

# Star SPORT

DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 20, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

## Banana thrown at Samba

Anzhi Makhachkala's Congolese defender Christopher Samba has claimed he was the victim of an apparent racial attack after a rival fan threw a banana at him after a Russian league match at the weekend.

Media reports said that Samba was on his way to the dressing room after the final whistle of Sunday's game at Lokomotiv Moscow which his side lost 1-0 when a banana came flying from the VIP box, landing nearby.

The 27-year-old Congo international defender picked it up and threw it back.

--AFP



## Tigers' date with destiny

*Bangladesh's crunch match against Lanka today*

MOHAMMAD ISAM



The Tigers have plenty of motivating factors today in their bid to upstage Sri Lanka for a place in the Asia Cup final against Pakistan on Thursday.

The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium will be the scene of history since this tournament has never been one for the underdogs. Bangladesh have been traditionally confined to the bottom of the points table since they began participating in 1988 with their only two wins coming against United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong. But their win against India last Friday has completely turned the regional competition on its head.

The Tigers haven't reached so far in a tournament since making the tri-nation final in early 2009 (which involved Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe), but apart from making history, it will be an opportunity to beat the Lankans for the third time in ODIs. For captain Mushfiqur Rahim too, there is the lure of climbing above previous skippers Mohammad Ashraful and

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in terms of wins against the big eight Test nations (apart from Zimbabwe).

But what was perceptible yesterday in Mirpur was a sense of calmness though the only thing in everyone's mind was the distant dream of March 22. Mashrafe was sent by the team management to appease the media of the team's way of thinking, harping on the fact that they are not feeling any pressure.

"It doesn't look as if our cricketers are under pressure. Nobody is thinking in that vein. The opportunity is there for us, if we can take it, well and good," he said during the pre-game press conference.

"Before the tournament began I said that we are not here to play the finals, just play good cricket. We have arrived at this situation after beating India. We will play like we had planned ahead of the tournament, that'll take us ahead," he added.

But the fact that the Tigers are "in it to win it" (as the sporting lexicon goes) was not lost to the Narail Express. "This is a must-win game for us so we are taking it as a positive sign. Our confidence is high after the win against India. So we hope to do well against Sri

Lanka," he said.

The last time the Tigers beat Sri Lanka was incidentally in a similar situation during the tri-series three years ago. At that time, the win in the shortened game gave them a place in the final. But Mashrafe didn't want to make it into history repeating itself, rather focusing on the present.

"I don't believe in such calculations. If I had played well against Sri Lanka yesterday, it doesn't matter. I have to do well tomorrow. What happened in the past won't help us now but we'll have a chance if we play like we did against India and Pakistan," said the paceman.

He was also quick to dismiss any suggestions that today's opponents are a weak line-up even though they have lost both games.

"It may seem so because they lost to India and Pakistan but ahead of the tournament, they were one of the favorites. Nobody is weak for us so we have to play better than our best cricket to win the game.

"I also think everyone of their players is a threat because they have the ability to do something brilliant. We will focus on all of them," he said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talks to India's master batsman Sachin Tendulkar when he called on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Onus on batsmen

SPORTS REPORTER



Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium curator Gamini de Silva has won a lot of praise from all except one section of the cricket community

over the past week: the bowlers. It has been a barren existence for the likes of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shahadat Hossain, Abdur Razzak and even Shakib Al Hasan, none having topped three wickets in the two matches of the Asia Cup so far.

The pacemen are the ones with the three scalps though Shahadat has blown hot and cold; a strong showing against Pakistan followed by his hammering for 80-plus against India. The two left-arm spinners have been steady at best with the leading man going for more than a run a ball in the win against India.

Only the Pakistan bowlers have been on top of things, especially Umar Gul and Saeed Ajmal who have taken seven and six wickets respectively. But none of them have been less expensive so far, and that has all been down to how the wicket has played.

But the changed nature, with the Sri Lankan having somewhat revamped part of the square in Mirpur, has obviously meant high-scoring games and it has been exciting for the packed house.

Bangladesh are most likely to go into the game with the

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4



**STRETCHING TO THE LIMIT:** Bangladesh's ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (R) and his teammates stretch with bands during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The Tigers will need to be at their best to beat Sri Lanka today to book a place in the Asia Cup final.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## BFF divided over polls issue

SPORTS REPORTER

Officials of the Bangladesh Football Federation are apparently divided in two factions over the issue of candidature in BFF polls, after president Kazi Salahuddin's constitutional explanation.

Salahuddin on Sunday told reporters that any aspiring candidate can contest in the BFF polls and doesn't need to be a councillor of the BFF, but must be proposed and supported by two BFF councillors.

The BFF boss also claimed that this system is right there in the BFF constitution which have not been so far noticed. FIFA, the highest body of world football, also follows this rule, he added.

Having opposed the explanation of Salahuddin, BFF vice-president Badal Roy said it is not mentioned anywhere in the constitution that someone without councillorship can contest in the BFF polls. If anyone can contest in BFF polls, then why were they asked to be councillors first before taking part in the BFF polls

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8

## LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army made a winning start in the Dhaka Bank Independence Cup Hockey Tournament with a 3-0 win over Bangladesh Police at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Krishna Kumar, Abdul Khalek and Rokonuzzaman scored one goal apiece for Army, who will play their second match against star-studded Mohammedan SC on Wednesday.

### School Football

Two schools moved into the district-level competition of the National School Football Islami Bank Tournament after emerging upazila champions yesterday.

Homna Adarsha High School defeated Dulalpur Chandramoni High School 3-1 in the Homna Upazila final while Solsa High School beat Hore Krishna Kusumkoli High School 1-0 in the Nawabganj Upazila final.

### Independence Cup Basketball

Citycell Independence Cup Basketball Tournament gets underway at the Dhanmondi Wooden Floor Basketball Stadium tomorrow.

Nine teams are taking part in the meet. They are Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force, Boarder Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Police, Dharmketu Club, Rangers, Bokshibazar and BKSP.

### Independence Cup Kabaddi

The Independence Cup Kabaddi Tournament will begin on Thursday at the Kabaddi Stadium. Six teams -- Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Jail, Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence -- are taking part.

## 'Not here to do any favours'

BISHWAJIT ROY



Cup match. This simple statement may send the wrong message to their opponents; Bangladesh. But if the Tigers heed the words of Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene they should get a clearer picture about how serious Lankans are about the match even though they have already been eliminated from the tournament.

If they win today's match it would be just another international success

for Sri Lanka while Mushfiqur Rahim's men are on the cusp of something truly special. The soft-spoken Lankan captain however made it clear yesterday that Bangladesh must play their best cricket if they want to make history by reaching the final of the Asia Cup as Sri Lanka will not yield an inch though they are playing the match only for pride.

"We are not here to do anyone any favours. As a team we are disappointed the way we've played in the last two days. Our objective was to get into the final and we'll treat it in the same way," said Jayawardene during a pre-match

press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

All the talk centred on whether Sri Lanka will take the match lightly when the result doesn't have no bearing on their tournament chances but Jayawardene issued a warning for the Tigers saying that Sri Lanka will desperately try to finish the tournament on a high note.

It is an altogether different situation for Sri Lanka as they started the tournament as favourites but failed to carry their CB series form into the region's biggest cricket extravaganza.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



PONDERING WHAT WENT WRONG: Sri Lanka stalwarts Kumar Sangakkara (L) and Mahela Jayawardene wear a bemused look during their practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The Lankans will be out to get a victory when they take on Bangladesh in the last group match today.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tendulkar meets PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina described batting genius Sachin Tendulkar as the pride of this sub-continent.

She made the remark when the world's most prolific batsman met her at her official residence Gono Bhaban on Sunday evening. Hasina greeted Sachin for his 100th international century.

After the meeting, Tendulkar told reporters that it was a great honour for him as the prime minister greeted him. "After interaction with her, I got an impression that she is a great fan of cricket," he said.

Responding to a question, Tendulkar admitted it was true that he was stuck for some time in the 99th century. "There's no specific reason for that."

Tendulkar, however, said he never played for records. "I'm a member of the Indian team and it's a pride for me when India wins."

About Bangladesh's cricket he said there are some talented players in the country and in its team. He mentioned that the cricket board should support the junior-level cricket to provide players in the national level.

Prime minister's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, PM's son Sajeeb Wazed, daughter Saima Wazed, Sheikh Rehana's son Redwan Siddique Bobby and his wife and Bangladesh Cricket Board president AHM Mostafa Kamal were present on the occasion.

## Weightlifters leave for Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

A sixteen-member Bangladesh contingent will leave for Nepal tomorrow for the inaugural South Asian Weightlifting Championships with a hope of winning seven to eight medals.

The championships will be held on March 23 and 24 as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will take part in the meet.

The Bangladesh contingent consist of six men and five women, all of whom will compete in separate events.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1