

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation have selected fifteen players for a residential camp ahead of the 3rd Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship that begins in India's Tamil Nadu on September 19.

The selected players have been requested to report to the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex on August 8 at 5pm. The camp will commence on August 9.

The players have been selected from different district sports associations, based on their performance in the recently concluded National Women's Kabaddi competition.

SQUAD

Shahnaz Parvin, Qamrunnagar, Yasmin Ara, Labani Chakma, Latika Chakma, Moyna Akhter, Farhana Akhter, Hasna Marium, Fatema Akhter, Marium Khatun, Mariam Khatun, Farzana Akhter, Kazi Shahin Ara, Ez Islam, Juni Chakma.

DHAKA OPEN TENNIS

Raqibul Alam of Bogra Station Club emerged champion in the boys' under-12 singles competition of Dhaka Open Tennis at the National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Raqib crushed Suraka Suchana 8-0 in the only game of the final.

In the men's doubles, the Niranjani-Mahmudul pair moved into the semifinals thrashing Sohan and Tanvir 6-1, 6-0.

In the other quarterfinal, Amal Roy and Ranjan Ram beat Milon Hossain and Mofazzal Hossain 6-4, 6-3.

Delwar Hossain and Anwar Hossain also ensured a semifinal berth, defeating Laxman Lal and Mizanur Rahman 7-5, 6-1.

PIONEER FOOTBALL

Mugdipara and Rampura earned 1-0 wins in their second round matches of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium at Kamalapur.

In the day's first match, Mugdipara edged past Mansoor Sporting Club through Pappu's goal in the 30th minute.

In the second match, Al-Amin scored the all-important goal for Rampura Kira Chakra against Maghbazar.

Friendly soccer match at RU

RUCORRESPONDENT

A friendship football match between Adivashi Chhatra Parishad and Pahari Chhatra Parishad units of Rajshahi University was held at the Shaheed Habibur Rahman playground to celebrate the International Day for the World's Indigenous People.

Former chairman of Mass Communication and Journalism department Prof Dulal Chandra Biswas inaugurated the match as chief guest.

Adivashi Chhatra Parishad defeated Pahari Chhatra Parishad by 3-2 goals.

Adivashi striker Harandra Nath Sing scored two goals and Upen Rabidas added the other while Usa Mong Marma and Sukiran Chakma netted one each for the Pahari.

Rafiq's two

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are facing a big problem with the opening pair. Actually I am really concerned about the top-order batting," he said.

"We tried few guys in the opening spot but none could impress us," he added.

Bangladesh will play three one-day internationals against Australia, scheduled for August 31 to September 6, in Darwin.

They are also scheduled to play two one-day warm-up games before start of the series.

Bad luck

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Friday, after it was confirmed that Sharmin would not be participating in the Games.

The 12-member contingent leaves Dhaka today for the Olympics with an eye on gathering valuable experience ahead of the South Asian Games.

Of the 28 disciplines, Bangladesh are taking part in athletics, swimming and shooting. On the eve of departure, sprinter Abu Abdullah, Rubel and Nazmun Nahar Beauty hoped to compete against neighbouring athletes.

"My target is to make a good fight with our sub-continental rivals and to learn something from world-class athletes," said Abdullah.

Usain unaware

FROM PAGE 17
The 21-year-old Bolt is seeking to become the Caribbean's first 100m champion since Trinidad's Hasely Crawford in 1976, but is also one of the firm favourites for the 200m.

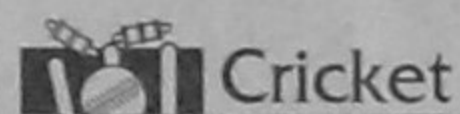
Bolt surprised everyone by breaking the 100m world record set by compatriot Asafa Powell, running 9.72sec in New York on May 31.

Powell rebounded to beat Bolt in last month's meet in Stockholm - their last before the Olympics, and the Jamaican duo will face stiff opposition from the American trio of reigning double sprint champion Tyson Gay, Walter Dix and Wallace Spearmon.



Khuina captain Habibul Bashar (4th from left) receives the National Cricket League 2007-08 trophy and a cheque worth Tk 10 lakh from BCB president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali (3rd from right) at a local hotel yesterday.

Mates back Pietersen



INTERNET, undated

While Michael Vaughan was tearfully announcing his resignation on Sunday, Andrew Flintoff was in the cinema with his children watching Kung Fu Panda, a film about a gaffe-prone and inexperienced outsider who is surprisingly appointed to lead the forces of good, which he does with his own unorthodox skills. "Prepare for awesomeness" is the film's tagline.

How awesome will Kung Fu Kevin be as England captain? According to Flintoff, Andrew Strauss and Alastair Cook, three men who could have been given the job, Kevin Pietersen's confidence and work ethic will ensure that he lets no one down. "He's a strong and decisive character, who will lead from the front," Strauss said. "A very determined player who will do a fantastic job" was

Flintoff's view.

The three were taking a day off from nets to drive cars round the Silverstone circuit, an event organised by Vodafone, the team sponsor. Flintoff compared Strauss's careful driving to that of an old lady, but it was the opening batsman who was the favoured choice of Times Online readers to get England back on the road. Of 1,500 votes cast, 36 per cent said that Strauss should be the next captain, with Pietersen on 19 per cent.

Strauss, who led England to a series win over Pakistan in 2006, admitted to regret, if not resentment, that he was passed over. "I'm disappointed not to be given the opportunity," he said. "I have unfinished business as captain, but the selectors have decided otherwise. Kevin is inexperienced but has the backing of all the players."

Cook admitted to a moment's thought that he could be asked to lead, but conceded that, at 23, "I am probably too young now".

Asked if the captaincy would affect Pietersen's batting, as it has many of his predecessors, Cook said: "KP knows his game very well. He is a cricket geek. Everything that has been thrown at him, he has dealt with brilliantly."

Flintoff also backed Pietersen to maintain -- indeed enhance -- his standing as a batsman. "He is very single-minded and has confidence by the bucketload," Flintoff said.

"Knowing Kevin, he'll start averaging 70 now," Flintoff added that Pietersen should not water down his flamboyant and risky approach to batting. "We don't want him to change," he said. "He does all these weird and wonderful shots, but he works really hard practising them in the nets."

There was also heartfelt respect for the old senei replaced by Kung Fu Kevin. "I feel sorry for Vaughan," Flintoff said. "He was a great captain who deserved to go out on a high. I hope we've not seen the last of him as a batsman."

Kirsten given leave to see ailing mum

AFP, New Delhi

India coach Gary Kirsten will leave the team's Sri Lanka tour and fly home to South Africa Tuesday to visit his critically ill mother, the cricket board said here.

"Kirsten has been granted leave to go to South Africa to be with his mother as she is critically ill," board secretary Niranjani Shah said in a statement.

"Kirsten will not be available for the third Test as he will be leaving from Colombo for South Africa tonight (Tuesday). There will not be any replacement in his absence," he said.

India staged a remarkable comeback under Kirsten by winning the second Test in Galle after suffering an innings defeat in the opener in Colombo.

The third and final Test begins in Colombo on August 8.

The Test series will be followed by a five-match one-day series starting on August 18.

Dinesh in solo

FROM PAGE 17
Lodhi stayed in the third spot along with local Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman who beat Bitan Banerjee of India to increase the tally to 5.5 points.

JUNIOR CHESS

Women FIDE Master Samima Akhter Liza won the third round game in the World Junior Chess Championship in Turkey yesterday.

Liza beat Bosnjak Antonija of Bosnia and Herzegovina to earn one point. Liza lost her first two rounds in the competition.

Strauss would

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Strauss believes Pietersen will find it hard to emulate Vaughan, who won 26 of his 51 Tests during a five-year reign, because he has so little captaincy experience.

"It is a brave decision because KP (Pietersen) hasn't done much captaincy before. But I think he has matured a lot in the last couple of years," Strauss said.

"We are all very sad Michael has decided to step down. Having been such an influential figure in the dressing room, it is going to take some time to get someone else going."

"It is a big job. I've done it a few times and you only had to see how much it meant to Michael Vaughan yesterday to realise it is an encompassing job."

"It is going to be a massive job. He will have an abundance of confidence to believe he can do it and he will have the full support of all the players around him."

Johnson gives back relay gold medal

AFP, Beijing

Athletics legend Michael Johnson has handed back the 4x400 metres relay gold medal he won in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice-president Thomas Bach confirmed here on Tuesday.

The 200 and 400 metres world record holder had already said he would hand it back after team member Antonio Pettigrew admitted earlier this year to being doped at the time.

Johnson's action came just three days after the team were officially stripped of the title by the IOC.

"Johnson wrote to us to say he considered the medal was not won honestly and he was returning it," said Bach, himself an Olympic gold medalist, in fencing, back in 1976.

As in the case of disgraced former US track queen Marion Jones, who was stripped of her five Sydney medals last December, the relay medal has not been redistributed.

Of the four members of the relay team that evening only Johnson has never tested positive - as well as Pettigrew, the Harrison twins Alvin and Calvin, were suspended for doping but after 2000.

The two other members of the squad, Angelo Taylor - the Sydney 400m hurdles champion who is competing in that event in Beijing - and Jerome Young, subsequently banned for drugs offences, will also forfeit their relay medals.

Nigeria filled second place in the final while Jamaica were third and The Bahamas fourth.

Bolt & Robles's world marks ratified

AFP, Beijing

Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt has had his 100 metres world record ratified by the sport's governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

The 21-year-old ran 9.72 seconds in New York on May 31 breaking his compatriot Asafa Powell's old mark of 9.74sec.

The IAAF also ratified the 110 metres hurdles world record of Cuban Dayron Robles who timed 1:28.72sec in Ostrava on June 12, breaking China's Olympic champion Liu Xiang's previous record of 1:28.84sec.

Ctg Media Cup semis today

CU CORRESPONDENT

The semifinals of the first Press Club-A & J Media Cup Football will be held today at the MA Aziz Stadium.

Green face White team in the first semi at 7.30am while Yellow meet Orange in the second match one hour later.

The final of the tournament takes place tomorrow at 3.00pm at the same venue.

In yesterday's matches, Orange defeated Sky 1-0. Asiful Hasanat Siddiqi scored the all-important goal while White team also secured a solitary goal victory over Blue with Shamsul Islam netting the match-decider.

Yellow managed a narrow 4-3 victory in tiebreaker against the Red team.

Real battle

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calendar - the B. League.

"We will certainly fight for the championship, but this tournament is a stage where I would love to see my footballers how they play in line with my strategy before the start of the B. League," said Maruf.

He said that his side was advancing to the right direction what he expects and hoped to show something new.

Like the coaches of the two giants, Brothers coach and former playmaker Wasim considered the Fed Cup a preparation ground for his team ahead of the B. League.

He however kept Mohammedan ahead of others, at least on paper. "What I heard from others is that Mohammedan are favourites on paper, but Abahani and Brothers are not far behind," said the former national footballer, who played for the Gopibagh outfit for a long time.

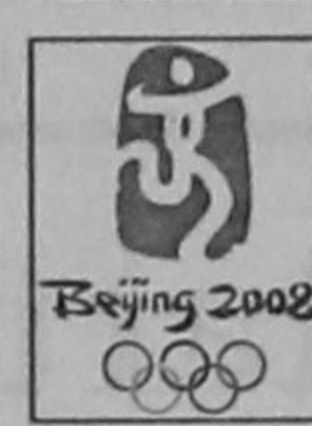
Given his experience in local football and showing some pragmatism, Wasim admitted that it is hard to predict anything in domestic football of Bangladesh for one simple reason.

"Fortune will play a big role in the match as most of the teams had little time to prepare themselves," said Wasim.

In truth, nobody would overlook a giant-killing act from the likes of Arambagh or Farashganj as most of the players, barring a few who were involved in infrequent international fixtures, have almost been out of touch since August 1, 2007, the last day of last season's B. League.

India eye 'best ever' Games

AFP, Beijing



Olympics.

The hockey stars, India's flag-bearers at past Olympics despite winning the last of their eight gold medals way back in 1980, have fallen on such hard days that they failed to qualify for the first time.

But officials are confident hockey's absence in Beijing will be made up by a promising display from other competitors like shooters, archers, boxers and tennis players.

"This is our chance to prove there is more to Indian sport than just hockey or cricket," the country's senior Olympic official Randhir Singh told AFP.

"We are confident this could be our best ever Olympics."

It will not take much to achieve that. India's best Olympic performance was in Helsinki in 1952 when wrestler Khasaba Jadhav added a bronze to the hockey team's then customary gold medal.

India, a growing economy with ambitions to host the Olympics,

has just four individual medals to show for its efforts at the four-yearly Games.

The last three Games produced a medal each with tennis star Leander Paes winning a bronze at Atlanta, women's weightlifter Karnam Malleswari a bronze in Sydney and shooter Rajyavardhan Rathore a silver at Athens.

The shooters remain the best bet in the 57-strong contingent with army officer Rathore, the flag-bearer at Friday's opening ceremony, hoping to relive his Athens moment of glory in the double trap.

Rifle shooters Gagan Narang and Abhinav Bindra, both among the top 10 in the world, pistol ace Samajit Jung and trap shooter Manavjit Sandhu are also strong contenders for medals.

"We have worked very hard for these Games and I am sure our efforts will bear fruit," said Sandhu. "If we fail, it will not be for lack of effort."

The seventh-ranked Narang, 25, returns to China where he won the air rifle gold medal at the World Cup in 2006 and followed that with a bronze at a similar event in April this year.

In tennis, Paes rubbished suggestions that his on-off partnership with Mahesh Bhupathi had hurt the three-time Grand Slam win-

ners' chances of winning a doubles medal.

"Never write us off," warned Paes, 35, with whom Bhupathi won the Asian Games title in Doha in 2006 after losing the Olympic bronze medal play-off in Athens.

"We click well on court and that is half the battle won."

Paes and Bhupathi, who parted ways in 2000, differ on most matters and reunite only to represent India at the Davis Cup, Olympics or Asian Games.

Tennis queen Sania Mirza, making a comeback after a wrist surgery faces a tough field at Beijing, but India is counting on the archers and boxers to spring surprises.

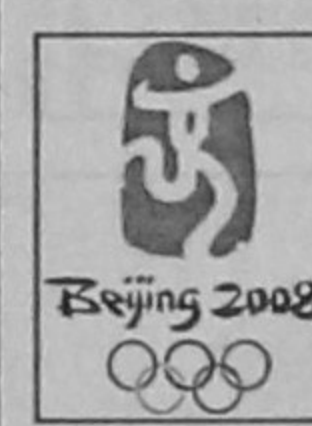
Archer Mangal Singh, picked up from a remote village by steel baron Lakshmi Mittal's sports foundation in 2006, helped India win the men's recurve team event in the World Cup in Turkey in May.

Boxing officials have pinned their hopes on Commonwealth Games 54kg champion Akhil Kumar and Vijender Singh, who recently beat Olympic champion Bakhtiyar Artayev of Uzbekistan in the 75kg category.

Kumar, asked if he could win a bronze here, said: "I am not so pessimistic. A bronze comes only if gold and silver are lost. You don't win a medal if you aim for the bronze."

Nadal feeling tired

AFP, Beijing



Olympics.

Soon to be world number one Rafael Nadal said Tuesday he was still feeling weary after his first training session here in Beijing ahead of the Olympic Games competition.

Just hours after flying in to the Chinese capital, Nadal joined Spanish teammate Tommy Robredo on court seven -- current world number one Roger Federer was practising on Centre Court -- for a light workout.

After what amounted to little more than an extended warm-up, with both players running through their ground strokes, volleys, smashes and serves, followed by a game of headers and volleys at the net, Nadal spoke of his tiredness.

"It's too soon to say anything about my condition, I only arrived on Monday and I've got jet-lag but I'm more tired than normal," said the 22-year-old.

Nadal is enjoying his best season yet and will take over from

Federer at the top of the ATP rankings on August 18.

He has spent 159 consecutive weeks in Federer's immediate shadow, with the Swiss master spending a record 236 weeks atop the world.

But Nadal beat the Fed-Express in both the Roland Garros and Wimbledon finals this year and has even started the North American hard court season in fine fettle, winning in Toronto and reaching the semi-finals in Cincinnati last week.

What's more, the clay-specialist Nadal, who previously has been unable to reproduce equal results in the second half of the season as in the first, has proved already that his form isn't dipping.

However, he is aware that he can't always be expected to keep up his clay-season success into August and beyond.

"The second half of the season is tougher than the first especially if you've played a lot of tough matches on clay like me," he said.

"It's tough to stay at 100 per cent throughout the whole season. After all these matches I'm more tired than the rest."

Nadal is widely considered to be the strongest and even fittest player on the circuit and he will have to be if he is to succeed at the Olympic tournament, which starts on Sunday.

He has the best record of anyone on tour this year, winning seven titles and with a 64-8 win-loss record.

That compares favourably even to Federer who has just two crowns and a 44-11 record.

But what that also means is that Nadal has played 17 matches more than Federer this season - 72 compared with 55.

Ironically the next three players in the rankings - Serbian Novak Djokovic, Russia's Nikolay Davydenko and David Ferrer of Spain, have all also played just 55 matches.

It means that no-one is coming into this tournament with as much having been taken out of the tank as has Nadal.

And with the heat, humidity and pollution likely to have some sort of an effect on players' physical condition throughout the tournament, the Olympics may prove one too far even for Nadal.

China guarantees

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said police had increased road checks, while extra security forces had been sent to guard government office buildings, schools and hospitals.

In Beijing, some athletes appeared more concerned that the final preparations for the biggest event of their lives were being hampered by the city's poor air, which has persisted despite emergency clean-up measures.

Indonesian weightlifting team official Syafridi Cut Ali said his squad were under strict instructions to stay in the open air as little as possible.

"We stay in our bedrooms and the dining rooms, not in the open," Ali said. "It is a problem."

Members of the US cycling team were also seen arriving at Beijing airport wearing masks.

However the International Olympic Committee's medical commission chairman, Arne Ljungqvist, said pollution levels were not as bad as first feared and blamed the media for exaggerating the issue.

"I'm confident the air quality will not prove to pose major problems to the athletes and to the visitors in Beijing," Ljungqvist said.

He said the media's reporting had convinced such stars as Ethiopian greats Haile Gebrselassie and Kenenisa Bekele and British marathon runner Paula Radcliffe that competing here might damage their health.

However, IOC president Jacques Rogge had said during the one-year countdown to the Games last August that endurance events such as the marathon may have to be postponed if pollution levels were severe.

More than one million of Beijing's 3.3 million cars were taken off the roads last month and many heavily polluting factories were temporarily closed down in an effort to improve the city's air quality.

China has said it may implement further emergency measures later this week, such as taking more cars off the roads and shutting other factories.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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