



Abahani's Ghanaian striker Awudu Ibrahim (No. 20), who scored the first goal of two, tries to keep in possession against Zahirul Islam of Sheikh Russel during their Bangladesh League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## AFC A coaching concludes

SPORTS REPORTER

AFC A coaching certificate course, organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation ended at the BFF House yesterday.

Iranian instructor Masoud Eghbahi conducted the course from Feb 6 to March 6 to 21 AFC B licence coaches who took part in the course.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin distributed certificates among the participants.

## School hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Jessore Paurasova High School made a flying start in the finals of the Ecstasy 6th National School Hockey Championship with a comprehensive 5-1 win over Habiganj High School on the opening day at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Jessore dominated the first half with a 3-0 lead with two goals from Bappi and one from Shukur. After the break, Himel and Saiful added one goal each to the Jessore goal tally while Salam pulled one goal back for Habiganj.

## Rating chess

SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier Bank 12th International Rating Chess got underway at the Chess Federation hall room yesterday with over 100 players taking part in the nine-round Swiss-League tournament.

On the opening day, 56 players won their respective games as a total of 116 players, including four FIDE Masters and 77 rated players are taking part in the tournament, said a

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# Ghana duo hoists Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani overcame the first hurdle in the Bangladesh League when they handed a 2-0 defeat to Sheikh Russel KC in the away encounter at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After the barren first half, Ghanaian striker Awudu Ibrahim gave the two-time champions a lead nine minutes into the second half while his compatriot Sheriff Din Mohammad sealed the result four minutes from time and made sure of Abahani's tenth triumph in a row. The win also extended their unbeaten run to 21 matches of which eleven came in the second edition of the professional football league last season.

The Dhanmondi-based outfit also consolidated the lead in the point table with a maximum of 30 points from ten outings, five ahead of rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club, who have 25 points playing a match less than Abahani.

It was the first defeat in ten matches for Sheikh Russel, who held Mohammedan Sporting Club in their previous match and they stuck to their previous collection of 23 points.

In the day's other match in Chittagong, hosts Chittagong Mohammedan went 2-0

down to visitors Feni Soccer Club riding on two second-half strikes from Mintu Sheikh and Asif Yousuf.

With the third victory, Feni now topped Bothers Union to grab the fourth position with 11 points in nine matches while Chittagong Mohammedan is fixed on six points from nine matches to stay at 11th place.

In Dhaka, both sides got off to a cautious start in the Dhaka derby and no one controlled the midfield solely, though both sides yielded one scoring chance each in the first half.

After scoring the match winner against Brothers Union in the previous outing, midfielder Motiur Munna got a place in the starting eleven yesterday and took a well-judged freekick outside the box that fell on national defender Atiqur Rahman Mishu, who sat down with frustration after having his header go astonishingly over the crossbar with one bounce in the 11th minute and a chance went begging.

Sheikh Russel also got the similar chance from a freekick in the 18th minute, but Abahani goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee made a diving save off a Maruf Ahmed freekick outside the box.

After resumption, Abahani looked better in terms of controlling the ball and they immedi-

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PHOTO: STAR

HE HAS TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY: Bangladesh A captain Mohammad Ashraful waits for a catch while Zunaed Siddiqui (R) and Shamsur Rahman await their turn during a practice session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

# Ashraful looking to bounce back

Cricket

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Ctg

Focus will be on former Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful when the three-day warm-up match between visiting England and Bangladesh A team starts today at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

Out-of-form Ashraful has missed the one-day series against the visitors as the right-hander was dropped due to poor run of form in international as well as domestic cricket.

It is the last chance for the ace batsman, who will lead the second string Bangladesh side in the match, to get back amongst runs before final selection for the two-match Test series. The first Test will be held at the same venue from

March 12. Ashraful was looking forward to taking the opportunity to make a comeback in the team.

"I have not been batting well in the last few series. That's why I felt I needed bit of a break from international cricket but it's a three-day game, and if I bat well here, I can play Test cricket again," said Ashraful while talking to the reporters yesterday.

"I want to enjoy my game putting aside the pressure. I think I have a problem with my gameplan and I have to come up with one solid gameplan. I believe in myself and hopefully everything will be okay," he added.

Ashraful also said that the team has now more match-winners which took the pressure away from him.

"It's good for Bangladesh that we have a lot of match-winners in the team. When we beat the big teams I sometimes play brilliant cricket, but now we have four or five guys who can do that, so I need to step up again," said Ashraful.

Two other out-of-favour batsmen Zunaed Siddiqui and Rokibul Hasan will also try to get back amongst runs to draw attention of the selectors.

Bangladesh A team practiced at the venue yesterday but the touring side didn't turn out after their 45-run victory in the third one-dayer against the Tigers at the same venue on Friday.

**BANGLADESHA SQUAD**  
Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Zunaed Siddiqui, Mehrab Hossain, Shamsur Rahman, Rokibul Hasan, Shuvagato Chowdhury, Sahagir Hossain, Mahbulul Alam, Robul Islam, Syed Rasel, Dollar Mahmud and Nur Hossain.

# Tigers slide against Eng

MOHAMMAD ISAM

In the past week, the Tigers could have walked away with a lot more than plain old 'improvement'. They could have achieved more than just individual glory. Things could have been momentous for the Tigers. To put it bluntly, Bangladesh could have won the one-day series. But they didn't.

As it happens the Tigers had other predicaments to worry about. Injuries, selection controversies, alleged bust-up between team high-

ups and a senior player and poor execution on the field have left them empty-handed. As empty-handed as they were when England last toured here in 2003.

What forces the Tigers to go back seven years then? It was a different team, almost a different era if you consider how fast a Bangladesh playing line-up changes. In fact only Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was the only player from this side who was also in the 2003 one-day series against England.

But the overriding theme for the Tigers in this series was to go one-up on the class of 2003. Realistically, the visitors faced a team in form rather

than one that loses often. True that this Tigers side have lost everything in 2010 so far but they have a belief and they have a host of performers rather than just one.

But what counts is the end result which still remains 3-0 in favour of the visitors, who were evidently less stronger this time.

Notwithstanding the quality of the opponents since they have the trophy safely tucked away, we must take a look back.

Firstly, someone should have stuck around with Tamim Iqbal during his majestic yet measured 125. He looked in good touch during

the century, carrying his good work from the India series but threw it away in the second one-dayer while the third innings from the left-hander could be overlooked since he was packed off in just three balls. Otherwise his was the best effort from any of the Tigers batsmen.

Tamim's opening partner however had a strange series. Imrul Kayes looked average at best even during his half-century in the second match, losing steam midway. Aftab Ahmed looked like a batsman out of touch with international cricket. Maybe it was a case of adjusting fast but after

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## MOST RUNS

Player	M	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100	50
E Morgan (Eng)	3	179	110*	89.50	103.46	1	0
A Cook (Eng)	3	156	64	52.00	90.69	0	2
T Iqbal (Ban)	3	155	125	51.66	104.72	1	0
M Rahim (Ban)	3	138	76	46.00	83.63	0	1
C Kieswetter (Eng)	3	130	107	43.33	86.09	1	0

## MOST WICKETS

Player	M	W	Best	Ave	RPO	SR
T Bresnan (Eng)	3	8	4/28	15.87	4.53	21.0
G Swann (Eng)	3	7	3/32	17.42	4.06	25.7
S Al Hasan (Ban)	3	5	3/32	23.80	3.96	36.0
A Razzak (Ban)	3	5	3/52	26.60	4.43	36.0
S Broad (Eng)	2	3	2/46	26.66	5.33	30.0

ITF JR TENNIS

## Jayaprakash, Sharipova triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

India's Mohit Jayaprakash and Sabina Sharipova of Uzbekistan became champions in the Grameenphone 24th ITF Junior Tennis Championships yesterday after both beat Chinese opponents in the finals at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Sharipova defeated second seed Xuanshuo Ou 6-1, 6-2 while Jayaprakash romped past Xin Gao 6-3, 6-2.

Grameenphone head of products Michael Malvebo distributed prizes among the winners.

## Sylhet lift U-14 title

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet clinched the title of the Young Tigers Under-14 National competition with a massive 119-run victory over Khulna in the final at the Mymensingh circuit house ground yesterday.

Zakir Hasan hit a steady 89-ball 44 that featured five boundaries as Sylhet scored 196 for eight in their share of 50 overs after deciding to bat first. Shahnur Rahman contributed 37 off 61 balls with four boundaries and Fahad Hasan added 29.

Sabibur Rahman and Mehedi Hasan took two wickets each.

In reply, Khulna were bundled out for a meagre 77 runs.

Man-of-the-match Abdul Ahad claimed three wickets conceding 24 runs while Asadul Hasan captured three for 12 runs.

Eight teams from six divisions took part in the competition. BCB's age group selectors monitored the tournament to identify players for the Under-15 national pool.

BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal was the chief guest at the final and distributed prizes as well also announced Tk 25,000.00 cash rewards for man of the final, man-of-the-series, highest run-getter and highest wicket-taker.

## Aslam leads BFF XI against EU XI

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Sheikh Mohammad Aslam helped the Bangladesh Football Federation XI defeat the European Union team 3-1 in a friendly match at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The EU team stunned the BFF XI taking a first-minute lead through a strike from Chris Roy, but their joy lasted only one minute as the BFF XI hit back as the former national striker equalised in the second minute.

Aslam doubled the margin in the 65th minute while Shafiqul Kader Munna sealed the fate of the game one minute from time.



PHOTO: STAR

Zahurul Islam of Rajshahi goes on backfoot to punch one on the off-side on the first day of the National Cricket League final against Chittagong at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

# Rajshahi solid on Day One

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

In their attempt to retain the title Rajshahi made a steady start against Chittagong on the opening day of the five-day final match of the 11th National Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Put into bat first, Rajshahi took their time and reached 208 for five before stumps were drawn for the day.

Form batsman Zahurul Islam and Sohrawardi Shuvo got off to a confident start as Rajshahi went to lunch without lunch with 84 runs on the board without any damage.

After the break, left-arm paceman Kamrul Islam gave the much-needed breakthrough for Chittagong in the fourth over when left-handed Shuvo, who only joined his divisional side in the morning after completing the third one-day match against England on Friday evening, was caught by Irfan Shukkur for 32 that came from 98 balls and contained four boundaries.

Left-arm spinner Elias Sunny took the wicket of Zahurul, the second highest run-getter in the competition with three hundreds to his credit, who was bowled for 59. Zahurul struck nine boundaries during his 115-ball innings.

Rajshahi lost one more wicket before the tea break as all-rounder Mahmudul Hasan clean bowled Forhad Hossain for 11 runs.

One down Sabbir Rahman showed his patience to steady the ship as the young right-hander occupied the crease for more than two and a half hours for a 144-ball 41 that saw two fours before seamer Alauddin Babu dismissed him.

Kamrul captured his second wicket by removing Nasir Hossain, who added 28 off 64 balls with four boundaries.

Experienced pair Khaled Masud and Anisur Rahman remained unbeaten when play ended on the day.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 208 for five in 90 overs (Zahurul 59, Shuvo 32, Sabbir 41, Farhad 11, Nasir 28, Masud 5 not out, Anisur 22 not out, extras 10; Kamrul 2-60, Babu 1-48, Sunny 1-37, Hasan 1-22).



PHOTO: STAR

Danish Ambassador to Bangladesh Einar H Jensen rushes towards the opposition goal while BFF XI's Masud Rana looks on during their friendly football match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. However the diplomat failed to find the net as the European Union XI lost the game 3-1.

# IPL to name two new franchises

PTI, undated

The two new franchises for the Indian Premier League's 2011 season will be announced on Sunday.

"Everyone is speculating many things. You will know (bidders) on Sunday," IPL commissioner and chairman Lalit Modi said while announcing the league's first-ever branded merchandise tie-up globally with 130-year-old Swiss watchmakers Banelier. The base price for the two new franchises, which would take up the number of teams in the IPL to 10, has been fixed at \$225 million.

"We expect the winning bids to be around \$300 million," a top IPL source revealed. The terms and conditions for the bidding process have been made stringent with each bidder having been asked to furnish a bank guarantee of \$100 million along with their bid, the source said.

Talking about IPL's merchandise branding tie-up with Banelier, Modi said this was the first of many such deals which are in the pipeline.

"We aim to clinch close to

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**What to WATCH**

**ATN Bangla**  
National Cricket League  
Final, Day Two  
Chittagong v Rajshahi  
Live from 9:30am

**ESPN**  
English Premier League  
Everton v Hull City  
Live from 9:55pm

**SuperSport3**  
FA Cup  
Chelsea v Stoke City  
Live from 10:00pm

**DAY'S EVENT**

National Cricket League Final  
(Five-Day Match, Day Two)  
Chittagong v Rajshahi  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National  
Cricket Stadium, Mirpur  
Bangladesh League  
Farashganj v Shuktara  
Time: 5:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National  
Stadium