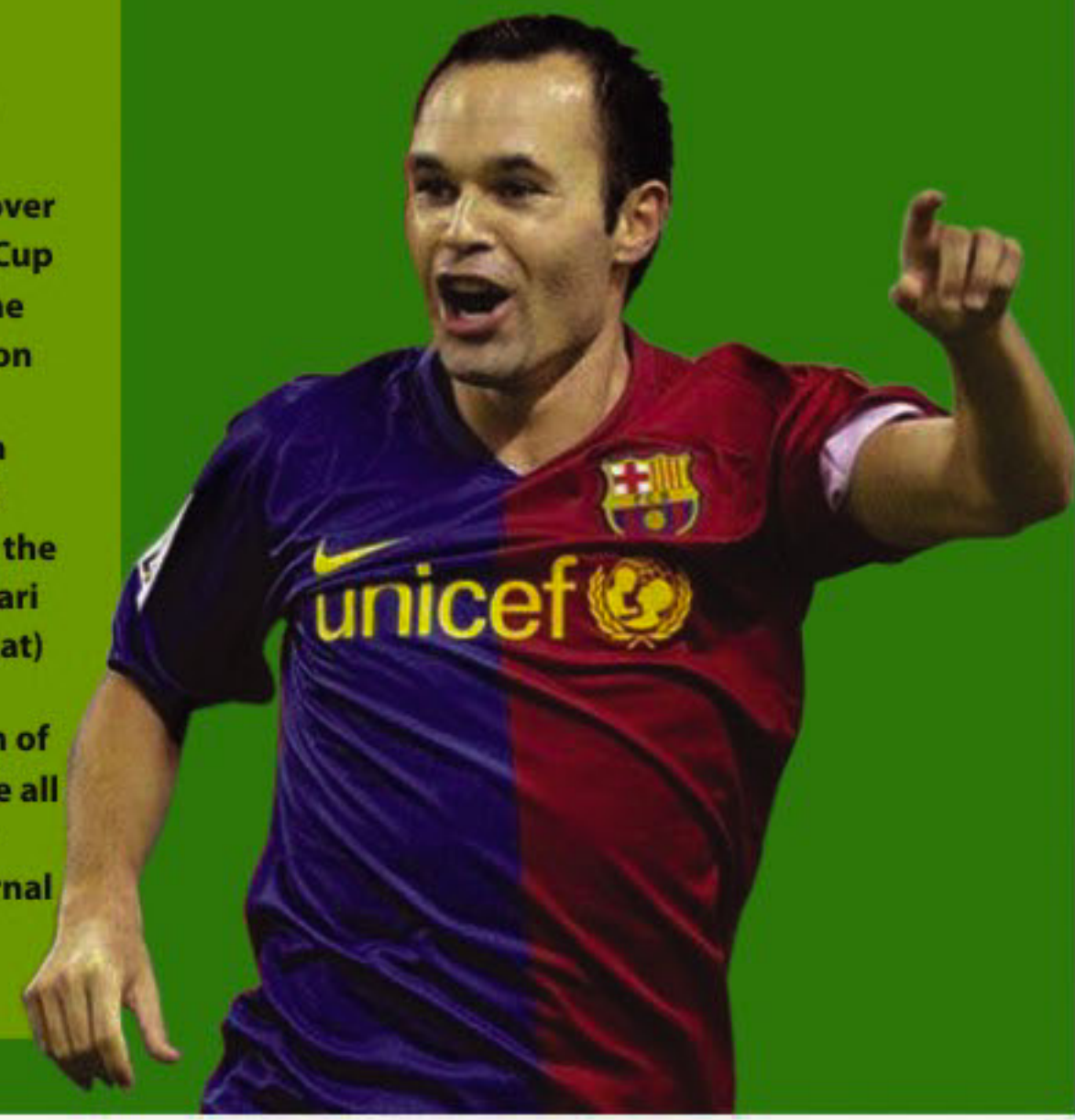


Iniesta to become a first time dad

Spain and Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta, who scored the winning goal in the 1-0 victory over the Netherlands in July's World Cup final, is to become a father for the first time, local media reported on Monday. Iniesta, 26, and his partner Anna took advantage of a post-World Cup break to conceive the child, the Catalan language newspaper Diari de Girona (www.diaridegirona.cat) said. Iniesta's family in his home town of Fuenlabrada near Albacete were all "very happy with the news," the paper quoted the player's maternal grandfather, Andres Lujan, as saying.



Barisal: Team of small stars

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Two years ago, they surprised everyone by getting close to the title, but last season they were pulled back to mediocrity when they finished second from bottom.

As Barisal prepare to launch their National Cricket League campaign against Chittagong at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on September 29, it is with the hope of going one better.

"We have a good enough team to make it to the second round," said captain Shahin Hossain, who informed that the 30-man provisional squad would begin practice today at the local stadium in Barisal.

They certainly need to take a good look at every single player at their disposal, them being Barisal after all.

Barisal have been scraping the bottom of the country's only first-class competition for a long time now, apart from the 2008-09 season. That time, they won four games and were equal on points with eventual winners Rajshahi. But last year, they only won two games and failed to

make it to the second round.

Their status as the perennial backwaters of cricket in the country usually brings a lot of outsiders in their squad but this year, Barisal's divisional sports association has had to select its own team from the little number of players in the region. But players like Hannan Sarkar, Kamrul Islam, Arafat Salahuddin, Nasiruddin Faruque, Tareq Ahmed and Shafaq Al Zahir have been called up to strengthen the Barisal squad.

The 12th National Cricket League is only a week away, with the first round matches starting on September 29 at three venues across the country. The Daily Star Sport will run a series of previews on all six divisional teams that are taking part in the country's lone first-class competition. Tomorrow, the second part of this series will be published.

In addition, Barisal have some good young players like opening batsman Asif Ahmed, off-spinner Sohag Gazi, batsmen Fazle Rabbi and Reazur Rahman and pacesman Kamrul Islam Rabbi.

Asif hammered two centuries in two games and is touted a prospect in the country's age-group teams.

Shahin, an experienced wicketkeeper, believes that some of the better performers from last season like Asif and former national player Hannan could make the dif-

ference this year.

"We have some good young players from Barisal and also performers like Hannan, Nasiruddin who are not from the division. This mix will be good for us and I think

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Iran's Tanin Naraghi (L) slams the ball past Bangladesh goalkeeper Sabina Akhtar during their AFC Under-19 Women's Football Championship qualifier at the Birshreshtha Sepoy Mustaf Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Naraghi struck a hat-trick in Iran's massive 6-0 win.

PHOTO: STAR

Wayamba thrash Stags

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Isuru Udana took a hat-trick as the Wayamba Elezens finished their Champions League Twenty20 campaign with a 74-run win over the Central Stags here on Wednesday.

Wayamba could only score 144 for six in their 20 overs but it proved enough as Udana and unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis sent the New Zealand team plunging to 16 for five. They were all out for 70 in 15.3 overs, the lowest total of the tournament.

The win at St George's Park enabled Wayamba to climb off the bottom of the Group A table. Both teams had lost their first three matches.

The first blow was struck by Mendis, who shared the new ball with Udana. Mendis trapped Stags captain Jamie How, the team's

leading run-scorer, leg before wicket.

Left-armed Udana, 22, who played for Sri Lanka in the 2009 World Twenty20 in England, deceived Brad Patton with a slower fourth ball of the next over, with the batsman playing too early and popping the ball up in the air for wicketkeeper Kushal Perera to run around to take an easy catch.

Mathew Sinclair over-balanced and was stumped off a leg-side wide and George Worker played down the wrong line to be bowled by a delivery which slanted in to complete the hat-trick.

Udana finished with three for 22 and Mendis with three for 14, while left-arm spinner Rangana Herath had the most economical figures of the tournament, two for seven off four overs.

"We really wanted it today," said Wayamba captain Jehan Mubarak. "But there are still a lot of areas we want to work on."

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Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar jumps for joy after taking the wicket of England's Jonathan Trott during the fifth ODI at Rose Bowl yesterday. After 43 overs, England were 191 for 4.

PHOTO: AFP

Games lose star shine

AFP, New Delhi

The Commonwealth Games plunged deeper into crisis Wednesday with England warning the event was on a "knife edge" over complaints of filthy housing and worsening structural and security concerns.

Officials said Commonwealth Games Federation chief Mike Fennell was flying in for a meeting Thursday with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to discuss the problems overwhelming the October 3-14 event.

The latest high-profile withdrawals include the English Olympic 400m gold

medalist Christine Ohuruogu and world triple jump champion Phillips Idowu, with Australia warning more of its competitors might follow.

Their decisions come after complaints by some teams about the state of the athletes' village, safety fears due to the collapse of a footbridge near one of the venues and question marks over security after a gun attack on tourists.

"I think we're at an absolutely vital time [regarding] whether the major teams go," warned Commonwealth Games England chairman Andrew Foster, who said the next 24-48 hours would be critical.

"It's a situation that hangs on a knife-edge," Foster said, with athletes due to

begin arriving this week for an event that was meant to showcase the modern India. Adding to the organisers' woes, a section of false ceiling fell down on Wednesday at the weightlifting venue, although there were no injuries, the government said.

Scotland -- the next hosts of the games in 2014 -- announced it was delaying the departure of its athletes by a few days, while Channel Island teams Jersey and Guernsey made direct threats to pull out if conditions did not improve.

England's Idowu wrote on the micro-blogging site Twitter Tuesday: "Sorry people, but I have children to think about. My safety is more important to them than a medal."

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WC opening ceremony in Mirpur?

SPORTS REPORTER

If you happen to visit the ICC (International Cricket Council) website these days, you will find a glaring error.

Under the venue guide for the 2011 Cricket World Cup, Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur is credited to be the ground where the opening ceremony will take place.

The website informs: "Established in 2006, the venue was named after AK Fazlul Haque - the country's renowned leader and has a seating capacity of 25,000. The stadium will host the opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011."

It is supposed to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on February 17, where construction work is at full swing for the one-off event.

The website doesn't even mention the Big Bowl, the country's most popular venue.

2nd Councilor Gold Cup

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Ward No. 1 thrashed Ward No. 2 7-0 in the day's first match of the Second Councilor Gold Cup Football tournament at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday.

Polash and Russel struck hat-tricks while Rana scored the other goal for the winners. Polash was adjudged man-of-the-match.

In the second match, Ward No. 9 blanked Ward No. 7 2-0 at the same venue with Shipon scoring both goals and later being adjudged man-of-the-match.

Iran put 6 past hosts

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh were eliminated from the group stage of the AFC U-19 Women's Football Championship qualifiers as they suffered a second successive defeat going down to Iran 6-0 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Neighboring India, however, kept their hopes of moving to the second qualifying round alive with a 2-0 win over Jordan in the day's first match.

With two rounds of matches being played in the group, Iran top the points table with maximum six points, three ahead of both Jordan and India. Hosts Bangladesh have zero points from two outings. Iran only need a draw in their last match against Jordan on Friday to qualify for the second round.

In the second match, Seyedeh Tanin Naraghi struck a hat-trick while Sahra Ghanbar scored twice and Farhadikah Parvin netted once for Iran to shove the hosts to concede 12 goals from their two matches.

The margin of defeat for Bangladesh though gives a false impression when considering the fact that they kept their opponents at bay for

most of the first half before conceding one at the stroke of half.

On the contrary, Bangladesh might have gone ahead in the sixth minute had a goal by Mirana not been disallowed for off-side and then Iranian goalkeeper Yektaei made a goalline clearance from a Sabina Khatun drive minutes later.

In the first match, hammered by 4-2 in their first match against Iran, India bounced back strongly with a speedy show in front of some fifteen hundred spectators as striking duo Rina Roy and Jabamani Soren struck one goal apiece before the lemon break.

India and Jordan are now equal on three points, both teams have a game in hand. It was a must-win game for India and they adopted an attacking strategy from the beginning. Despite facing some tough challenge from early in the match Jordan, who outplayed hosts Bangladesh 6-1 in their opener, India took the lead in the 20th minute.

India might have got on to the scoresheet earlier when but defender Ayah Faisal Ayed made a last-ditch save. On the other hand, Jordanian forward Shahnaz Yaseen, who was well guarded throughout the game following her hat-trick against Bangladesh, nearly gave

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GP connects with BFF

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Leading mobile phone operators Grameenphone engaged themselves with country's football for the first time when they came forward to sponsor the billboards during the ongoing AFC U-19 Women's Football Championship qualifiers.

Some 30 boards with the company's logo have been set up around the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium pitch yesterday, though there were no such billboards on the opening day of the meet.

"After the opening day, I have been instructed by the BFF president to arrange to set up billboards of Grameenphone and I just followed the instructions," said BFF women's football com-

mittee chairman Sirajul Islam Bachchu, adding that he did not know anything more.

However, it has been learnt that a discussion between Grameenphone and the BFF regarding the sponsorship was going on after its official partner Citycell almost severed its ties with the football's governing body before their three-year contract expired.

Citycell signed a three-year deal worth Tk 16 crore in 2008 and kept their word providing Tk 5 crore in the first season but it was learnt that they backtracked in the second season despite providing Tk 2 crore.

Grameenphone came up to sponsor the tournament after BFF requested them to be involved.

Tahmeed Azizul Huq, head of corporate communications at Grameenphone, said, "After getting a request from the Bangladesh Football

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Tom Bauer, president of 'Surfing the Nation' (R) stands with the winners of 6th International Surfing Championship held at the tourist city of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tough day for men's and women's teams

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh went down in their opening game of the 39th World Chess Olympiad when they lost to eighth-seeded Bulgaria 3.5-0.5 at Khanty-Mansiysk in Russia yesterday.

Only FM Abu Sufian Shakil drew his board against Bulgarian GM Kiril Georgiev while FM Minhazuddin Ahmed, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag and Debaraj Chatterjee lost to GM Ivan Cheparinov, GM Aleksander Delchev and IM Kiprian Berbatov respectively.

Bangladesh, without top players like GM Niaz Murshed, GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Reefat Bin Sattar, GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Enamul Hossain Rajib, are taking part in the Olympiad where some 148 teams from 144 nations are participating.

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Local surfers hold their own

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The 6th International Surfing Championship was held at the Kolatoli point of the tourist city of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

About a hundred surfers took part in the day-long competition. A large number of spectators enjoyed the water sport organised by Surfing Bangladesh and sponsored by Akiz Food and Beverage Limited.

Tom Bauer, president of international surfing organisation 'Surfing the Nation' declared the competition open. The former surfer hailed the efforts of the media to popularise the sport in Bangladesh and also to promote Cox's Bazar as an excellent tourist destination around the world.

The main attraction of the event was Zafar Alam, the first Bangladeshi surfer in the

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SPORTS POLL

TODAY'S QUESTION

What should Khaled Mahmud do?

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