

Henry close to Arsenal return

Thierry Henry will sign a two-month loan deal with Arsenal if insurance agreements can be arranged with his Major League Soccer side New York Red Bulls, according to the London club's coach, Arsene Wenger. The 34-year-old Frenchman has been training with the Londoners since the close of the MLS season in November and recently had a statue of him unveiled at the Emirates Stadium to underline his legendary status at the club. Henry, the club's record all-time scorer, left Arsenal in 2007 for Barcelona before moving to the United States.

-AFP

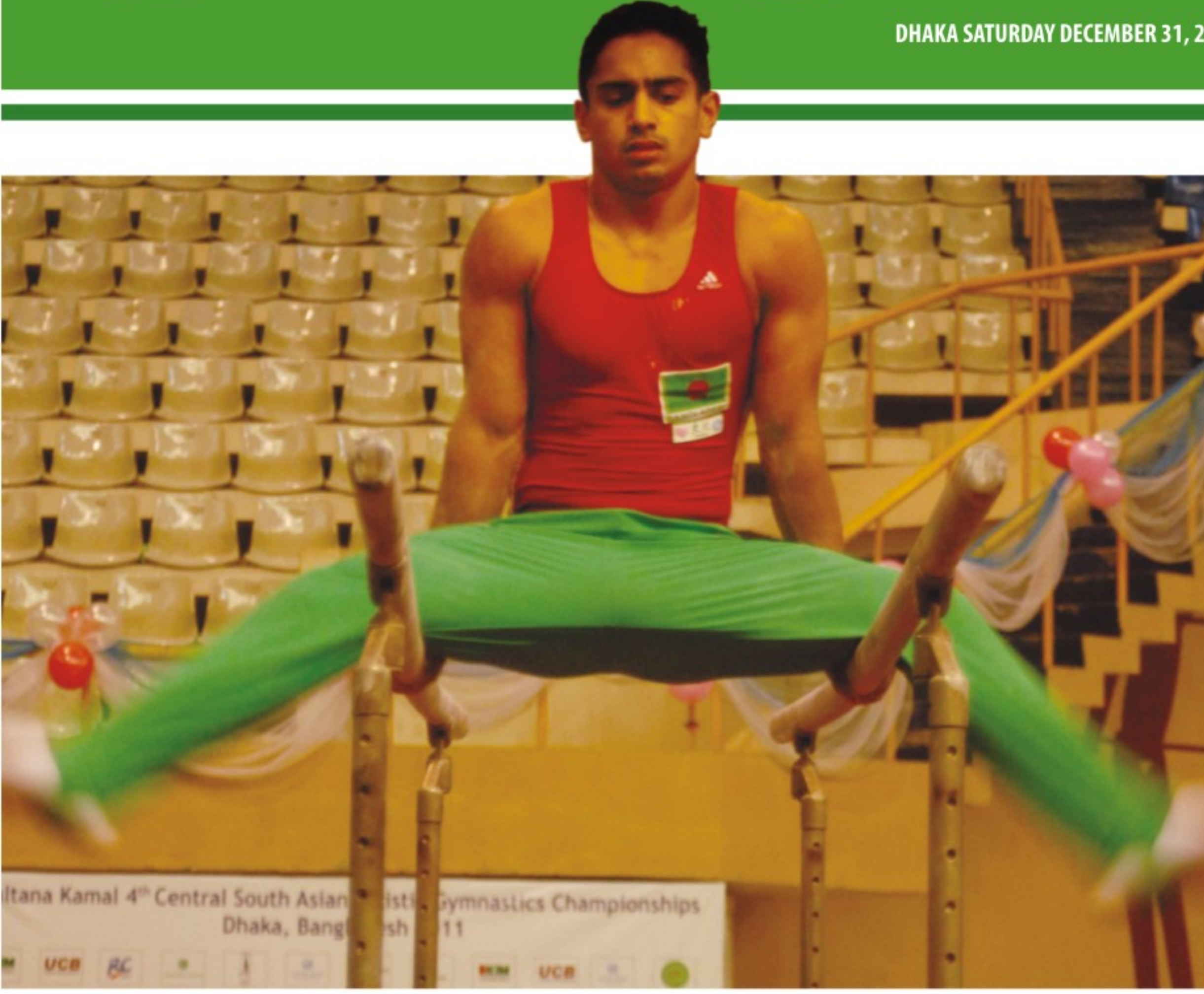


PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's Quazi Syque Caesar balances on the bars during the Parallel Bar event of the Sultana Kamal 4th Central South Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

SOUTH ASIAN ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS C'SHIPS

Golden Syque

SPORTS REPORTER

Quazi Syque Caesar finally gave hosts Bangladesh something to brag about in the Sultana Kamal 4th Central South Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships when the US-born Bangladeshi gymnast won gold medal in his favourite Parallel Bar on the concluding day at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Syque put Uzbekistan's Ruslan Irgashev and India's Devesh Kumar behind to win the gold with a score of 14.60 as Ruslan and Devesh notched up 13.85 and 13.72 points respectively to claim silver and bronze.

It is not only the first international gold medal for Syque but also Bangladesh in international gymnastics. Bangladesh's lone medal thus far came in the form of a bronze, won by Amir Ali in the inaugural edition of the championships in 1995.

All of Bangladesh's hopes centred around US-born Syque, but he hardly got any support from his teammates in the team event before he won a bronze medal in All Around event after a fierce battle with India's Ashish Kumar and Uzbekistan's Daulet Narmetov on Thursday.

However, the 21-year old eclipsed that feat in the concluding day as he won his favourite Parallel Bar event and came close to winning another gold in the Vault event. But, he narrowly missed it with a faulty landing and had to be content with a silver medal with a score of 14.25 points. India's Ashish Kumar won the gold scoring 14.81 points.

Syque also won a bronze medal in the Floor event with a score of 13.52 where

India's Ashish and Uzbekistan's Otabek Masharipov won the gold and silver with scores of 14.82 and 13.87 respectively.

"I am happy to win my first international gold medal in Parallel Bar. It is also pleasing to win a gold medal on home soil. Now I want to represent Bangladesh in the World Gymnastics Championship and want to win a medal for Bangladesh outside the country," said US-born Syque.

"I should have won another gold medal but I failed to balance myself properly when I landed in the Vault and that landing deprived me of the gold," said a disappointed Syque.

Apart from Syque's three medals on the final day, there was another bronze medal won by the local participants and it came courtesy of female gymnast Sathi Akhter who scored 11.01 points to finish third in Vault as Indian duo Dipa Karmakar and Meenakshi won gold and silver respectively.

On the final day, 10 gold medals (male and female) were decided with India's Ashish Kumar winning three gold of them in Floor, Vault and High Bar while Uzbekistan's Daulet Narmetov and Ruslan Irgashev won Pommel Horse and Steel Ring gold respectively.

In the women's section, Uzbekistan's Asal Saparbaeva won two gold in Floor and Balancing Bar while her teammate Diana Karimjanova won gold in Uneven Bar. India's Dipa won gold in Vault.

Ashish became the best male gymnast with four gold to his name while Uzbekistan's Asal won three gold to become best female gymnast of the meet.

Jahurul ton stalls Biman

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Out-of-favour Jahurul Islam slammed the first hundred in the ongoing Premier Division Cricket League as star-studded Victoria Sports Club started their campaign with a 21-run victory against Bangladesh Biman in the high-scoring match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Shakib Al Hasan was off-colour in the first game but opener Tamim Iqbal returned among the runs as the left-hander smashed eight boundaries to score 74 runs in 96 deliveries and shared 50 runs with Ahmed Shehzad in the opening stand to give Victoria a good platform.

After that Jahurul took the charge and hit a 113-ball 105 that contained ten fours and two sixes as Victoria posted 311 for seven in their share of 50 overs after deciding to bat first.

Kamran Sajid was the other notable scorer with a 39-ball 57 that saw four boundaries and two sixes.

In reply, Biman made a flying start by courtesy of a 158-run opening partnership between Avishek Mitra and Junaed Siddiqui but they lost the plot once the latter was bowled by Al-Amin for an 82-ball 71. Javed Omar played an unusual quickfire knock of 54-ball 64 but still Biman finished their allotted 50-over quota for 290-9. Avishek top scored with 84 off 101 balls.

Left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain was the most successful bowler with three for 47.

At BKSP, Nasir Jamsed guided Old DOHS to a comfortable five-wicket victory against Surjo Tarun Club.

Nasir smashed 84 off 69 deliveries that featured nine fours and two sixes while Tanvir Haider was not out on 34 as Old DOHS reached the target of 190 losing five wickets in 45 overs.

Earlier Surjo Torun scored 189 runs before being bowled out with two balls remaining thanks to Khurram Manzur's 71.

Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque caused the main damage taking three wickets for 19 runs in his 10-over quota.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National

Stadium in Mirpur, an all-round performance from Suleman Khan helped Cricket Coaching School (CCS) to secure 38 runs win against Kalabagan Club.

Suleman claimed four wickets conceding 18 runs in ten overs as Kalabagan were dismissed for 166 runs in 47.5 overs in reply to CCS's 204.

Earlier Suleman, who scored 67, and Jubayer Ahmed added 98 runs in the seventh wicket stand as CCS made 204 runs before being bundled out in 47.5 overs.

Jubayer added 52. Pacer Shahadat Hossain captured three wickets giving away 55 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

VICTORIA: 311-7 in 50 overs (Tamim 74, Ahmed 33, Jahurul 105, Kamran 57; Shaid 3-66, Fawad 2-51)

BIMAN: 290-9 in 50 overs (Avishek 84, Junaed 71, Javed 64; Alamin 2-71, Mosharraf 3-47)

Result: Victoria won by 21 runs.

SURJO TORUN: 189 all out in 49.4 overs (Jupitar 26, Khurram 71, Taiyampur 34; Enamul 3-19)

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LOCAL snippets

BGB meet Police in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will meet Bangladesh Police in the final of the Meizan National Kabaddi at the Kabaddi Stadium today, after they beat their respective opponents in the semifinals yesterday.

In the first semifinal, BGB beat Bangladesh Army by 20-16 points with two creditable 'lona' while Bangladesh Police thrashed Tangail by 52-12 points with five 'lona' in the second semi.

Nat'l basketball from today

Bangladesh Army will take on Bangladesh Air Force in the opening match of the Citycell 25th National Basketball Championship which begins today at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium. Twenty teams -- 15 District Sports Associations and five services teams -- will take part in the meet.

Schools football

Dholaipar High School emerged group A champion in the National School Football Islami Bank Tournament mauling Narinda Govt. High School by 5-0 goals in the final at the Jagannath University ground yesterday.

Earlier, Dholaipar defeated KL Jublee School & College 3-0 while Narinda beat Nawabpur Govt. High School 2-0 in the semifinals to book their final berth.

In the other group A matches of the day, Dhalpur High School drubbed St. Gregory High School 5-0, Shaheed Nabi High School blanked Dhaka Cotton Mills Adarsha High School 4-0, KL Jublee School & College outplayed Faridabad High School 2-0, Narinda Govt. High School overpowered Mannan High School 4-0, Nawabpur Govt. High School beat JB Memorial Academy 2-0 and Dholaipar High School outclassed Shahid Nabi High School 2-0.



Victoria batsman Jahurul Islam raises his bat after reaching his hundred against Bangladesh Biman in their Premier League encounter at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

Grameenphone Federation Cup Draw Ceremony



Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin (2nd from R) displays a team's name during the draw for the final round of Grameenphone Federation Cup at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

FINAL ROUND DRAW HELD

Giants avoid each other

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani and Mohammedan SC were drawn in different groups of the Federation Cup finals and the two traditional foes have little chance of facing each other before the final of the curtain raising tournament.

The Sky Blues were placed in comparatively easier Group B along with Feni Soccer Club, Arambagh KS and Bangladesh Police SC as the 16-team draw of the final round was held at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday.

The 24th edition of the Federation Cup will get underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Sunday with Mohammedan taking on newcomers Team BJMC while at the same time at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium Muktijoddha Sangsad will play against Cox's City FC.

Unlike their bitter rivals, Mohammedan were drawn in tough group A where they will have to vie with Muktijoddha Sangsad, Team BJMC and Cox's City FC for a place in the quarterfinals. Mohammedan having formed a mediocre squad this season, and Team BJMC and Cox's City being new comers, Muktijoddha Sangsad are considered as favourite in Group A as they have a formidable squad.

Group C has comprises last edition's runners-up Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Sheikh Russel KC, Victoria SC and Agrani Bank while Brothers Union, Rahmatganj MFS, Farashganj SC and Wari Club were placed in Group D.

As per the fixtures, Abahani and Mohammedan have no chance of facing each other in the quarterfinals and even they have a little chance to square off in the semifinals.

If both sides emerge group champions or group runners-up and overcome the quarterfinal hurdles, they

will face each other in the semifinals. But, if one of them emerge group champions while the other finish as group runners-up and overcome the quarterfinals and semifinals hurdles, then it will be a final between two traditional foes and a repeat of last season's Super Cup final.

However, the fact that Muktijoddha have formed the most balanced squad formidable squad while Abahani, Sheikh Jamal, Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel are all pretty close in power, it will be a hard task for both Abahani and Mohammedan to reach the final of the season's curtain-raising tournament.

At the simple draw ceremony at the BFF House yesterday, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, senior vice president Salam Mursheedy, members Awarul Haq Helal, Hasanuzzaman Khan Bablu, acting general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag and representatives of the participating clubs were present.