

Obaidul opens BKSP cricket pavilion

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader inaugurated a cricket pavilion yesterday at the Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Prosthana (BKSP) built at a cost of 25 lakh taka, report agencies.

With the construction of the pavilion, it will now be possible to arrange international matches as it consists separate dressing and dining rooms for players, VIP room, umpires' room, scorers' room and a storeroom.

Officials said mini galleries will be set up around the ground and the pavilion would be expanded into a two-storied building in phases.

Director of the coaching, Eddie Barlow lauded the standard of the construction of the pavilion and also praised various modern training and practice facilities at the BKSP.

Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives and president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Director General of BKSP Syed Sadik Hassan Rumi and Editor of the Ajker Kagoj Kazi Shahed Ahmed accompanied the state minister.



State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader (R) inaugurating the cricket pavilion at the BKSP yesterday. Bangladesh Cricket Board president and Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Saber Hossain Chowdhury is also seen.

Serie A preview

Lippi wants no respite

MILAN, Sept 24: Inter Milan coach Marcello Lippi has told his men to stoke up their fire against Torino this weekend after setting the Serie A alight with their 5-1 demolition of Parma, reports AFP.

Top of the Serie A table with the most prolific attack and the meanest defence, Inter should be good for another three points in Turin.

But Lippi said: "We have to keep our feet on the ground. We had a special kind of match against Parma and we were all really thrilled. But that doesn't mean to say we'll always be capable of playing like that."

"On Sunday we're facing a team that have real pride and who know how to fight, especially in front of their home fans."

"If we walk out there still thinking about all the praise we've had since the Parma match, we're going to wind up in a very sorry state I can assure you of that."

Lippi will be returning to the Delle Alpi stadium for the first time since quitting as coach of Juventus in February, having spent nearly five years turning them into European and world champions.

The coach is likely to stick by the team who annihilated

Parma, with Christian Vieri and Chilean Ivan Zamorano leading the attack, supported by winger Francesco Moriero and midfielders Paulo Sousa and Luigi Di Biagio.

However, such a line-up will leave little or no room for Ronaldo, the Brazilian ace who sat out the goalfest against Parma and who will be lucky to even make it onto the subs' bench in Turin.

Buoyed up by the news that he is going to become a father next spring, Ronaldo is determined to rediscover his full fitness and magic touch after a year ruined by injury and disappointment.

Meanwhile, Parma coach Alberto Malesani may have survived Sunday's mauling by Vieri and Co., but his days will be numbered if the UEFA and Italian Cup holders are hammered a second time this weekend by Lazio.

Lazio showed real fighting spirit in their 2-1 win over Dynamo Kyiv in midweek and a similar performance can't be ruled out on Sunday night, even if coach Sven Goran Eriksson does re-shuffle his pack.

There should be room for striker Simone Inzaghi and Portuguese winger Sergio Conceicao, while goalkeeper Luca Marchegiani, who missed the match against Dynamo through injury, faces a late fitness test.

Reigning champions AC Milan face Bologna here on Saturday night. As they did for much of last season, Milan are putting points on the board without convincing critics about the quality of their football.

Tuesday night's 2-1 Champions League win over Galatasaray only lifted morale a certain degree, as it was accompanied by a punishing second-half and some waspish comments afterwards from club owner Silvio Berlusconi.

Central defender Alessandro Costacurra has a thigh strain and his place could go to Bruno N'Gotty, while striker George Weah - still serving out a lengthy ban in Europe - returns to the starting line-up.

Juventus travel south to Lecce on Saturday, while Fiorentina have to bounce back from their 4-2 midweek thrashing by Barcelona when they meet Udinese and Fabio Capello's AS Roma host Perugia.

Serie A fixtures (1400 GMT unless stated):
Saturday: Lecce v Juventus, AC Milan v Bologna (1930 GMT)

Sunday: Cagliari v Venezia, Reggina v Piacenza, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Torino v Inter Milan, Udinese v Fiorentina, Verona v Bari, Parma v Lazio (1930 GMT)

Primera Liga preview

Rayo hope to carry on

PARIS, Sept 24: Unheralded Rayo Vallecano hope to show they have a head for heights as they go into Sunday's home clash with Real Zaragoza looking down on their more illustrious rivals from the top of the Spanish Primera Liga, reports AFP.

It is certainly a remarkable feat for suburban Madrid outfit Rayo Vallecano to be at the top of the Primera Liga for the first time in their 75-year history.

But coach Juan Ramos admits that his unfashionable side, promoted last May, are not likely to be there when it matters at the end of the season.

Meanwhile, defending champions Barcelona - defeated by Alaves last weekend - partially redeemed themselves with a comprehensive European Champions League victory over Fiorentina in midweek and now host Real Betis at the Nou Camp.

The former Leeds striker

Barca's eternal rivals Real Madrid face a trip to holiday paradise Malaga with Welsh coach John Toshack pleading for the Spanish press to lay off his 37 million dollars French international striker Nicolas Anelka.

Anelka, whose failure to settle in Britain led to a far from amicable split with Arsenal, is already giving signals that life in Spain is not to his taste and, sidelined with injury, his teammates are determined to prove they can do without him.

Toshack's well-meaning intervention could well have the reverse effect with the Spanish press making their much-maligned British counterparts looking like choirboys in their determined pursuit of the striker.

Another man to leave England for Madrid in controversial circumstances is Dutchman Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, settling better in the Spanish capital.

The former Leeds striker

has already scored twice for Atletico Madrid, who are recovering after a dismal start. They will hope to consolidate at home to Racing Santander.

Real Mallorca host Athletic Bilbao whose French coach Luis Fernandez this week confirmed he would leave the club at the end of the season while Celta Vigo travel to Real Sociedad's San Sebastian base.

Deportivo La Coruna host Numancia while Sevilla is the destination for Espanyol.

Alaves visit Oviedo, while Valladolid make the trip to Valencia in Sunday's other matches.

Fixtures in the Primera Liga this weekend:
Sunday: Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander, Deportivo La Coruna v Numancia, Barcelona v Real Betis, Seville v Espanyol, Valencia v Real Valladolid, Real Mallorca v Athletic Bilbao, Malaga v Real Madrid, Rayo Vallecano v Real Zaragoza, Real Sociedad v Celta Vigo, Real Oviedo v Alaves

Bundesliga preview

Bayern getting into shape

COLOGNE, Germany, Sept 24: German international defender Christian Worns has resumed training again after being sidelined with a torn thigh muscle, meaning Borussia Dortmund go into their game with Eintracht Frankfurt Saturday virtually at full strength, reports AFP.

His team-mate Fredi Bobic tweaked his shoulder Wednesday evening punching the air in joy after the second of his goals against Portugal's Boavista but ought to have no after-effects.

Wollsburn won't have it easy at Hamburg, especially after last week's demoralising 2-7 home annihilation by Werder Bremen.

Bayern Munich say the worst is over and, after Michael Tarnat's last minute equaliser at Glasgow Rangers Tuesday, claim they have reached top gear and are ready to take on anyone.

To freshen things up coach Ottmar Hitzfeld will bring in five new faces for Friday's match against struggling VfB Stuttgart, who haven't won an away fixture for 12 months. "Anything except defeat would be a surprise," Stuttgart's trainer Ralf Rangnick said disconsolately.

Oliver Kahn is back in goal for Bayern after his concussion but it's not certain which of the others will be rested.

"It's not about keeping the players happy but about conserving energy," Hitzfeld said of his rotation tactic.

"If I leave someone out of the team it's only because another

player can produce 20 percent more."

Reveling in their 2-1 win over Chelsea, Hertha Berlin want to risk playing more attacking football at Unterhaching. General manager Dieter Honess predicts Saturday's game will be more strenuous than next week's champions League fixture at AC Milan.

Leverkusen will receive a revived Kaiserslautern Sunday with all eyes still on Ciriaco Sforza and coach Otto Rehagel to see if they can hold their shaky peace.

Successive wins over Hamburg and Scottish side Kilmarnock in the UEFA Cup have boosted Kaiserslautern's confidence enormously.

Prior to Saturday's game at Hansa Rostock 1860 Munich coach Werner Lorant has spoken openly about throwing in the towel because of the constant negative pressure when Bundesliga teams string together a few bad results.

"We in Germany always take stock after just one game and it irritates me," Lorant said. "It's possible to have a bad start but then you have to fight your way out of it. A season consists of 34 rounds."

1860 are currently 13th after five games with two wins and three defeats.

In the remaining games of round six, Werder Bremen host SSV Ulm, Schalke travel to Duisburg (both Saturday) and Arminia Bielefeld play Freiburg,

Advisers sue Premiership

LONDON, Sept 24: The English Premier League is facing a legal fight which could cost clubs tens of millions of pounds following the issuing of a writ against the 20 Premiership clubs by two former Sky TV executives, reports AFP.

Sam Chisholm and David Chance's appointment as media advisers caused a crisis earlier this year and led to the resignation of chief executive Peter Leaver and chairman Sir John Quinton.

Chisholm and Chance were appointed by Leaver to renegotiate television contracts, but the Premiership clubs were shocked by revelations the pair could net around 50 million pounds (80 million dollars) each from the deal, and refused to ratify the posts.

The chairmen were also angered that they had not been consulted ahead of the contract with Chisholm and Chance being agreed.

Attempts to renegotiate their terms following Leaver's resignation failed, and the pair have now issued a writ against the Premier League claiming breach of contract.

At a Premier League meeting on Thursday, the clubs' chairmen unanimously agreed to defend that writ.

League spokesman Mike Lee said: "The Premier League clubs voted unanimously today to defend the writ that we have received. There is a clear view that we must now move on from this issue and look forward."

The League believe they have a formidable case but if Chisholm and Chance achieve a court victory, the compensation they would receive could be huge.

In the future, TV rights negotiations will be handled by new chief executive Richard Scudamore, who will move to the Premier League from the Football League before the end of the year.

The current deal netted the League around 743 million pounds and runs out in the year 2001. The new contract is expected to top 1 billion pounds.

MU turns Blair down

MANCHESTER, England, Sept 24: Manchester United insist they cannot re-enter the FA Cup despite Tony Blair's appeal to them to return, reports AFP.

The Prime Minister wants United to sit down with the Football Association and try and find a way of enabling the Treble winners to defend the trophy this season.

But United say no-one has come up with a way of reducing their hectic fixture schedule to allow them to participate in the FA Cup.

United withdrew from the competition three months ago because the then Sports Minister Tony Banks and the FA wanted them to compete in FA's inaugural World Club Championship in Brazil in January and so help England's 2006 World Cup bid.

The Old Trafford outfit reluctantly pulled out of the FA Cup because they felt they could not play in both competitions.

United maintain that no-one has come up with a better solution that would enable them to take part without adding to their already considerable fixture burden.

United spokesman Ken Ramsden said: "The position remains unchanged. The fundamental issue here is the number of matches our players will have to play."

"We understand what others are saying but until someone can offer a solution which reduces our number of games then we are stuck where we are. Therefore our position remains unchanged."

Edmundo on target for Vasco

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 24: Brazilian Edmundo produced his best performance since re-joining Vasco da Gama from Italy's Fiorentina, scoring twice and setting up two more goals in a 4-2 win over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League, reports Reuters.

Edmundo's goals came in a three minute spell in the second half of Wednesday's game. Most immediately after Corinthians had come from two goals behind to level the scores at 2-2.

Earlier, he had set up goals for Paulo Miranda and Danilo as Vasco raced into a 2-0 lead.

Vasco, who have had five players sent off in their last two matches, managed to complete the game with 11 players on the pitch but still had coach Antonio Lopes shown the red card for dissent.

Former detective Lopes was escorted from the field by police after initially refusing to go.

Vasco's last game on Sunday was suspended three minutes from the end when club director Eurico Miranda invaded the pitch with security men and radio reporters to threaten the match referee.

Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla was once again kept on the sidelines as South American champions Palmeiras beat Parana 1-0 away.

Asprilla has barely played since joining the club from Italy's Parma and has been reprimanded by coach Luis Felipe Scolari for not pulling his weight in training.

Corinthians still lead the championship, in which the top eight teams qualify of the quarter-finals.

Vasco and Palmeiras are also in the top eight.



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: Groundsman at the Galle Cricket Stadium try to drain the drenched pitch before the start of play yesterday. The second Test eventually did resume later in the day. —AFP photo

Premiership preview

Watford target Gunners

LONDON, Sept 24: Watford manager Graham Taylor will be quietly plotting another upset this Saturday when his promoted side visit Arsenal in the English Premiership, reports AFP.

Watford are currently in the middle of their toughest four-game sequence of the season - Chelsea at home, Arsenal away, Leeds United at home and Manchester United away.

Yet all four opponents are heavily involved in European competition and if last Saturday's shock 1-0 home win over Chelsea is anything to go by, another surprise could be on the cards at Highbury.

Watford's colours are predominantly yellow and red but their form this season has been very much black and white - they have won three and lost five of the Premiership games and followed up their Chelsea success with an embarrassing 3-1 defeat at second division Wigan in the League Cup.

The ex-England manager admits he doesn't know which Watford to expect on Saturday.

"We've shown in our last two games the two different sides of Watford," we have the bottle to win when we are the underdogs against teams like Chelsea but we can't impose ourselves when we are supposed to be top dogs. That worries me," he said.

Taylor is hopeful that record Dutch signing Nordin Wooter, so influential against Chelsea, will be fit after missing the Wigan defeat with a leg problem.

Arsenal who like Chelsea and Manchester United, have just completed the second of three successive midweek Champions League matches, were given a boost by their 3-1 win over Aik Solna at Wembley on Wednesday.

Manager Arsene Wenger won't want the bubble burst on Saturday ahead of next week's

crunch trip to Barcelona, though equally, he needs to rest his key players after an exhausting start to the season.

The cerebral Frenchman will have noted how Chelsea followed up their Watford loss with a worryingly limp performance in the midweek Champions League defeat by Hertha Berlin.

"These European games are very intense but I want my players to concentrate on the Watford game and forget about Barcelona," he said. "It's a very important one too."

Frenchman Gilles Grimandi, who suffered a dead leg in injury doubt.

Arsenal are currently third in the table on 16 points, four behind leaders United who play host to Southampton.

It's a match the Treble winners would expect to win at a canter. But the same could have been said of the game against Wimbledon last week, when United needed a late equaliser to earn a draw.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson will also rotate his squad with another European week looming and one player unlikely to figure is midfielder Roy Keane, who aggravated a knee injury an hour into the 3-0 win at Sturm Graz on Wednesday.

"Fingers crossed I will be back for Saturday," said the Irishman, who admits he may need surgery.

"Hopefully it will settle down again and if it doesn't, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it," he added.

Ferguson expects Keane to be fit for Wednesday's Champions League game against Marseille at Old Trafford at least and claims time will be the best healer.

"Hopefully he will be fit for next Wednesday and it's just a matter of it getting better as time goes on," he said.

Game of the day could well come at Elland Road, where

Leeds United, currently second, ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, tackle resurgent Newcastle United.

Bobby Robson's side are still on a high after the 8-0 drubbing of Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds will need to shackle Alan Shearer, scorer of five goals last Sunday.

Leeds are on a four-game win streak and manager David O'Leary reckons his young team are ready to emulate Manchester United's decade of domestic dominance.

"I want to do for and with Leeds United what Alex [Ferguson] has done for and with Manchester United," he said.

"They may have beaten us in the third game of the season but I hope they made the most of it because that will change."

"We want to be kicking their backside over the next few years."

Chelsea slipped to sixth, seven points adrift of United after their Watford defeat and a visit to Middlesbrough is not the easiest of warm-ups for the midweek Champions League clash at home to Galatasaray next week.

Sheffield Wednesday, meanwhile, will be quaking at the thought of a visit to promoted Sunderland.

Peter Reid's side, fifth on 14 points, stuck five past Derby last Saturday and matched the feat on Tuesday in the League Cup at Walsall.

Fixtures:
Saturday (kick-off 1400 GMT): Arsenal v Watford, Coventry v West Ham, Derby v Bradford, Leeds v Newcastle, Leicester v Aston Villa, Man Utd v Southampton, Middlesbrough v Chelsea, Sunderland v Sheffield Wednesday
Sunday (1500 GMT): Wimbledon v Tottenham
Monday (1900 GMT): Liverpool v Everton

French First Division preview

National team spot up for grabs

PARIS, Sept 24: Paris St Germain's sell-out home clash with Monaco tops the bill in this weekend's French First Division programme which also offers many players the last chance to impress national team coach Roger Lemerre before he names his squad for France's biggest game since the World Cup Final, reports AFP.

Next Wednesday Lemerre announces the list of players that will face Iceland at home on October 9 in a game which could see the World Champions eliminated from next year's European Championships.

Particularly eager to impress Lemerre will be strikers - the long-standing Achilles heel of the French national team - and goalkeepers, with first choice Fabien Barthez suspended for the make-or-break showdown with the Scandinavians.

With PSG joint top - level with Lyon on points, goals scored and goals conceded - Saturday's Parc des Princes clash between PSG and Monaco will provide the perfect stage for PSG's Bernard Lama to wrest the goalkeeper's jersey from opposite number Barthez even if just for one match.

Lama has not been included in Lemerre's recent squads as he has told the coach he will only turn up if he is guaranteed a place in the starting line-up - unthinkable as Barthez, with Zinedine Zidane, is one of the two biggest folk heroes in French football.

But with Barthez out of the equation Lemerre, who admits his job depends on qualification, may well prefer the experience of the former West Ham goalkeeper to his other two alternatives to don the gloves.

They are Stephane Porato of Marseille and Bordeaux's Ulrich Rame. Uncapped Porato and his team-mates visit Rennes on Sunday and the young goalkeeper had a brilliant game for Marseille in their Champions League away victory against Croatia Zagreb on Wednesday.

Rame, who won his first French cap against Andorra in June, has been in fine fettle for Bordeaux, who host Auxerre on Saturday also on the back of good form in Europe after the reigning French champions' victory over Holland's Willem II Tilburg in the Champions League.

The Bordeaux v Auxerre clash also provides a good chance for strikers to stake a claim for inclusion for a position that no-one has really managed to fill successfully since Jean-Pierre Papin and Eric Cantona left the international scene.

With Real Madrid's Nicolas Anelka fast falling from favour the Bordeaux pairing of Sylvain Wilton and Lilian Laslandes started France's last qualifier - the 3-2 win over Armenia - but were not particularly impressive in that game or in the French

first division this season.

And after that match Lemerre indicated he had Auxerre's Stephane Guivarch in mind for the Iceland clash.

It would be the former Guingamp and Rennes forward's first game in the national side since the World Cup Final which holds bitter-sweet memories for the Brittany-born hitman.

While Guivarch was guaranteed the legend status that has been accorded all of the team that drubbed Brazil 3-0, he squandered four golden chances in that match and was substituted.

A miserable year across the channel with Newcastle and then Glasgow Rangers seemed to have ended his hopes of a France recall but in his second spell at Auxerre Guivarch has finally started to hit the target again.

Also available for Auxerre, level on points with PSG and Lyon but with an inferior goal difference - is another World Cup star, Bernard Dionede, who is now eligible to play for the Burgundy side again after re-signing his registration form.

Paris PSG's new French international striker Laurent Robert will miss the Monaco clash as he completes a three-match suspension and that could count against him when Lemerre reveals his hand Wednesday.

But Monaco's David Trezeguet is well in the running, leading the goalscoring charts. A goal against PSG could see him win a place in Lemerre's starting line-up.

Unless Anelka suddenly finds his feet and fitness the only realistic candidate outside the French first division is Arsenal's Thierry Henry.

Joint leaders Lyon host Strasbourg with their own French international striker Tony Vairelles having an outside chance of winning Lemerre's vote.

Nantes, in fourth, are away to Metz while Sedan make the journey to Montpellier.

Bastia host Le Havre while Nancy visit Troyes in other games Saturday.

As well as Rennes v Marseille there is one other game Sunday which sees two of France's best supported clubs clash when Lens host St Etienne. All other matches are played Saturday.

Match referee speaks to Fleming

GALLE, Sri Lanka, Sept 24: Australian pace bowler Damien Fleming has been spoken to by the match referee for an altercation with Sri Lanka's Chaminda Vaas in the second Test but it is unclear whether he has been fined, reports Reuters.

The bowler appeared to drop his right shoulder into Vaas on Thursday after dismissing the batsman, who made 41 and frustrated the visitors with a series of lineings.

The bowler was approached by umpire Doug Cowie as the Australians gathered in a group to celebrate Vaas' dismissal and was again talked to by the umpire after the end of his over.

After the match, Fleming met with match referee Cammie Smith for about 30 minutes to discuss the incident.

Smith and Australian team management refused to disclose what action, if any, had been taken, saying that an International Cricket Council (ICC) regulation states any comment must come from the controlling nation's cricket board.

A senior official of the Sri Lankan Board of Cricket Control said the Australian team had made a request for them not to release any details of the disciplinary hearing.

Jadeja back to normal

NAIROBI, Sept 24: India's stand-in skipper Ajay Jadeja has completely recovered from the muscle tear that he had suffered in Singapore, and had begun batting session at the nets with his team yesterday, reports PTI.

"I am completely fit now and am looking forward to the series," Jadeja said after his team had the first training session here.

Middle order batsmen Vijay Bhardwaj of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh's Mohammad Kaif joined the team this morning upon their return from Los Angeles after the India-A's five-match American Challenge Series against Australia. A Kaif and Bhardwaj also trained with the team today.

"We hope to maintain the winning streak. It'll be a nice way to sign off," coach Anshuman Gaekwad, whose two-year term expires after the LG Cup here, said.

The team arrived here Wednesday morning and later headed for the Jhansi Mdra national park, about five hours from here. The players returned to the capital this morning.

The Zimbabwe and Kenya teams trained at the Gymkhana and Aga Khan Club respectively, while the South African team is reaching here this morning, a day ahead of the four-nation tournament which starts on Saturday with a match between Kenya and Zimbabwe.

South Africa and India play the second match on Sunday.

Bacher advises Cronje

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 24: Hansie Cronje received qualified South African coach yesterday for his plan to coach Glamorgan but was warned not to let it interfere with his obligations to the national team, reports Reuters.

"Hansie is a vital member of the South African team and he cannot and will not be lost to South African cricket during this important time in our history," Bacher told Reuters.

"We have no problem, in principle, with Hansie spending two of our winters coaching Glamorgan. It can only expand and broaden his knowledge of the game and make him even more qualified in all aspects of cricket."

"But we have a major and fundamental problem if it interferes with his role for South Africa and in particular with the tour to Sri Lanka at the end of July and August next season."

"I will be contacting Glamorgan as soon as possible today to convey our concerns and clarify Hansie's availability for that tour."

"If he prepares for it by batting in Glamorgan's nets and getting into form, then great, but he must be available."

Cronje was widely believed to have put his position in jeopardy by accepting the Glamorgan job but Bacher was at pains to stress that he was still important to