

Star

SPORT

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Another feather in Messi's cap

Barcelona's Lionel Messi was named as Argentina's sports personality of the year on Wednesday, winning the Olimpia de Oro (gold) for the first time. The prize, his first in his home country, is awarded by Argentina's sports writers and follows a year in which his goals helped Barca win Spain's La Liga, the European Champions League and the Club World Cup. "I'm happy and proud of the award. Thanks to God, I've received prizes all over the world but I'd never before had one in Argentina," his country's captain told reporters.

## CITYCELL BASKETBALL

### Europa take on BKSP in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Europa Youth and Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) moved into the final of the Citycell Federation Cup Basketball Championship by beating their respective rivals in the semifinals at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Europa Youth defeated Boarder Guard Bangladesh by 85-59 points after dominating the first half 44-25. Mithun caged the highest 39 points while teammate Shoaib chipped in with 13 points. Darad and Manzil of BGB scored 20 and 15 respectively.

BKSP beat Bakshibazar 60-51, with Lincoln scoring the highest 30 points for the winners. Tahmid and Mubtasin scored 22 and 10 respectively for Bakshibazar.

The final will take place today at the same venue.

## Moulvibazar through to final round

SPORTS REPORTER

Moulvibazar qualified for the final round of the Meizan National Kabaddi Championship after becoming zonal champions in Moulvibazar yesterday.

Moulvibazar defeated Comilla by 38-12 points with three 'lona'.

In other zonal venues, Barisal, Pirojpur, Jessore, Tangail and Mymensingh moved into the zonal finals after beating their respective rivals.

Hosts Barisal defeated Patuakhali 64-13 to set their final clash with Pirojpur who also recorded an easy 48-10 win over Barguna.

Meanwhile, hosts Jessore defeated Bagerhat 32-19 to advance into the zonal final, their opponents for which will be decided today.

In Tangail, Jamalpur were thrashed 38-7 by the hosts to set up a final battle against Mymensingh who recorded a hard-fought 40-34 win over Dhaka.

## Airgun C'ship starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The IFIC 4th National Airgun Shooting Championship gets underway at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan with youth and veteran shooters taking kicking things off.

The National Shooting Federation (NSF) of Bangladesh arranged a six-day training programme for under-18 shooters which ended yesterday and those upcoming shooters will compete in a separate competition which includes men's and women's 10m Air Rifles events.

"We are placing emphasis on the 10m Air Rifles events because it has a good prospect for us. Besides, the expenditure of this event is comparatively less than the other ones like the 25m and 50m events. That is why we have arranged the 10m Air Rifles event for the youth shooters," said NSF general secretary Ishtiaque Ahmed at a press conference at the National Shooting Complex yesterday.

Ishtiaque said that the introduction of the Airgun

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5



SHAKIB AL HASAN

## Football season starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

After a four and a half month gap between seasons, a new spell of football will be underway today through the qualifying round of season's curtain raising tournament, Grameenphone Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Bangladesh Navy will face Cox's City in the opening match before Beanibazar SC take on Wari Club in the second match under the floodlights.

The 2011-12 football season was supposed to begin from October like last season but the football governing body deferred the start by two-and-a-half months due to the AFC U-19 Championship in Bangladesh as well as the preparation of the national football team for the SAFF Championship which ended in December 11 in India.

The Bangladesh Football Federation took 11 months to complete the 2010-11 season despite having started the Federation Cup

from October 10. The fourth Bangladesh League consumed more than 180 days for a meagre 132 games following the sudden-insertion of the Independence Cup in the middle of the professional league.

Last season ended through the Super Cup final between two archrivals Abahani and Mohammedan on August 6 and since then there has been no competition in senior level.

This time around, the Federation Cup will see 12 teams including seven clubs of the second-tier professional football league (Bangladesh Championship League) take part in a knock-out basis. Five teams will qualify for the 16-team final round where the 11 clubs of the Bangladesh Premier League are waiting.

As five teams will advance to the final round, seven clubs who are going to play the inaugural Bangladesh Championship League will be trying to fine-tune their squads as well as looking for a long stay in the Federation Cup through qualifying for the finals.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8

## Int'l hockey returns to Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan came from two goals down Thursday to beat a much improved China 5-3, taking the lead 2-0 in a four-match series that marks the first international hockey in the troubled country for seven years.

Forwards Waqas Sharif and Haseem Khan hit two goals each with Ali Shah netting once to lead Pakistan's fight-back after China dominated initial play with two goals by the 11th minute.

Pakistan won the first match 3-0 on Wednesday in Karachi, in the first international hockey hosted by Pakistan in seven years.

A campaign of Taliban and Al-Qaeda linked attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2008, has made Pakistan a virtual "no go" zone for international sport.

China struck in the third minute when striker Dong Yang scored off the first penalty corner, going under the feet of Pakistani goalkeeper Salman Akbar, who had a miserable match.

Liu Xiang Tang doubled the lead in the 11th minute when he sneaked past Pakistan's defence to score a field goal, much to the shock of Pakistan.

Awoken by their rivals' sudden surge, Pakistan struck three times within the next 14 minutes as Khan (14 and 28 minutes) and Waqas Sharif (23 minutes) put Pakistan ahead with 3-2.

Yang pulled one back in the 54th minute in a slick move from the forward line before Sharif ended the score with another field goal in the 56th minute.

## KP to stay at Surrey

AFP, London

England star Kevin Pietersen has committed his future to Surrey for as long as he remains an international player, it was confirmed on Thursday.

Pietersen is currently a centrally contracted player with England and has no fixed term for his county career at Surrey.

However Surrey announced in a statement that Pietersen, 31, had pledged to remain with the county for the duration of his central contract with England, which is reviewed every 12 months.

"England batsman Kevin Pietersen has extended his contract with Surrey County Cricket Club until the end of his central contract with England," Surrey said in a statement.

Pietersen joined Surrey on loan in 2010 after a spell at Hampshire before agreeing a one-year deal for 2011.

## Shakib numero uno

### Concerned about long gaps between Test series



BISHWAJIT ROY

Shakib Al Hasan received another feather on his impressive cap as the former Bangladesh captain became the number one ranked all-rounder in the ICC Test player rankings.

It was a double delight for the 24-year-old who also holds the number one position in the ODI rankings.

Nothing could have been better than the way the prolific all-rounder signed off the year, and the usually reserved man was also delighted by the achievement.

"Without any doubt it's great news for me and for the country's cricket and I'm really happy. I have had the self-belief that it will come my way sooner or later because you know for a long time I was in the top five, so it was a matter of time," said Shakib in his instant reaction.

The laurel came his way for the first time in his career through his splendid all-round performance against Pakistan in the second Test match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Shakib became the first Bangladeshi

TOP FIVE TEST ALL-ROUNDERS				
Player	Country	Rank	Points	
Shakib Al Hasan	Bangladesh	1	404	
Jacques Kallis	South Africa	2	397	
Daniel Vettori	New Zealand	3	385	
Shane Watson	Australia	4	379	

player to hit a century and take a five-for in the same Test when he slammed 144 before falling victim to a run-out and added a haul of 6-82 in Pakistan's first innings. It was the first instance of a player scoring a hundred and taking a 6-for in the same Test since Pakistan legend Imran Khan did it in 1983.

"It's fantastic that the performance in the last Test in the year helped me to achieve this feat but it would be much better if we could manage a good result from the last Test match. We could have celebrated this success in great fashion if we had a good result under our belt," opined Shakib.

The staggering performance in the Mirpur Test, which Bangladesh lost by seven wickets, not only earned the Magura lad the man-of-the-match award but also elevated him four places in the all-rounders' rankings, placing him at the top of the tree.

Shakib, who has also improved his bowling and batting rankings, gathered 404 points while South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis followed him with 397 points. In the Reliance ICC Player Rankings for Test batsmen, Shakib vaulted seven places to claim a career-best 31st position while in the

SHAKIB AL HASAN'S TEST STATS										
M	Runs	H/S	Ave	100s	50s	Wkts	Ave	BBI	BBM	5wkt
26	1630	144	34.68	2	9	96	31.36	7/36	9/115	9
TESTS IN 2011										
M	Runs	H/S	Ave	100s	50s	Wkts	Ave	BBI	BBM	5wkt

## Gymnastics C'ship from Wednesday

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sultana Kamal 4th Central South Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championship will start at Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on December 28.

The three-day long international gymnastic event will feature 6 participating nations: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Uzbekistan and hosts Bangladesh. 6 male and 4 female gymnasts will be representing the host nation among a total of 32 male and 24 female gymnasts taking part in the competition.

100 delegates in total, including players, coaches, managers and judges from the six nations are set to be

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8

## ASIAN SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP

## Squad likely to be trimmed

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Shooting Federation of Bangladesh (NSF) is likely to cut down the nine-member squad for the Asian Shooting Championship to only four due to the financial crisis although they have sought financial help from the clubs to send their respective players to the championship.

Nine players have initially been selected for the 12th edition of the Asian Shooting Championship, which will see a total of 35 shooters from 14 events to earn the quota place in the 2012 London Olympics.

The championship will get underway from January 11 in Doha, Qatar.

"We are mostly likely to send four shooters in the championship due to financial problem but if the clubs come forward to sponsor their respective shooters, the number of shooters might be increased," said NSF general secretary Ishtiaque Ahmed yesterday.

"Out of 29 quota places in each of 14 Olympic shooting events, 27 places in each event have already been fulfilled through different championships and tournaments and the remaining two quota places in each of the shooting events of the 2012 Olympics will be fulfilled through the Asian Shooting Championship.

"We believe Bangladesh have a good chance to earn the quota places in women's 10m Air Rifles event. So we will try our best to send more women's shooters in the championship," said Ahmed adding that India, Singapore and Malaysia would be Bangladesh's main rivals in women's 10m Air Rifles event.

However, the fact is that Bangladesh have never earned any quota places in Olympics and have always played through the wild card system.

The preliminary squad includes Sharmin

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

## Minhaz gains 3rd & final IM norm



SPORTS REPORTER

Fide Master Minhaz Uddin Ahmed earned his third and final International Master (IM) norm when he beat Golam Mostofa in the tenth round of the Walton 37th National Chess Championship yesterday.

Minhaz won the second norm in the Grand Masters' Chess Tournament in India's Andhra Pradesh last month while in 2008 he earned his first IM norm in the National Chess Championship. He is currently joint third in the ongoing championship with seven points.

In the other matches of the day at the Bangladesh Olympic Association Media Hall, Mohammadan Sporting Club's Grand Master Ziaur Rahman defeated Titas Club's Shafiq Ahmed to maintain his top position with 9.5 points, inching towards winning the title.

The tournament's most senior Grand Master Niaz Murshed remained in second position with eight points after defeating Destiny's Fide Master Debora. Biman's IM Abu Sufian Shakil defeated Pritom-Prism Chess Club's Sohel Chowdhury. As a result, Shakil was also in the third place with Minhaz.

Today, Debora will face Zia, Minhaz will face Sohel Chowdhury, Shakil will face Mahfuz, Mehdi Hasan will face Mahtab Uddin, Shafiq will face Mostafa, and Javed will face Monir in the 11th round matches at the same venue.



PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

Fide Master Minhaz Uddin Ahmed makes a move on way to winning his tenth round board against Golam Mostofa and thus the third and final IM norm yesterday.