

Star SPORT

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Maradona blasts Leonardo

Argentinian football legend Maradona has unleashed an astonishing attack on Paris Saint Germain sporting director Leonardo, questioning the Brazilian's motives at the Qatari-backed French club. "I don't really understand Leonardo. I didn't understand him when he moved from AC Milan to Inter, and I understand even less what he's doing at PSG, whether he's a player, a manager, an agent or an oil tycoon. I don't understand." "I don't like people who stoop to flatter to get along - I don't like one bit Leonardo's position."



Sheikh Russel striker Anwar Hossain skips past two Agrani Bank defenders during their Federation Cup clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. (Inset) Russel's two-goal hero Ernest Emako.

PHOTOS: STAR



Fear pervades Pakistan tour

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricketers are concerned about the proposed tour of Pakistan due to security fears.

"When all the teams have turned down the offer to tour Pakistan because of ongoing security concerns, then why are we showing interest?" questioned a national cricketer on condition of anonymity.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Sunday requested the government to send a security team to Pakistan to evaluate the security arrangements ahead of Bangladesh's tour planned for April, but the players believe that the board should talk with them first before making a decision, since it is their safety that is at stake.

"We are really concerned, especially our family members are very keen to know what is going on with this tour. You know we have been getting bad news almost every week from Pakistan. If I'm not wrong, an attack even took place on a naval air force base near Karachi's National Stadium, so how can you feel comfortable with this proposed tour," said another cricketer.

"It would be really nice if the board took

the opinion of the cricketers which many countries have done," he added.

A senior member of the national team however wants to see what will actually happen in the end.

"It is true that security is a big issue when you think about a tour to Pakistan but I think it's too early to say anything right at this moment. Let's see what happens," he opined.

Sources close to the board informed that the foreign staff of the national team also harbours reservations about the proposed tour to Pakistan but they were also waiting for official confirmation before making a comment.

"I don't know what the reason is behind the tour but security must come first. How you can play cricket with fear in your mind?" queried another concerned player.

Since the attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in 2009, Pakistan has failed to persuade any Test team to visit their country and that's the reason the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is desperately looking to revive international cricket in their country with the visit of Bangladesh.

Pakistan has not hosted international cricket since 2009 as their team have been playing their 'home' series either in the United Arab Emirates or England or New Zealand.

The BCB however promised to send a

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A teams sans training

2nd one-dayer today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A will be on a high as they take on England Lions in the second one-day match at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong today.

But both teams will be slightly less prepared as they had to postpone their pre-match training at the same venue due to political rallies in the port city. According to a source within the teams, it was learned that the management of both teams didn't find the security sufficient enough to trek through to the Sagarika area where the stadium is situated.

But the venue manager of the Chittagong stadium, Fazle Bari Khan, cited a different reason. "They played a game only yesterday [Sunday] so they didn't want to practice today [Monday]," he said.

The home side took a 1-0 lead in the five-match series

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Jamal, Russel through

SPORTS REPORTER

Grameenphone Federation Cup 2011

Dhanmondi neighbours Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC moved into the quarterfinals of the Grameenphone Federation Cup from Group C after registering their second successive victories at two separate venues yesterday.

A brace from Cameroonian hitman Ernest Siankam Emako powered Sheikh Russel to an emphatic 3-0 win over Agrani Bank SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium while last season's Federation Cup runners-up Sheikh Jamal defeated Victoria SC 1-0 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur, thanks to a late strike from Nigerian striker Assogba Allen.

Two successive defeats for Victoria and Agrani Bank meant the two teams were eliminated from Bangladesh Championship League and will now meet each other in an inconsequential last match while Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel will lock horns to decide the group winners on Friday.

Sheikh Jamal had to wait until the 86th minute for the winner against second-tier side Victoria as Allen headed home a Monaem Khan Raju cross to rescue the Bangladesh League champions and ensure a quarterfinal berth with a match in hand.

Away at the rain-soaked pitch of BNS, Sheikh Russel started as favourites against Agrani Bank

and took the lead in the third minute when Cameroonian striker Emako headed home a Yousuf cross from the right-flank.

Agrani Bank hardly made an impression throughout the game except for one good effort from Zahirul Islam which hit the side-netting on the 13th minute.

Sheikh Russel doubled the lead in the 36th minute when left-back Moshui Kabir Bappi whipped in a cross from the corner flag which was only half-cleared by Agrani Bank goalkeeper Jahangir Alam and it fell kindly to an unmarked Yousuf, who coolly drove the ball on the top corner of the net from inside the box.

Sheikh Russel kept up the momentum after the break and fashioned a third goal in the 59th minute when Nigerian striker Alamu Bukola Olalekan sent a defense-splitting through pass for Emako and the tall striker sent it over the advancing goalkeeper to find his third goal in the tournament as well as to seal the match.

The margin could have been even bigger had substitute defender Shamiul Kader not cleared a goal-bound shot by Mezbabul Haq Manik on the 79th minute.

Zahed Parvez Chowdhury came close scoring a fourth in the dying moments of the match when the former Muktijoddha Sangsad winger drove an angular shot that beat substitute goalkeeper Ershad but the ball missed the target by a whisker.

U-18 cricket underway

SPORTS REPORTER

The Young Tigers U-18 National Competition got underway yesterday with four three-day matches commencing across various venues in the country.

Dhaka South declared on 219-9 against Dhaka Metro, who were teetering at 29 for three at the end of the first days' play at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. Ariful top scored for Dhaka South scoring 49 runs.

In the other game Khulna were bundled out for 87 runs in 34 overs against Rangpur who ended the day firmly on top at 165-5 with Saiful top-scoring for them with 41 runs at the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

The games between Barisal and Dhaka North at the Faridpur Divisional Stadium and Sylhet and Rajshahi at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore saw no action on the first day due to rain.

Franchises to get owners today

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The Bangladesh Premier League will take some shape today when the franchise bidding programme takes place at a local hotel.

The Twenty20 competition which has been structured IPL-style will have six team owners for the different teams.

Nine different bidders have so far bought bidding documents, though most of them are associations of two or three different companies. Each of these associations will drop their quotation for the franchise they are interested to buy. If there is a single bidder for one franchise, it will go on auction, the minimum bidding price being a million dollars (Tk 8 crore 20 lakh).

Sirajuddin Alamgir, BPL governing council secretary, said that they were pleased with the response so far.

"We are more than happy. Through these bidders, some more people are getting connected to the BPL. They are being encouraged to get involved," he said yesterday. Alamgir also informed that some of these bidders are associated with foreign companies.

The rumours of IPL franchises' involvement could also be true as teams like Royal Challengers Bangalore, Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Daredevils have shown interest in acquiring stakes in the different franchises. What has hindered them from directly buying a franchise so far is the slow pace of official formalities.

It was learned that several of the country's business

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India to name limited-overs squad Jan 15

CRICINFO, Chennai

The Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) selection committee will meet in Chennai on January 15 to pick the squad for the limited-overs leg of the Australia tour. India will play two Twenty20s against Australia from February 1, and then a tri-series that also involves Sri Lanka.

In a letter sent to the five national selectors, dated January 7, Sanjay Jagdale, the BCCI secretary, has asked chief selector Krish Srikkanth and his colleagues to assemble in Chennai to pick the squad. The panel is likely to pick a 16-man squad, and all-rounder Yuvraj Singh will in all probability return. Yuvraj, who has been convalescing from a non-malignant lung tumour, said last week that he has 'completely recovered and been training for the last two weeks'.

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Latif's 'advice' for Tendulkar

Cricket

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Former Pakistan captain Rashid Latif on Monday suggested that Indian batting icon Sachin Tendulkar should take counselling from a sports psychologist to get over the "mental block" caused by the continuing wait for his elusive 100th international century.

"He is under pressure no doubt about it. He might not admit it but he is facing a mental block because of this hype over his milestone. It would not be a bad idea for him to get some counselling from a sports psychologist," Latif suggested.

"He is batting well and he is looking good out in the middle. It is just a mental block and pressure that has prevented him from reaching this milestone earlier," he said.

India lost the first two Tests after batting collapses with Tendulkar scoring a half century in each match but failing to get to his elusive 100th international hundred.

Latif said he had a feeling that Sachin would get the hundred in the final Test and definitely in the series. He said the world's top athletes at some time in their career required counselling to get over mental blocks.

"It can happen to anyone," he added. The Indian maestro's last international century came against South Africa in March last year.

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Dhaka skipper Sheikh Mohammad Nannu (L) advances past a Mymensingh player during their National Hockey Championship match at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

NAT'L SCHOOL FOOTBALL Second phase from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second phase of Dhaka Metropolitan zone of the National School Football Islami Bank Tournament gets underway today with six matches scheduled for the opening day.

Some 70 schools from Dhaka Metropolitan, split into eight groups, took part in the knock-out round from where the eight group champions, divided into two groups, will play the round-robin matches. The top two teams from each group will advance into the semifinals.

The champions and runners-up will qualify for the 16-team final round where 14 schools from seven divisions will join.

The qualifying teams are: Group A: Dolairpar High School, Dhaka Residential Model College, Khilgaon High School and Bangladesh International School. Group B: Nahar International School, Rajdhani High School, Segunbagicha High School and Mirpur Udayan School & College.

Faridpur run riot

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending Champions Faridpur, star-studded Dhaka and BKSP emerged group champions to reach the super league stage of the Trust Bank-Viyellatex 28th National Hockey Championship after winning their respective matches at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Faridpur earned a massive 16-0 goals victory over Chittagong with national player Mamunur Rahman Chayan scoring six goals, all of those from penalty corners.

Chayan's national teammate Hasan Jubair, Prasanta Kumar Das, A H M Kamruzzaman and Moinul Islam struck twice each while veteran Issa Miah and Enamul Kabir scored one apiece for the winners.

Meanwhile, high-flying Mymensingh were brought down to Faridpur as

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