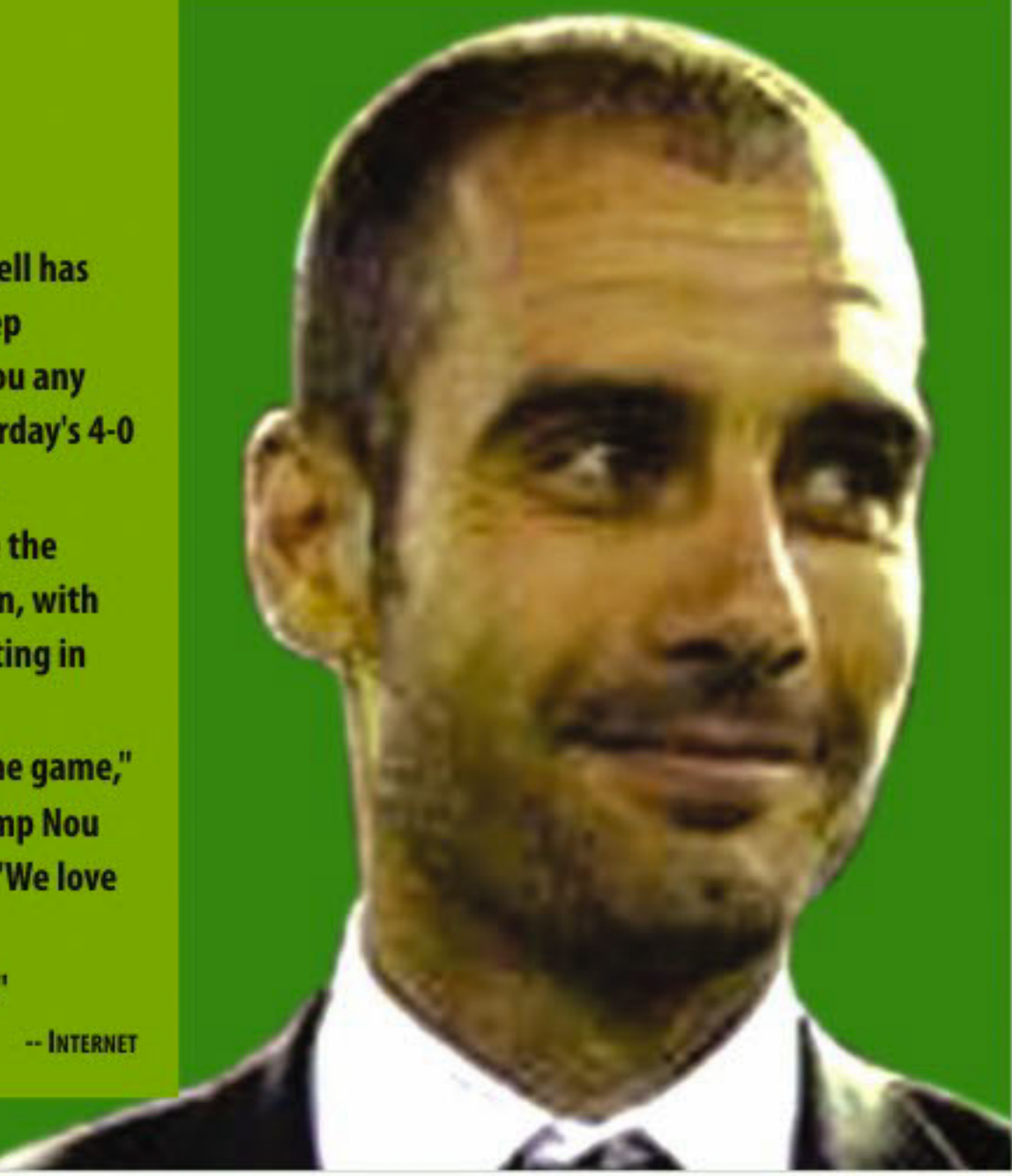


Door open for Pep

Barcelona president Sandro Rosell has revealed that outgoing coach Pep Guardiola can return to Camp Nou any time he chooses, following Saturday's 4-0 win against Espanyol in La Liga. The former midfielder will leave the Catalans at the end of the season, with assistant boss Tito Vilanova waiting in the wings as his replacement. "No one left before the end of the game," Rosell said after the match. "Camp Nou has said tonight loud and clear: 'We love you, Pep.' "Pep can return when he wants."



Whistling Bolt

Athletics

Double world record-holder Usain Bolt shook off two false starts to open his 2012 season with a world-leading 9.82 seconds to win the 100 metres at the Jamaica International Invitational on Saturday. Bolt, running his first 100m of the season, looked in control from the start as he posted an easy victory over compatriots Michael Frater (10.0) and Lerone Clarke (10.03). He improved on the previous best time of the year, the 9.90 clocked by Jamaican Yohan Blake on April 14 in Kingston. Bolt, his sights set on defending his Olympic titles at the London Games in July, said the time shows he's in better shape than he was at the same time last year. But there is room for improvement. "There were some mistakes in the race, my coach [Glen Mills] pointed them out and we will be fixing them in training," Bolt said. He added he was slow out of the blocks after the two false starts. World champ Blake also posted a world leading time with a 19.91 seconds in the 200m. There was a third world leading time as Carmelita Jeter won the women's 100m in 10.81 seconds, her third straight win in the event here. Novlene Williams Mills produced arguably the best performance of the night in the women's 400m when she ran 49.99 seconds. Bolt said it wasn't a perfect race but he was happy to get his first 100m out of the way as he jump started his Olympic preparations. "It is a good start I would say," he said. "Better than last year so I am definitely happy with myself. "I don't think the execution was perfect but I think for my first race it was good." Bolt said the two false starts "threw me off, but I was just trying to stay focused and went out there and executed as best as possible."



Jamaica's superstar sprinter Usain Bolt acknowledges the crowd's applause after recording a world leading 9.82 seconds to win the men's 100-metre at the Jamaica International Invitational at the National Stadium in Kingston on Saturday.

40 days disappear, how many more?

The only thing that has happened in the last forty days is bringing out the irony of Bangladesh cricket in front of the world. As everyone sings praise of the Tigers after their Asia Cup performance, the Bangladesh Cricket Board has effectively benched the players through a level of ineptness that has not been seen for a long time. Sadly, it has put the country's cricket back by two steps after it took a giant stride forward. The erstwhile Tigers coach Stuart Law put it as eloquently as possible: "The domestic cricket here is a structure of which there's no blueprint anywhere else in the world. It stops it starts; it would be nice to see that these games take place in these days, rather than two teams have a fall-out and the whole tournament is suspended." Such poor scheduling, decision-making and leadership are bound to keep cricketers at home and cricket suspended. "That's not good for cricket in this country. I know it's a different culture but as an outsider looking in, it can't be good for cricket. We are all trying to say that domestic cricket is where we want our cricketers to learn, they're learning by sitting back! That's not helping them at all," said Law the day before he left the country. One might question his limited contribution to the Tigers, but Law stated the bleeding obvious. Only six days after Bangladesh reached the Asia Cup final to the amazement of cricket followers around the world, the Dhaka Premier League stopped in its tracks and has since not seen the light of day. The sort of people who have failed to put the Super League phase back on the field make for compelling reading. After the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) suspended the league, it was taken up by the BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal. He passed the buck to a four-member committee that had a senior vice-president in charge to put the house in order. They too failed to convince Abahani, Mohammedan Sporting Club and Victoria Sporting Club. Soon the other clubs -- Old DOHS, Gazi Tank and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club -- protested the delay and a date was proposed. The big three threatened a no-show and in the meantime, there were two rainy days in the capital. It was like a blessing to the inert BCB officials. They directed CCDM to postpone the league further and since then while several dates came up and many statements were made, nothing fruitful has happened. To make matters worse, the man for whom all of this began in the first place gave two conflicting statements in the last two days, much to the board's chagrin. Despite clarifying what he was trying to tell the media, Yousuf has made the matter an international issue from what was a domestic problem. Now the irony of Bangladesh cricket is out.

btI Int'l golf from today

The first international golf tournament organised by Bangladesh Professional Golfers' Association (BPGA) bti International Golf Championship starts at the Kurmitola Golf Club in the capital today. The four day event is the first international tournament organised by Bangladesh's premier golf association, the previous ones have all been hosted as part of the Professional Golfers' Tour of India (PGTI) season. A press conference in this connection was organised at the head office of bti in Gulshan yesterday, where bti managing director FR Khan, assistant general manager Ayesha Siddiqua, president of BPGA Arshi Haider, vice president brigadier general Salim Akhtar (retd), general secretary brigadier general Abidur Reza Khan (retd) and CEO of Kurmitola Golf Club colonel SM Shawkat Ali (retd) were present among others. This is the fourth golf event organised by BPGA and the second to be sponsored by Building Technology & Ideas Ltd (bti). Three professional golfers from India, four from Nepal, one from Sri Lanka and about fifty from Bangladesh will participate in the 15 lakh taka event. Although the monetary prize is substantially low compared to the Asian tour or PGTI events, the organisers and golfers see this as a positive beginning for Bangladesh's golf. "This is a good thing for our golf. To arrange an international event at such short notice is a commendable thing. This will be a good experience for the local professional golfers who don't get to participate in international events," said Bangladesh's number one golfer and one-time Asian tour winner Siddikur Rahman. Brigadier general Salim Akhtar, the vice president of BPGA urged sponsors to come forward for golf. "Since there is no Asian Tour or PGTI event right now, we could manage a slot to arrange the event. Currently we do not have an annual schedule since we don't have adequate sponsorship, so we will be looking for sponsors to come forward," said Salim.

Messi gift for Pep

Lionel Messi scored four goals to take his La Liga tally to 50 this season as Barcelona hammered Espanyol 4-0 on Saturday in an emotional last game at the Nou Camp for outgoing coach Pep Guardiola. He has one La Liga away game and the King's Cup final against Athletic Bilbao left before he goes but the crowd gave him a huge sendoff in the city in four seasons including two Champions Leagues. He has one La Liga away game and the King's Cup final against Athletic Bilbao left before he goes but the crowd gave him a huge sendoff in the city. Messi netted twice from the penalty spot, once from a free kick and the other was a low finish into the corner following a thrilling breakthrough. After notching his fourth from the spot, a record 72nd goal in all competitions this season, the World Player of the Year ran to the touchline and hugged Guardiola while the rest of the squad gathered to join them in a huddle. Guardiola is leaving at the end of the campaign, to be replaced by assistant Tito Vilanova, after winning 13 trophies

RESULTS

Real Mallorca 1 (Pina 54) Levante 0
Athletic Bilbao 0 Getafe 0
Grenade 1 (Jara 5) Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 81-pen, Cortes 90+3-og)
Valencia 1 (Jonas 90+2) Villarreal 0
Sevilla 5 (Baba 30, 47, Cala 42, Reyes 65, Kanoute 81)
Rayo Vallecano 2 (Diego Costa 37-pen, 77)
Barcelona 4 (Messi 12, 64-pen, 74, 79-pen)
Espanyol 0
Sporting Gijon 2 (Sangoy 12-pen, 54) Real Betis 1 (Molina 45+1)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Koke 69, Adrian 79) Malaga 1 (Eliseu 38)
Real Zaragoza 2 (Helder Postiga 13, Lafita 79)
Racing Santander 1 (Fernandez 11)

U-22 football camp from tomorrow

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is going to hold a two-day trial for the U-22 team for the AFC U-22 Asian Cup from tomorrow at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. "All 50 players of the initial list have been informed about the trial from where we may pick 25 to 30 players and the training is likely to get underway from May 10," said BFF technical director BA Jubair Nipu yesterday. "Our plan is to start the training at Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Protishthan but if the clubs do not agree to release their players during the Bangladesh Premier League, the training too may be held at the BNS," said Nipu. Of the 50 players, 37 have been picked from the Bangladesh Premier League. SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

I have valid NOC to play

Pakistan's former captain and senior batsman Mohammad Yousuf today asserted that he has a valid No Objection Certificate (NOC) to play in the Dhaka League, putting to rest the confusion that was created by some of his own statements. Yousuf was reportedly being investigated by the Bangladesh intelligence agencies for allegedly submitting a fake clearance letter to play in the Dhaka league. The Bangladesh Cricket Board apparently handed over the matter to the intelligence agencies after Yousuf appeared for Victoria Sporting Club in the league against Abhani on March 28. Abhani had claimed that the NOC submitted by Yousuf on behalf of his previous club, Mohammedan, was fake and fraudulent but the senior batsman denied this. "The quote has created some misunderstanding as it gave an impression that Victoria gave me the clearance without the consent of

MSC eye Gerhard Look for Indian stars too

Mohammedan Sporting Club are keeping tabs on Indian hockey players for their bid to defend the title of the Premier Division Hockey League which is likely to start from the second week of June. The Black and Whites are also looking to sign Bangladesh's former national coach Gerhard Peter Rach and a German trainer. The club's hockey committee chairman Shafiqullah Al Munir and manager Ariful Haque Prince are scheduled to leave here on May 11 for Germany to hold talks with Gerhard as well as Indian hockey players who are playing in Spanish league. "It is confirmed that Gerhard and a trainer are coming here for Mohammedan and we are going to Germany to finalise the financial deal with the Indian players who are in close contact with Gerhard," said Prince yesterday. Prince informed that Gurprit Singh, Prabhjot Singh, Deepak Thakur and Arjun Halappa have been in touch with him and they would finalise the financial deal in Germany as all four players are expected to come to Germany from Spain. "We need 30 to 35 lakh taka for the four Indian players as they will stay here for two months to play in the Premier Hockey League," said Prince adding that they would field only local players in the Club Cup Hockey tournament. Mohammedan have already signed up local stars like Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Moshirur Rahman Biplob, Imran Hasan Pintoo, veteran Ashiqzaman Ashiq. Prince informed they would provide transport and



Lionel Messi (2nd from R) hugs coach Pep Guardiola as a troupe of La Masia graduates (from R-L) Sergio Busquets, Cesc Fabregas and Tiago follow suit during their derby against Espanyol at the Camp Nou on Saturday. The game marked Guardiola's last home game in his tenure as Barcelona coach.

Kulfa start with huge win

Kulfa Goshthi amassed a 252-run victory over Victoria Club on the opening day of the Colonel Malek Smriti Premier Cricket League at the Shahid Miraz-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj yesterday. Winning the toss, Kulfa batted first and made 330 runs in 40 over losing eight wickets. Shatej remained not out on 126 runs with twelve sixes and four boundaries. Aslam scored 50 runs and Omi added 26 runs. Razib picked up three wickets. In reply, Victoria were bundled out for only 78 runs in 24.1 overs. Azam picked up three wickets while Mazed and Masud took two each. Green Valley will face Nabajagaran Sangsad today (Monday).