

# Star SPORT

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 19, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

## Romario doesn't rate Brazil

Former star Romario says Brazil wouldn't get past the group stage of the World Cup if the competition was played today. Romario said he would like to see former South Africa coach Joel Santana in command if Menezes is fired in case Brazil fails to earn a good result during the London Olympics. He also said in his interview to the local Rio de Janeiro daily "O Dia" that he was "by far" better than Argentina's Lionel Messi. He said he is in the top three all-time, along with Pele and Diego Maradona.



## PCB's security plan delayed

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

With only ten days remaining to the month-end Tigers' tour of Pakistan, several matters remain undecided and without much direction, leaving very little time for the Bangladesh Cricket Board to make preparations for the three-day tour.

Earlier this week, the BCB and the Pakistan Cricket Board informed the International Cricket Council of an agreement to hold a one-day international and a Twenty20 match on April 29 and 30.

But sources in Pakistan have informed The Daily Star Sport that a lack of coordination between the federal government and Punjab authorities, which will host both the international matches in Lahore, have forced the PCB to delay sending its security plan to the ICC, who have sought a comprehensive security plan.

It implies that the PCB are still not ready for the tour despite the insistence of BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal that the tour is on.

Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif told reporters yesterday that they are seeking coordination from the central government.

"Bangladesh are our brothers and I welcome them to come and play here in

Pakistan. But the federal [government] is not coordinating with us," he said.

At the same time as Shahbaz spoke, PCB chairman Zaka Ashraf was holding a press conference at the National Cricket Academy across town. He admitted that the chief secretary of the Punjab government is yet to respond to their April 16 letter requesting the security plan.

"We had dispatched them the letter for the plan [on April 16] that is yet to be responded," said Ashraf.

"ICC actually was asking us to hand them the plan during the meeting but we didn't carry it. It is our mistake that it is delayed for some reason but it will be sorted out soon," he added.

So once PCB receive the government's response, it will be dispatched to the ICC, who will commission a local risk assessment to determine whether match officials are sufficiently protected by the security plan before any further decision is taken. It is also understood that the ICC's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit may consider outsourcing a security company to do an independent assessment of arrangements in Pakistan, after they receive the plan from the PCB.

ICC however has maintained that the report from the PCB is only the first step. But the PCB chief has said that the ICC have

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



## Zaka banks on Tigers' tour

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan cricket chief Zaka Ashraf Wednesday said Bangladesh's short tour will help revive the suspended sport in his country.

Bangladesh on Sunday confirmed it will play a one-day and a Twenty20 match in Lahore this month, matches which will reintroduce international cricket to Pakistan following its suspension in the wake of 2009 attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus.

"I am sure the Bangladesh tour will break the ice, and the breakthrough achieved during President Asif Ali Zardari's tour to India will also help in the revival of Indo-Pak cricket," Ashraf told a press conference.

Last week Zardari reportedly requested Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to send his national team to Pakistan. Singh promised to talk to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) over the matter.

Ashraf said he wants to revive cricket ties with India, stalled in the wake of 2008 terrorists attacks on Mumbai which killed 166 people and were blamed on militants based in Pakistan.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

## Matches at BNS deferred again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation has once again deferred fixtures of the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League again by four days as the league will resume on April 23 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The football's governing body had earlier suspended the ongoing professional football league by three days for the reception accorded to the Prime Minister at the BNS yesterday. However, the program took a toll on the pitch as holes were dug out, rendering it unplayable. Hence, the league committee decided to defer the league to get the pitch playable again.

## Familiar challenges await SALAHUDDIN

Football

ANISUR RAHMAN & ATIQUE ANAM

When cricket was sweeping the mindscape of sports lovers across the country, and football took a remote backseat, Kazi Salahuddin accepted the challenge of bringing back the glory days of the once-most-popular sport in the country. As the elected president of the Bangladesh Football Federation, Salahuddin promised to keep the ball rolling throughout the year and take the country's football to a higher level, both domestically and internationally.

Four years have gone by. Football is being played round the year, new leagues have been introduced, giant corporate sponsors have been enticed. The BFF has banked on its charismatic leader to rope in big corporate sponsors such as Citycell, Nokia and Grameenphone. A 16.5 crore taka deal with Citycell and the introduction of the crore-taka Super Cup has been some of the success stories of the Salahuddin era. Hosting of the international friendly between Argentina and Nigeria has also heightened Bangladesh's football prestige. And with strengthened alliance with FIFA, the world football's governing body, Bangladesh's football has paved a definite path towards development.

However, as another election knocks on the door (April 30, 2012), and Salahuddin's bid for another term seems almost unchallenged, it will be unwise to assume that everything went according to plan during the last four years. True that football was kept on the field round the year in Dhaka, but away from it, there was little life in football related activities. Lower league competitions were not held regularly, or at all. The connecting league between top tier and first division has only been introduced while there is broken links between age-level teams.

From an organisation point of view, the BFF and its wings, have failed to function properly. The National Team Management Committee (NTMC), the Development Committee, and the Professional Football League Committee have not done anything more tangible than just maintaining status quo. Lack of resourcefulness of the incumbent members and internal politics within the BFF has disrupted its smooth



progress towards development.

The biggest criticism of Salahuddin's tenure, though, is his failure to bring spectators back to the stadium. The top-tier professional football league, in its five editions, has failed to draw a sizable crowd to the stadium.

Therefore, if Salahuddin does get another term to serve, he will be facing a lot of challenges.

Revising football at district level will be his main challenge as providing financial support will be the main obstacle there. Besides, it will be a tough job to make the DFAs functional, most of which are run by politically motivated committees.

With no football at district level, the BFF president must concentrate on ensuring a proper pipeline for the national team and there is no alternative to a football academy. Once the financing of the Sylhet Academy by FIFA extinguishes in one and a half years, the BFF boss will have to find an alternative source to run the academy smoothly.

In the last four years, BFF has struggled due to an acute shortage of football grounds. The BNS and the BSMMU at Kamalapur have become the go-to venue for every football tournament in the capital. In order to maintain the quality of pitches and stick to the calendar, the BFF should find alternative fields.

The appointment of a quality foreign coach for the national team with a long-term vision will be another important task for the president. The BFF needs to draw a four-year calendar taking consideration of all international engagements. A few friendlies with the neighbouring countries once in a while will keep the coach and his charges in good motivation and touch.

The absence of a professional set-up and the lack of competent and die-hard organisers now being felt like never before. A dynamic, resourceful and aggressive crop of leadership at the BFF is the need of the hour.

## 100-day countdown begins

SPORTS REPORTER

Even as a shoal of colourful flowers at Kew Gardens marked the 100 day point to the Olympics in Britain, in Bangladesh hundred school children participated in a 100 metre sprint to mark the same.

The events were held numerous timezones apart, but it goes to show the universal appeal of the Olympic Games, the latest edition of which will be held in London.

"One hundred days from now, athletes from around the world, including Bangladesh, will parade into the Olympic Stadium. As we enter the final

sprint, we are truly proud of what we have achieved," said British High Commissioner, Robert Gibson, who hosted the commemorative event at the compound of the High Commission in Baridhara yesterday.

Mizanur Rahman Manu, Chef de Mission and vice president of the Bangladesh Olympic Association also spoke on the occasion and said that Bangladesh would participate in five disciplines in the Games -- archery, swimming, gymnastics, shooting and taekwondo.

The 100-metre sprint by hundred schoolchildren was the highlight attraction and it was attended also by numerous sporting luminaries including cricketer Shahriar Nafees, coun-

try's fastest woman Nazmun Nahar Beauty and taekwondo athlete Srabonti. All of them also took time out to speak to the school-children about the road to success.

The High Commission also announced a quiz competition for Bangladeshis (available via www.facebook.com/ukinbangladesh) where people stand the chance to win Olympic memorabilia and attend events held locally for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Other dignitaries, including the secretary to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mahbub Ahmed and BOA secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed and other BOA members were also present at the venue.

BFF ELECTIONS

## Four for president

SPORTS REPORTER

Four candidates will vie for the hot seat of presidency in the Bangladesh Football Federation elections as a total of 64 candidates submitted their nominations for 21 posts at the BFF House yesterday.

A total of 122 delegates will elect one president, one senior vice president, four vice presidents and 15 members in the April 30 election.

Incumbent president Kazi Salahuddin, former vice president and Jatiya Party leader Abdur Rahim, Swadhin Bangla Football Team captain and Mohammedan director Zakaria Pintu and journalist and Shariatpur DFA councillor Mozzammel Haq Chanchal submitted their nominations for the president's post.

Apart from the four candidates for the president's post, five contestants will fight for senior vice-presidency, nine for vice-presidency and 44 for the member posts.

The election commission will receive objections regarding the candidacy today before scrutinising the nominations tomorrow. The withdrawal of candidacy has been fixed for April 22.

Three major groups are

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8

## 'Mission Presidency'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

On the surface level, Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan may be seen, as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Mustafa Kamal himself has said, as a form of diplomacy and a show of good faith. For those who have followed the events and negotiations leading up to the announcement of tour dates the signs of ulterior motive are all too clear. Pakistan's famed cricket writer Osman Samiuddin is one of them and he wrote an article on the issue in the UAE daily National yesterday titled "The true politics of

cricket disguised as a good turn'.

For Samiuddin, the tour is solely to satisfy the International Cricket Council (ICC) presidency ambitions of one man -- Kamal, adding that a wary Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has been compelled to play ball with him in their desperation to bring international cricket back in the country after the March 2009 attack on the touring Sri Lankan cricket side.

"Not that the whole matter has been much about safety. This decision, so immense for Pakistan, for Bangladesh and most of all for Bangladesh's cricketers, has been driven by self-interest, of one man's desire to become the president of the ICC," writes Samiuddin.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

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