



## India withdraws weightlifter

REUTERS, Beijing

India has withdrawn woman weightlifter Monica Devi from the Beijing Olympics after she failed a dope test at home, a senior Indian official confirmed on Wednesday.

"We have learnt she is not participating after failing a dope test," India's deputy Chief de Mission Baljeet Singh Sethi told Reuters.

Indian news agency PTI had reported on Tuesday that Monica, the lone Indian lifter to participate in Beijing, had failed a test conducted on July 29.

It quoted unnamed officials saying the report showing the positive result for an anabolic salt came hours before she was to leave for Beijing.

However, the tearful lifter said she was innocent and the federation criticised the state-run Sports Authority of India (SAI), whose laboratory tested the urine sample.

"I've never, ever tested positive," she told reporters in New Delhi. "I don't know what politics has happened."

"Tomorrow, I am supposed to be tested in Beijing. If that turns positive, everyone can shoot me."

Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF) President Harbhajan Singh said she had been tested almost 30 times in the past 18 months, all of which had negative.

"They (SAI) took four urine

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## Did U Know?

American speed skater Bonnie Blair won six medals competing in three Winter Olympics Games, the second most medals won by a woman in the Winter Olympic Games.



## Ronaldinho

(Brazilian football superstar) "My goal is to create history for Brazil. The Olympics is as important as the World Cup and Copa America, everybody wants to be the champion in the Olympic Games."



## STAR Cricket

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

## ESPN

AFC Challenge Cup  
SEMIFINALS  
India v Myanmar  
Live from 4:30pm  
N Korea v Tajikistan  
Live from 7:30pm  
Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 10:30pm

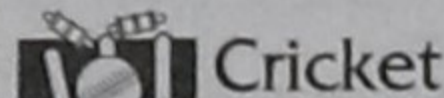


Citycell Federation Cup  
MSC v Sunrise (5pm)  
Arambagh v Rahmatganj (7pm)



Jatrabari defender Sagar (2nd from L) tries to stop Abahani's Nigerian playmaker Awudu Ibrahim during their Citycell Federation Cup final round opener at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Get big runs, India



AFP, Colombo

India will be looking forward to handsome contributions from their famed middle-order in the crucial third and final Test against Sri Lanka starting here on Friday.

The series is tied 1-1, with Sri Lanka winning the opening Test by an innings and 239 runs in Colombo, and India bouncing back with a 170-run victory in the second match in Galle.

India have quality batsmen in Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Venkatesh Laxman, but they rarely looked at their best in the last two Tests.

Laxman is the only middle-order batsman to have cracked a half-century in four innings, while Tendulkar, Dravid and Ganguly have failed to convert good starts into big knocks.

Tendulkar, chasing retired West Indies captain Brian Lara's world record of 11,953 Test runs, has so far contributed 75 in two matches,

with 31 being his highest score. He is now 97 runs short of the record.

All the middle-order batsmen were troubled by Sri Lankan spinners Muttiah Muralidaran and Ajantha Mendis, who shared 34 wickets in two matches.

Mendis, an unorthodox spinner with plenty of variation, grabbed 18 wickets and off-spinner Muralidaran 16. They are expected to play major roles in the final match.

India captain Anil Kumble was confident the middle-order batsmen would return to big-scoring ways.

"Everybody has got starts. Sachin was batting brilliantly in the second innings (in Galle) and Rahul also," he said after the second Test.

"Sourav spent some time in the opening match, but did not get an opportunity in Galle. Laxman has been among runs, so it (middle-order) is not really a worry."

That India managed to square the series without sizable contributions from the middle-order batsmen was mainly due to the excellent form of openers Virender

Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir.

Sehwag buried Sri Lanka's spin threat with an exciting strokeplay in the last match, hammering an unbeaten 201 in his team's first-innings total of 329 and a half-century in the second. He was named man of the match.

Gambhir made successive half-centuries in Galle, helping Sehwag add 167 for the opening wicket in the first innings and 90 in the second.

In contrast, Sri Lanka are still looking for a solid start from their openers. Michael Vandort's form is the main worry as he has contributed just 17 runs in three innings.

The hosts also expect their fast bowlers to keep pressure on India. Veteran left-arm seamer Chaminda Vaas has so far taken four wickets and Nuwan Kulasekara one.

India's pace attack looked sharper in the last match, with Ishant Sharma and Zaheer Khan sending the hosts reeling at 10-3 in the opening four overs.

Sri Lanka could never recover from the early blows and were

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## Bangladesh athletes off to Beijing

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh contingent left here for China yesterday to take part in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games to be held from tomorrow.

Of the 28 disciplines in the Olympics, Bangladesh will compete in athletics, swimming and shooting.

Swimmer Mohammad Rubel Rana will carry the national flag in the grand opening ceremony tomorrow.

Bangladesh contingent comprising five sportsmen -- two athletes, two swimmers and one shooter, three team manager-cum-coaches, one general team manager, one observer (Sharmin Akhter) and two participants of youth camp.

Five Bangladeshi sportsmen will take part in one event each with athletes and swimmers competing in the heats while the shooter in the qualifying round.

Swimmer Rana will compete in the men's 50m backstroke in the opening day of the Games on August 9 while another swimmer Dolly Akhter will participate in women's 50m freestyle on August 15 at the National Aquatic Centre in Beijing.

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## BKSP into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP blanked Nawabpur Krira Chakra 2-0 to move into the semifinal of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League at the Birshrestha Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

The sports institute side secured a maximum of 12 points in the second round to become Group D champions.

Sumon Ali put the winners ahead in the 21st minute and then Masud Rana doubled the margin in the 65th minute.

BKSP will play the second semifinal against group B champions Tangail Football Club on August 9 while Group A champions Sadhinata KC will face Group C champions Rampura KC in the first semifinal tomorrow.

## Wedding bells ringing for Mehrab

SPORTS REPORTER

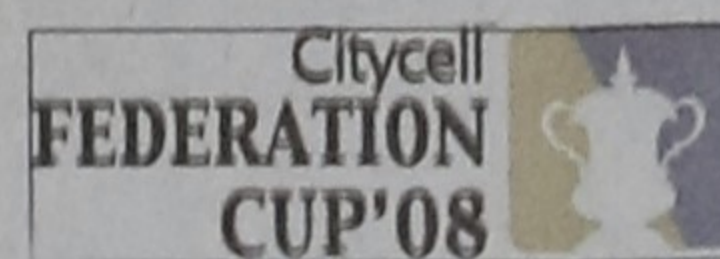
National cricketer Mehrab Hossain Jr. will tie the knot with Fahima Zerin Fahmin in a simple ceremony tonight.

The 21-year-old all-rounder, who toured with the Bangladesh side in the recently concluded Asia Cup in Pakistan, is his parents' only son.

His gaye holid was held last night and national players including captain Mohammad Ashraful were present on the occasion.

Mehrab, a left-handed batsman and a more than useful left-arm spinner, has so far played eleven one-day internationals and a solitary Test.

## Four-star Abahani



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani kicked off the real battle of the Citycell Federation Cup with a resounding 4-0 win against Jatrabari Krira Chakra at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

There was little doubt for Abahani to dominate the first Division side and one of the five qualifiers from the first round in the opening game of the 16-team final phase and a goal-fest was guaranteed despite the first goal coming as late as the 40th minute.

Mehdi Hossain Uzzal broke the evening's duck with a spectacular low left-footer, striker Zahid Hossain Emily headed in the second two minutes after the break before second-half substitute Andrews Mensha Pomeyie fired in twice in the 54th and 71st minutes respectively.

The second-half kick off was delayed by a minute for the arrival of the Nigerian with an Army-cut hairdo in place of Abul Hossain whose contribution in the first 45 minutes was a beefy volley that ricocheted off the crossbar. But it was worth waiting for the five thousand loyal Sky Blue supporters.

Pomeyie's first goal, a first-time looping shot over an out of position Jatrabari 'keeper Uzzal, had certainly brought a big smile on the face of his coach Amalesh Sen. And his second, a powerful diving header, not only made his Dhaka debut a memorable one but also ensured a third striker for Abahani at least in the season's curtain-raiser if not for the whole season.

But the hero of Abahani's triumph was undoubtedly their long-serving Nigerian playmaker Awudu Ibrahim, who set up all the four goals scored. Not only that, the dreadlocked attacker produced the fluid attacking football in company with ageless holding midfielder Arif Khan Joy.

Interestingly they were the two players in the Abahani ranks who looked supremely match-fit while the rest including Emily, the nimble striker who was instrumental in Abahani's B. League triumph last year, were out of touch.

Emily did score one goal, but missed a penalty in the fifth minute after the referee had awarded it following a professional tackle on him by the Jatrabari goalkeeper in the forbidden zone. Emily drove in a feeble shot that ran harmlessly past the right-hand post. He was also missing the firepower throughout the match giving an indication that his personal homework during the off-season was not

as intensive as it was for true professionals like Joy and Ibrahim.

Abahani will take on their Chittagong namesake on Sunday and they will certainly look for a similar result in an effort to avoid tough opponents in the quarterfinals in which that have virtually guaranteed a place from Group B with this win.

## TEAMS

ABAHANI: Biplob (Atiquel), Obaidur (Prodip), Nazrul, Samad, Faisal, Ujjal, Joy, Mamun, Abul (Pomeyie), Emily and Awudu.

JATRABARI: Uzzal, Sultan, Dulal, Sagar, Badal, Al-Amin (Adil), Badsha, Yasin, Dalim, Tapas, Shariful and Badal.

Yellow Cards: Uzzal and Sagar (Jatrabari)  
Referee: Abdul Hannan Miron.

## CTG MOHAMMEDAN-CTG ABAHANI

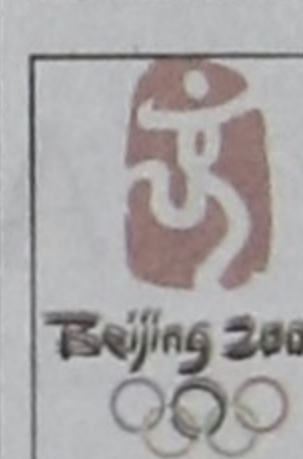
In the other match of the evening, the Chittagong derby was settled in the penultimate minute when the port city's Mohammedan snuck home 2-1 against Abahani.

Shoukat scored in the 89th minute to settle the tie after both sides scored once each in the first half.

Abahani opened the scoring through Ronnie who scored in the 24th minute. In the 42nd minute, Doulat levelled the scoring for the eventual winners.

## Dull opening to Games

AFP, Shenyang



Germany and Brazil battled to a scoreless draw as they launched the 2008 Olympic Games with the opening Group F women's football match at Shenyang Stadium here Wednesday.

The World Cup finalists from last year, who have the misfortune of being placed together in the "pool of death" with Nigeria and North Korea, were not without their chances in a fast-paced spectacle.

In a match of contrasting styles -- Brazil relying on pace and flare to Germany's patient and clinical approach -- Brazil had every

chance to open the scoring in the opening minutes.

German keeper Nadine Angerer was drawn out of the goal as Brazil's Marta, the world Player of the Year for the past two years, swept down the right flank but they were unable to finish the move.

From there the match turned into a series of desperate shots with Marta and Cristiane peppering the German goal and veteran Birgit Prinz and Kerstin Garefrekes replying for Germany.

Angerer twice tipped shots from Cristiane and Marta over the bar and saved Germany again diving in front of Marta when the speedster had ripped through the German defence.

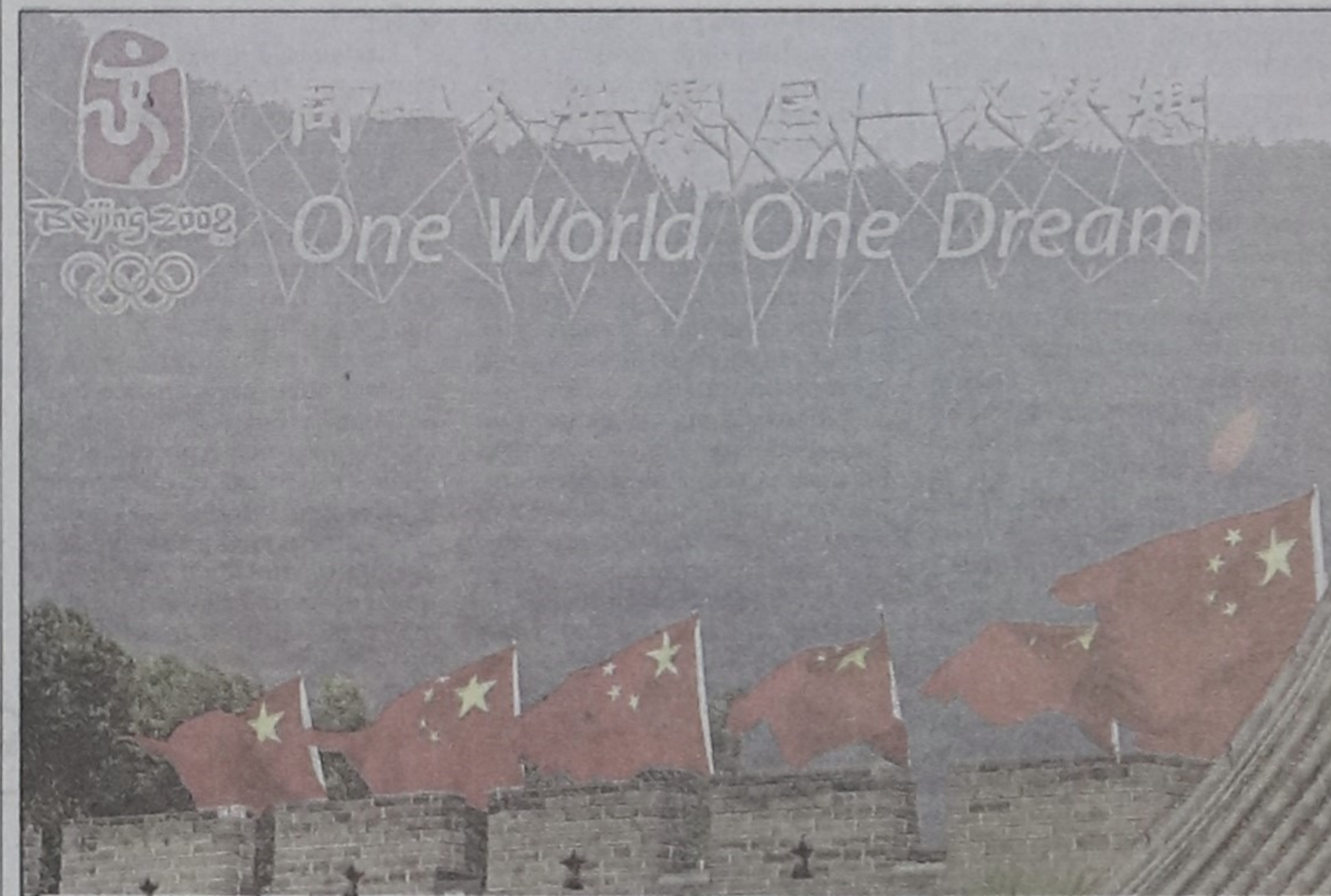
Prinz's finest effort came just before half-time when her power-

ful shot beat a diving Brazilian keeper Andreia and narrowly swung outside the right-hand post.

Although neither side would be satisfied with a draw, Brazil at least had the satisfaction of not conceding a goal to Germany after losing 0-2 the last time they met in the World Cup final.

The Athens silver-medallists also maintained their record of never losing their opening match at an Olympics, but Germany were unable to live up to their reputation of scoring at least three goals in their first match.

The two sides are likely to meet again in the play-off stages here, either in the semi-finals or finals, if they win their remaining pool matches.



Chinese flags fly over the Great Wall in Badaling two days before the beginning of the Beijing Olympic Games on Tuesday.

## KO for Messi & co

AFP, Beijing



Argentina ignited a major international football row on Wednesday by insisting superstar attacker Lionel Messi will make a controversial Olympic Games debut.

Sergio Batista, the coach of the defending Olympic champions, placed himself firmly on a collision course with Messi's Barcelona employers who want the 21-year-old to play in a Champions League tie instead.

"The player is here and will remain with the team. He will start Thursday's game (against Ivory Coast in Shanghai) from the beginning and I'm sure he can be with us for the rest of the competition," said Batista.

The coach's defiant stand came just hours after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled that clubs were not obliged to release players for the Olympics.

The Lausanne-based CAS's ruling also had major implications for Argentina's fellow South

American giants Brazil ahead of the start of Thursday's tournament, primarily an Under-23 event although teams can field over-age players.

Barcelona, Werder Bremen and Schalke had all been fighting to keep their young stars -- Argentina's



LIONEL MESSI

Messi and Brazil's Diego and Rafinha -- out of the Games, which clash with their own season after appealing an earlier ruling by FIFA which said players must be allowed to compete in Beijing.

Asked if the player will return to Spain in the light of the CAS ruling, Batista said: "Not at this time, no. I have spoken with him and he wants to stay here with the rest of the team."

"I hope this decision will not have any effects on other teams with players who are coming to this tournament. Every coach would want Messi in their team. Hopefully, Barcelona can take the decision that he stays here."

Earlier, FIFA president Sepp Blatter said he was "surprised and disappointed by the decision, but we respect it".

Headed: "Nevertheless, I appeal to the clubs: Let your players take part in the Olympic Games. It would be an act of solidarity in perfect harmony with the Olympic spirit. It would be wonderful for the players, for the fans and for the game itself."

"FIFA's opinion has not changed. The Olympic football tournaments are high level competitions that give everyone involved - most notably young players - the chance to gain international experience that will stand them in good stead for the future."

"It stands to reason, therefore, that it is not only the player who

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