



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

AN EFFORT TO LET THE GRASS GROW AGAIN: Workers pile up the rough surface of the famous Paltan Maidan once revered as the free home of budding talents but eventually turned into a lifeless meadow often occupied by addicts and thugs. Recently the custodian of the place the National Sports Council has decided to bring its brilliant self back.

Feisty Rovers

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with Webb's refusal to award a penalty for Rafael's challenge on Pedersen.

"Sir Alex doesn't think it is a penalty, but I think it is. It has to be pretty blatant to get a penalty here at Old Trafford. We all know that. For me, it is a big disappointment because the lads put up a really good fight."

Arsenal's goalless draw at home to Sunderland left them six points off the top four and struggling to qualify for the Champions League.

This was their the Gunners' third straight goalless league draw and manager Arsene Wenger did not hide his frustration at Sunderland's approach.

"Like everybody who comes here they put one striker up front and that's it," the Frenchman said. "If everybody plays like that it will be very boring in the Premier League."

James Beattie was Stoke City's hero as they moved two points clear of the relegation zone with a 2-2 draw at home to fellow strugglers Portsmouth.

Beattie scored twice as Stoke came from behind in a match where all four goals arrived in the final 15 minutes.

Niko Kranjcar finished off a well-worked move to put Pompey in front but three minutes later Stoke were level when a penalty, controversially awarded for a handball by Glen Johnson, was converted by Beattie. Then, in the 80th minute the striker headed in from close range.

Pompey salvaged a draw that left them five points clear of the drop zone when Stoke's Ryan Shawcross put through his own net in the 90th minute.

Bolton scored twice in two minutes as they beat West Ham 2-1.

Long-range specialist Matt Taylor curled in a free-kick from 22 yards before Kevin Davies made it 2-0. West Ham pulled a goal back through Scott Parker in the 66th minute.

Middlesbrough remained in the bottom three after a goalless home draw with Wigan Athletic.

U-13 football

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best players of this tournament will represent the national team in the AFC Football Festival in Tehran in May," told Nabil.

Each team will receive Tk 20,000 as appearance money, he informed adding that Tk 17.5 lakh will be spent for the qualifying stage. The total budget is Tk 22.5 lakh.

Tournament committee's member-secretary Mohammed Mohsin, development committee member Satyajit Das Rupu, BFF's technical director Shahidur Rahman Shantoo were present among others.

"In Pakistan captaincy is a very difficult job. The captain not only has to look after the team but also do other things like keeping the board chairman happy and maintaining a good relation with the media," Akram said.

"In Asia, the media is very strong and assertive and the captain must learn to deal with them properly. Similarly, he must have good relations with the board chairman. If the chairman is changed the captain has to develop good contacts with the new person," he added.

The pace legend also hit out at critics who questioned his habit of helping Indian bowlers.

"Why shouldn't I help any fellow cricketer who comes to me for advice. I also want to do a lot for Pakistani players but I can't go to anyone and tell them give me a job that is not my stature. Whenever I have been asked to coach young players I have done it," he said.

Pakistan

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Nabajatak Majlish earned a 3-1 victory over Jubo Sangha (23-15, 25-18, 25-19, 25-19 points) in the National Bank Metropolis 2nd Division Volleyball League at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

In today's matches, Bangladesh Jails meet Sicily Club at 3pm, Nagar Samaj Kalyan take on Hazrat Ali Smriti Sangha, also at 3pm, and Nabodaya Sangha face Bangladesh Bank at 4.30pm.

DIVISION FOOTBALL
City United Club beat BKSP 2-1 in the Citycell Metropolis 3rd Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium at Kamalapur.

Shahabuddin and Mojibar Rahman scored one goal each for the winners while Ali Akbar netted the lone goal for BKSP in the 2nd-half.

The day's other match between Rampura KC and Kasaituly Samaj Kalyan Parishad ended in a 1-1 draw at the same venue in the afternoon.

Asaduzzaman Noor put Rampura KC ahead in the 62nd minute while Saimon Hossain restored the parity for the Kasaituly team in the 74th minute.

GIRLS' HANDBALL
The KFC-Pizza Hut 5th Mini Girls Handball Tournament, organised by Bangladesh Handball Federation, begins

today at the Outer Stadium handball ground.

Eighteen teams, split into four groups, will initially take part in the meet.

Executive director of tournament sponsors Transcom Foods Limited Akku Chowdhury will inaugurate the meet in the morning.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
A double hat-trick by Tithi Rani Sarkar powered Bangladesh Village Defence Party (VDP) to a massive 9-0 victory over Rangamati in the CityCell National Women's Football Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Tithi, who scored six goals in the 21st, 28th, 52nd, 54th, 64th and 68th minutes to complete the double treble, was rightly adjudged player-of-the-match.

Shahnaz Khatun scored two goals in the 57th and 63rd minutes while Salma Khatun netted the other for VDP in the 47th minute.

In the day's other match, Jessore beat Khulna 1-0 at the same venue in the afternoon.

Rehana Khatun scored the winner in the 69th minute, but Mirona of Khulna was named the player-of-the-match.

SHAHEED SMRITY HOCKEY
Bangladesh Army maintained an all win record in the Need For Speed Shaheed Smriti Hockey Tournament beating BKSP 3-1 in the day's lone match at the Maulana Bhasani

National Hockey Stadium.

Hamidul Islam, skipper Sirajul Islam and substitute Mostafa Sharif scored one goal each for the winners, all in the first-half, while Abdullah Al Mansoor netted the lone goal for the national sports institute team in the 2nd-half.

With their third consecutive victory, Bangladesh Army top the league table securing full nine points.

Earlier, they defeated Bangladesh Air force 4-0 and Dilkusha SC 4-2.

Isinbayeva
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competing at the European championships in Turin next month.

"Coming here I've given up two weeks of training and everything is focused on the outdoors but it's been good to come here. Birmingham is always one of the best grand prix and it's good to give something back to the fans."

Mo Farah slashed more than six seconds off his own British record in the 3,000m, winning in a time of 7min 34.47sec.

That was 6.52secs quicker than he ran in Glasgow at the end of January and the Somalia-born 25-year-old admitted it was now time for him to deliver when it matters most, starting with next month's European championships.

"I knew I was in great shape and wanted to go under 7:40," Farah said. "It was a good race and I'm really pleased."

Records roll
FROM PAGE 17
behind the stumps.

The Sri Lankan skipper hit 32 boundaries during his 531-minute stay at the crease. Samaraweera was bowled by leg-spinner Danish Kaneria after hitting 31 boundaries during his 457-minute innings, while Kaneria finished with 3-170.

Jayawardene also shares the record for the highest ever partnership of 624 in Test cricket -- made for the third wicket with Kumar Sangakkara against South Africa in Colombo three years ago.

Pakistan are playing their first Test match in 14 months after security problems prompted teams to cancel tours of the country.

They have also been hit by an injury to strike bowler Shoaib Akhtar, as well as international bans against 17 first-class players for taking part in the rebel Indian Cricket League.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at close of the second day of the opening Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the National Stadium in Karachi on Sunday:

SRI LANKA: First innings (overnight 406-3)

Wanapura c Misbahul b Arafat 59

Paranavilana c Misbahul b Gul 0

Sangakkara c Misbahul b Kaneria 70

M Jayawardene c Akmal b Malik 240

Samaraweera b Kaneria 231

Dilshan c Akmal b Malik 0

P Jayawardene b Kaneria 18

Vaas not out 12

Extras: (lb-4, nb-9, w-1) 14

Total: (For seven wks decl in 155.2 overs) 644

Did not bat: Fernando, Mendis, Muralidaran.

Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-93, 3-177, 4-614, 5-614, 6-614, 7-644.

Bowler O M R W

Gul 24 2 92 1

Sohail 21 3 131 0

Arafat 26 2 90 1

Malik 36 3 140 2

Kaneria 46.2 5 170 3

Younis 1 0 6 0

Butt 1 0 11 0

PAKISTAN: First innings

Manzoor not out 18

Butt c Jayawardene b Muralidaran 23

Younis not out 0

Extras: (nb-3) 3

Total: (For one wk in 22 overs) 44

To bat: Faisal Iqbal, Shoaib Malik, Misbahul Haq, Kamran Akmal, Sohail Khan, Yasir Arafat, Umar Gul, Danish Kaneria.

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FA, fans reject
FROM PAGE 17
centage of people who can escape back into the warm and do various things in that time and I am sure it has got some merits somewhere but I think we support the Football Supporters' Federation here.

"We don't think it has got merit."

Extending the break by five minutes would not go down well with fans, Malcolm Clarke, chair of the Football Supporters federation, said.

Kottan now Pakistan coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Austrian coach George Kottan, who guided Bangladesh to win the 2003 SAFF Championship in Dhaka, has been named as the new head coach of Pakistan national team on Saturday.

The 62-year-old former Bangladesh coach, who also coached local side Mukti Juddha, has been asked to prepare the team for the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers this year and 11th South Asian Games to be held in Bangladesh next year, reports the AFC.com.

Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) president Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat told the AFC website: "We have asked Kottan to build the team looking at future international events and bring Pakistan at par with other South Asian countries."

Kottan, who succeeded Shahzad Anwar, said his main mission will be to take the team to the AFC Challenge Cup finals and get silverware in the SAF Games.

"There is no dearth of talent in this country but a lot of improvement is needed to build a winning side," said the Hungary-born after the team's first training session.

"I will first concentrate on improving players' fitness level and technical skills. The new team will be a blend of youth and experience for the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers."

Pakistan have been pooled in Group D with Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei and Brunei Darussalam with winners and the best second-placed team from among all the four groups advancing to the eight-team finals.

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NZC's India windfall

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

India's tour will deliver New Zealand Cricket (NZC) the biggest payday in its history -- probably in excess of 25 million dollars -- thanks to a multimillion-dollar deal for television rights.

The board will pocket a staggering 1 million dollars for each of the 22 days that India will be in action, making the deal the biggest one-off broadcasting windfall in New Zealand sport.

The New Zealand board has also taken out insurance against being unable to deliver matches to Indian broadcaster Sony. "We normally have insurance for gate receipts if a match is rained out, but for a tour of the magnitude of India we're insuring everything, including TV rights," NZC boss Justin Vaughan told the Sunday Star Times.

During a tour, it is the host nation that bears the expenses of visiting teams, but in turn gets sole access to all broadcast rights and gate receipts. Over the past two years, NZC's income has been around 30 million dollars, but this year Vaughan hoped to bring in "north of 40 million dollars" from broadcast rights, sponsorship and ticket sales.

Broadcast rights account for up to 75 per cent of NZC's income and after the previous tour by West Indies and the upcoming series against India, broadcast revenue is expected to

be in excess of 30 million dollars.

Vaughan did not give away the exact figures, but said a tour by India generated "many times" more income than tours by Australia, South Africa and England, who are on the next tier. He said the Indian tour was worth more to NZC than the payout from the 2007 World Cup, which was around 20 million dollars.

"I doubt we've had a bigger year than the one that's in front of us," Vaughan said.

He also said it was vital for New Zealand to perform well on the field, as he was looking to negotiate the rights for the next cycle in the Future Tours Programme (FTP) and was keen on another Indian tour as soon as possible.

"This series is as important as any I can remember," he said. "The tour is important on so many levels, obviously financially, but we cannot emphasise enough how important it is for us to do well against them on the field."

"This Indian team rates itself extremely highly and if we are competitive against them then the levels of respect New Zealand gets in terms of international credibility will increase and that's really important as we look at the planning of the FTP beyond 2012."

"To have some influence over that [FTP] people have to understand that we're a serious player. We can't always rely on good relationships with England and Australia we have to be able to prove it on the field as well. Because an Indian tour is so important for our finances, we'd like an Indian tour to come in the next four-year cycle."

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