

Gayle to throw 31st birthday bash

It's party time in Guyana. West Indies captain Chris Gayle turned 31 on September 21 and he plans to celebrate it poolside at the Tower Hotel in Guyana over the weekend. Gayle is likely to be in entertainer mode - singing as well as DJ. "I always wanted to do something different for my special day, plus my son is in Guyana and he always wanted me to come spend some time with his family," Gayle told a website. Several of his teammates are likely to attend the bash and the cost of attending? A cool 5,000



Iran's Zahra Sarbali (C) and her teammates carry their country's flag after they qualified for the second round of the AFC Under-19 Women's Football Championship qualifiers with a 3-2 win over Jordan at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Iran through, hosts concede six more

SPORTS REPORTER

Iran came from two goals down to stage a 3-2 victory over Jordan but Bangladesh went down 6-0 again, this time to India in the concluding day of the AFC Under-19 Women's qualification round matches at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday. Iran's victory saw them emerge as group champions with the maximum nine points from three matches and sealed them a spot for the second round. The hosts predictably

finished the campaign empty-handed, conceding a staggering 18 goals against the one they scored against Jordan in the opener. The qualification for the second round meant a lot to the girls from the Islamic republic as they ran with the national flag around the ground to the ovation of a large crowd. They even paid their gratitude to the Almighty with a

round of prayers on the field. The holiday made sure of a large crowd, which was encouraging for the game. There was a large number of female spectators in the stands to cheer on the girls. Even the balconies and windows of the adjacent buildings were full with excited onlookers. Curiously, a couple of vuvuzelas also made their way into the stadium that added to

the atmosphere. And the expectant crowd were treated to an entertaining encounter between two sets of girls who have taken up the game only 4-5 years ago. A dominant early display from Jordan striker Shahnaz Yaseen saw them sprint to a 2-0 lead within 25 minutes. The first goal came in the 16th minute when Shahnaz pounced on a

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Bangladesh goalkeeper Sabina Akhtar (R) makes a valiant save during their AFC Under-19 Women's Football Championship qualifiers match against India at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Hauritz banks on Tendulkar's mistakes

PTI, Chandigarh

Australia spinner Nathan Hauritz admitted that it would be a "tough challenge" to bowl against Sachin Tendulkar in the upcoming Test series but said the champion batsman too is vulnerable to mistakes. "He (Tendulkar) is the world's best batsman, he is unbelievable. I am looking forward to bowl to him, in what I know, is going to be a tough challenge. But people make mistakes and Tendulkar too can make mistakes," Hauritz told reporters ahead of the three-day practice match against Board President's XI starting here on Saturday.

Hauritz, who made his Test debut against India at Mumbai six years ago and took the prized wicket of Tendulkar in that match, will be leading the Australian spin attack during the two-Test series starting here on October 1.

Akbar's promise for Abahani

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Iranian coach Ali Akbar Pourmoslemi vowed to take popular Abahani to the standard of Asian club level during his six-month stint after arriving in the capital yesterday. "Three-time professional football league champions Abahani is a famous club and I am pleased to have an opportunity to work with them," said Akbar ahead of yesterday's training at the club ground in Dhanmondi.

"I have just arrived today (Friday) and have no idea about the condition of the players but I will try to take them to the club standard of the rest of Asia, subject to the

standard of the local players," Akbar said. "I can tell you about the standard and the condition of the players after working with them for a week," he added. It seems the Iranian coach prefers a formation of 4-4-2 and he wants to emphasise on the need of a good combination between backline and the midfield.

Akbar is the eighth foreign coach for Abahani, a pioneer in bringing in foreign coach at the club-level, and the 56-year Iranian coach will be the second in Abahani's professional league campaigns after Argentinean Diego Cruciani. Akbar has been part of the coaching staff of Iranian pro-league club PAS Hamedan FC and has been working as an

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Khulna: Star-less but title-contenders

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

The last time Khulna won the National Cricket League title, they had to beat Barisal in the crucial 10th round game without Habibul Bashar, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak, Tushar Imran and Syed Rasel. All were busy on those days with the national setup. That was in 2007-08 when Khulna won the first-class competition for the second time. Even in their maiden triumph of 2002-03, Khulna won with few international players in their line-up. The likes of Raju Parvez, Mohammad Salim, and the late Manzarul Islam Rana were the main performers then with a young Abdur Razzak among them. They beat a powerful Dhaka side that was led by Naimur Rahman and included other stalwarts like Jahangir Alam and Mazharul Haque Mridul, in the final.

Playing without top players may have become a habit for them as they head for another NCL campaign next week with only Tushar and Rasel available among Khulna's best.

Sahagir Hossain Pavel, Dollar Mahmud and Robiul Islam will comple-

ment the experienced duo but Shakib's all-round skills, Mashrafe's incisive bowling and leadership and Razzak's wiles remain elusive to the southwestern division. Yet, Khulna are confident of going for a third title, which would set them on an equal platform with Rajshahi, another three-time winner.

Wicketkeeper Pavel, who has been a long-time understudy to Mushfiqur Rahim in the national setup, believes that his team is balanced enough to do much better than last season when they finished a disappointing fourth. "There was some disorder last time but I think we have a more balanced squad this year," said Pavel, who was the team's top-scorer with 428 runs at an average of 50.11.

"We have been practicing quite well this year despite some problems with the facilities. We have been training in the indoor stadium but despite all that, our main target would be to become champions," he added confidently. It may seem to be bold words but Pavel has every reason to think that way. Apart from himself, Tushar, Rasel, Dollar and Rabiul, Khulna have a blend of youth and experience.

Nazmus Sadat and Mithun Ali are key to a good start as both openers have done pretty well in the last few years. All-

rounders Ziaur Rahman, Taposh Ghosh and Fariduddin Masud and spinners Murad Khan and Bishwanath Haldar make up a prolific side by domestic standards. They will probably miss the service of left-hander Amit Mazumder, who would be busy appearing for exams. But the form of Tushar and Pavel would be the key to Khulna's success.

"I have been the second wicketkeeper for the national team for quite some time now. In fact it has been almost 4 or 5 years. So I'm determined to do well this season," said Pavel, who is set to bat at number five after Tushar.

"I need to do something extra this year to push for a place in the national team. I think it is possible to do well because I have been training with them for the past few months.

"Tushar played just two games last year so he's also motivated to score runs," added Pavel.

Khulna's bowling clearly looks balanced enough to knock over any team but something has been amiss in the last two seasons when they finished fourth and third respectively.

But according to Pavel, it couldn't be the cricket structure of the region that would be to blame. In fact, they have better

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Bangladesh lose in 4th round games

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh lost in both their men's and women's games in the fourth round of the 39th World Chess Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia yesterday.

The men's team lost 2.5-1.5 to Puerto Rico while the women's team lost 4-0 to Mongolia.

In the open section, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar drew against CM Machin Rivera Mark, FM Abu Sufian Shakil drew against IM Montalvo Alejandro, Debaraj Chatterjee drew with CM Vazquez Reyes Raul while FM Mohammad Javed lost to CM Almedina Ortiz Edgardo.

The men's team now have two match points and six game points.

In the women's section, WFM Shamima Akter Liza lost to Munguntuul Bathkhuyag, Sharmin Sultana Shirin lost to Lkhamsuren Uuganbayar, WIM Rani Hamid lost to Enkhtuul Altanzulzi and Nazarana Khan Eva lost to Ankhchimeg Bayanmumh.

The women's team earned three match points and six game points.

Afridi hints at Test return

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan one-day captain Shahid Afridi hinted at a return to Test cricket Friday as the team returned from what he called the "most difficult" tour of his career in England.

The corruption-tainted tour ended Wednesday with England taking the one-day series 3-2 after an Afridi-led Pakistani fightback had levelled the series. Pakistan also lost the Test series, 3-1.

"The best part of the whole tour was that the players showed unity even in difficult times and gave a good fight in the one-day series against England," Afridi told a scrum of reporters outside Karachi airport.

"I will think about it and if the team needs it, I may consider playing the Test series against South Africa," added the explosive all-rounder. After a four-year break, Afridi came out of Test retirement this summer only to quit after one game when Australia pummeled Pakistan by 150 runs at Lord's in July.

Allegations of spot-fixing in a Test against England then engulfed Test captain Salman Butt and bowlers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif.

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Shakib's figures tell the story

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

While England off-spinner Graeme Swann is having the best phase of his career, Shakib Al Hasan is not far behind.



SHAKIB AL HASAN

In Test match cricket, the left-arm spinner has had a splendid two years when he took 45 wickets at an average of 33.0 with a strike rate of 67.7.

He is followed by off-spinners Nathan Hauritz and Harbhajan Singh and left-arm spinner Rangana Herath.

Shakib has also taken 25 wickets from 21 one-day matches since January 2009 against the top eight teams. Australian Hauritz has taken the most wickets (50) while Swann has the best average (24.29).

But in a list of spinners bowling in the middle overs (16th to 40th) in ODIs against the top eight teams during the same period, Shakib averages 40 and has taken just 13 wickets, though he has a good economy rate.

The good showing in the last two years has meant that Shakib has maintained his position in the top of the ICC ODI all-rounders' ranking with 382 points, despite sharing the place with Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi for a while.

He's also the second-best ODI bowler and Test all-rounder, according to the latest rankings.

Best Test spinners against top teams since Jan 2009

Bowler	M	W	Avg	SR	5-wkt
Graeme Swann	18	83	24.95	51.0	6
Shakib Al Hasan	10	45	33.00	67.7	3
Nathan Hauritz	12	44	33.56	66.8	2
Harbhajan Singh	10	41	35.80	74.9	2
Rangana Herath	8	35	36.34	70.8	4

SOURCE: CRICINFO

Four teams gain big wins

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Arambagh KC, Madaripur Handball Training Center and Azad Sporting Club won their respective matches on the opening day of the United Oil Women's Handball League at the Handball Stadium yesterday.

Mariner Youngs crushed Jatrabari KC 30-10, Arambagh thrashed Gofur Baluch Smrity Sangsad 36-6, Madaripur outplayed Flame Girls Club 24-3 and Azad defeated Royal Handball 28-6.

Home minister Advocate Sahara Khatun declared the nine-team league open while Bangladesh Handball Federation (BHF) president AKM Nurul Fazle Bulbul was also present.

Dream start for The Daily Star

SPORTS REPORTER

Najmul Alam Nobin was the star of The Daily Star with a hat-trick that powered his side to an emphatic 4-0 win over Sokaler Khobar in the DRU-Rapid Securities Media football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

It was a dream beginning for the leading English daily as they did their tag of favourites a massive favour.

Substitute Wasim Bin Habib netted the other goal to complete the rout.

They looked impulsive at the onset but the first-half remained at 0-0. After resumption, substitute Wasim provided the momentum, feeding Nobin the two passes that resulted in goals. The

opponents never looked to threaten the backline comprised of captain Hasan Jahid

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Batsmen Rokibul Hasan and Shahriar Nafees practice rotating the strike at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

SPORTS POLL
What you think Khaled Mahmud should do?
Stay in the job 22.3%
Leave the job 18.8%

TOTAL VOTES: 592
TODAY'S QUESTION

Will Liverpool make it into the top four this season?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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Man City v Chelsea
Live from 5:40pm
Primera Liga
Liverpool v Sunderland
Live from 7:55pm

TEN Sports
Serie A
AC Milan v Genoa
Live from 9:55pm
Primera Liga
Sporting v Valencia
Live from 12:30am (Sunday)

ZEE Sports
Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Lebane
Live from 12:00am (Sunday)
Bilbao v Barcelona
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)