Cruciani - Ujjal for Zahid Hossain and Topu for Robin - gave the all greens an edge as Topu set Ariful with a fine through in the 77th minute but the overlapping centre-back's low drive was stopped by goalkeeper Shamsullah at the near post. A minute later, Shamsullah punched out Emily's close range header to inspire his teammates to dominate the last part of the game and come close to snatch their first ever win against Bangladesh. But Hafizullah's header from close was kept out for a corner by an acrobatic Shakil.

"This is the level of Bangladesh football. It is not at all good as many people think. They don't have the capacity to attack or create situations for scorers. Our main problem is that we lack a good scorer," said a very upset Cruciani after the match.

"We started organised but lost everything after 15 minutes. We dominated the second half but without much penetration. We also wasted two-three very good chances.

Afghanistan only created problems for us in the air because their players are very tall. My defence was okay," he said assessing his side's performance.

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## TOUR TO PAKISTAN First 4-dayer today

SPORTS REPORTER

BCB National Cricket Academy team launch their campaign today when they take on Pakistan Academy in the first four-day match at Karachi.

A 14-member team led by Mehrab Hossain left Dhaka on Monday to play two four-dayers and three limited-over matches against their Pakistani counterparts.

The second and final four-dayer will take place in Multan from August 23.

The first one-day match will be held on August 27 at Sheikhupura followed by the second one-dayer on August 31 at Sialkot and 3rd one-dayer on September 2 at Lahore.

## SA GAMES Second batch off to Colombo

SPORTS REPORTER

Six teams -- boxing, table tennis, weightlifting, swimming, kabaddi, hockey left Dhaka yesterday to take part in the 10th SA Games in Colombo.

The cycling team leave on August 18 and the last batch --

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## COLOMBO CRICKET

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

With the local media still concentrating on cricket, organisers of the tenth edition of the biennial event can now look forward to get some attention.

"There is no chance that the SA Games will be called off. It has happened in Sri Lanka before and we are not afraid because sports had never been a target. Sports is always out of danger, so I don't know why the South Africans are so concerned about their security," said an official of the organising committee seeking anonymity.

A terror attack on August 14 in the heart of Colombo killed eight people, putting the tri-nation cricket tournament to a grinding halt. It also led a terrified South African cricket team to finally withdraw from the meet that also involves Indian and hosts Sri Lanka.

"We're hoping to see a successful end to the Games," he added.

If the proverb 'seeing is believing' is true, preparations hardly reflected the organiser's claim. With less than 48 hours to go for the opening ceremony, they have yet to open the media centre. It took three full days for the Bangladeshi journalists to get hands accreditation cards. For results, they had to rush to almost every room at the Sugathadasa Sports Complex as even the official website for the Games does not work.

Also last year's nightmare at Colombo's Test venue P Sara was revisited at the tiny (world's smallest) press box at the Sugathadasa Stadium as reporters had to watch the football match standing. There was only one table that could seat three persons. The first additional table that came as help suddenly collapsed and a local guy spectacularly caught a Bangladeshi journalist's laptop before it hit the ground. No wonder, the Lankans are good athletes and will dominate the track and field events.

## AVERAGE PERFORMANCE FROM SHUTTLERS

The Bangladesh shuttlers crashed out of the singles and doubles quarterfinals on the opening day of the 10th SA Games badminton competition.

They made a good start in the morning session at the Sugathadasa

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PHOTO: COURTESY

The Bangladesh swimming team, bound for Colombo to participate in the SA Games, take rest at the Bangkok airport after their flight was delayed yesterday.

## Proteas pull out SL-India 5-ODI series likely

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

South Africa have pulled out of the limited-overs tri-series against India and hosts Sri Lanka due to security concerns after a deadly bombing, a Sri Lankan cricket official said on Wednesday.

"South Africa have told us they want to pull out. It is unfortunate but true," Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) media manager Samantha Algama told AFP.

A South African source said earlier: "The players are in no mood to play the series. We are just waiting for the green signal to fly home."

The Proteas were due to issue a formal statement later on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka have asked India to play a bilateral one-

day series following South Africa's withdrawal, Algama said.

"We have asked India to play five one-dayers in lieu of the tri-series and they have promised to get back to us on Thursday," he said.

"Sri Lanka are very grateful to India for helping us in a crisis."

South Africa had indicated on Tuesday they wanted to return home after Monday's blast close to their team hotel which killed seven people and injured eight.

The Proteas had, however, agreed to extend their stay in Colombo pending the security assessment by the ICC which was expected to be announced later on Wednesday.

Indian decided not to cancel their tour following increased security and positive indications from New Delhi's diplomatic mission here.

South Africa played a two-Test series in Sri Lanka earlier on their tour without incident. The home

team won both matches against the depleted tourists, missing captain Graeme Smith and all-rounder Jacques Kallis.

The tri-series, which was scheduled to start on Monday, did not see a ball being bowled in the first two matches.

The original opener between South Africa and Sri Lanka was rained off on Monday and cancelled again on Tuesday following South Africa's reluctance to play amid security fears.

The next match between India and Sri Lanka was abandoned on Wednesday because of wet ground conditions at the Premadasa stadium.

This is not the first time a foreign cricket team have withdrawn from Sri Lanka over security fears.

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## Did U Know?

Anatoly Karpov, the first world champion won the title without playing a chess match. He got the title in 1975 when Bobby Fischer refused to defend his title.



ESPN

England v Pakistan  
Fourth Test, Day One  
Live from 4:00 pm



## Andriy Shevchenko

(Ukrainian star footballer)  
"My father, and my mother, taught me good values, family values, to work hard, to respect people, to be honest and to give back to people and help them. I work the same way."



PHOTO: TIGERCRICKET.COM

The Bangladesh team poses with the trophy as they are flanked by expatriates living in Kenya at the Nairobi Gymkhana ground on Tuesday.

## Women's cricket: the untold stories

MONOWAR ANIS KHAN

It was February 1982, and by then, women of our country had already established themselves in various outdoor sports like athletics, badminton, volleyball, handball and hockey. Cricket was not to lag behind and the Metropolitan Women's Sports Association arranged a three-month camp for training the enthusiastic girls. About 50 girls from a variety of backgrounds in sports, a few new ones from schools, colleges, universities and some working women also joined the camp. Hamida Ali, Aleya Ferdousi, Nazma Shameem Chowdhury, Hamida Begum were the main organisers and many others like Roushanara Chobi and Rabia Khatun assisted them. National cricket coach Syed Altaf

Hossain was appointed to train the players. The then chairman of the National Sports Control Board (NSCB) Lt. Col. Rezaul Jalil (retired) cooperated to arrange the equipment from Cricket Foundation. The journey of women's cricket in Bangladesh started there.

At the beginning, the girls were very scared of the red cricket ball as it was wooden, hard and could cause injuries. Sometimes, especially when practising slip catches or straight and full-tossed balls used to come towards the batswomen, the novices would either leave their field positions or the crease. The coach faced a hard time to make them bat properly and practise different bowling actions. However, this state of trepidation was not to persist for too long. Very soon, conquering all fears, the new but eager cricketers started

playing quite well. An exhibition match was later organised between two teams of the participants.

The training camp ended, but the aspirations of the 'newborn' cricketers kept increasing. They wished to become full-fledged cricketers. Given this scenario and interest, Najma Shameem, the then secretary of the Metropolitan Women's Sports Association and also an official of Abahani Krira Chakra, took a sincere initiative to arrange training for the women cricketers. On behalf of Abahani, about 20 girls came spontaneously to the indoor stadium to practise cricket and started to organise in proper way. The players would not bother for either conveyance or tiffin money. The coach would give lessons at a very nominal salary, sometimes even without any remuneration. The team under the banner

of Abahani eventually played friendly matches with Agrani Bank and Gulshan Brothers Club.

In 1983, the historical event was the match between the Bangladesh team under the banner of Abahani and the West Bengal President's XI on the 24th of March at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta. The local team were the seven-time champions and once runners-up in India's national championship. So, anybody could guess their strength.

The captain of the Bangladesh team was Ivy. Shahin and Minu opened for the team. Putul was the wicketkeeper and other players were Nitu, Afsana, Lovely, Dolly Cruze, Nargis, Lubna, Arundhuti and Sabah.

The event got tremendous publicity in the media of both the countries. This was possible only because of the indomitable eager-

ness of the players, earnest endeavour of Nazma Chowdhury and sincere co-operation of coach Altaf Hossain.

After returning from Calcutta, the team started practising with fresh zeal. They learnt to bowl googlies and yorkers besides medium pace, off- and leg-spins. This team of women cricketers later on emerged as the Sisters' Union. Aleya Ferdousi, an established name in both theatre and sporting circles, was an inspiring factor in this endeavour while Dolly Cruze, a renowned national athlete, played a coordinating role in keeping the team together. This team also played with Three Stars Boys' Club of Narayanganj and Lalmatia Club later on.

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