

# Star SPORT

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 14, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

## Cassano sorry for gay remark

Italy forward Antonio Cassano apologised on Tuesday for saying he hoped there were no homosexuals in the national team. Asked at a Euro 2012 news conference earlier in the day about media reports there were two "secret" gays in the Italy squad, he said: "That's their problem. I hope there isn't one in the national team." After criticism from gay groups, Cassano issued an apology through Italian state news agency ANSA. "I am sincerely sorry that my comments have caused controversy and protests among gay groups."



## Soccer Group eyes f'ball investment

SPORTS REPORTER

Soccer Group, a UK-based football consultancy and facilitating company, stated their ambition of setting up a full-fledged sports complex during a reception accorded at the official residence of British High Commissioner yesterday.

The conglomerate, which was set up by UK-born Bangladeshi businessman Mohammed Kabir in 2007, came with elaborate plans and are seeking the assistance of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), Ministry of Youth and Sports and other authorities concerned.

Their proposals include restructuring of leagues through investment, sponsorship and media deals, facilitating qualification, coaching and refereeing, setting up a sports complex with third generation artificial pitch, gym, health and fitness centre, etc.

Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker, Soccer Group representatives, BFF officials, members of corporate community and football related people were present at the reception.

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## EURO 2012 TODAY'S MATCHES

Poznan, Group C:  
**Italy v Croatia (10pm)**  
Gdansk, Group C:  
**Spain v Ireland (12:45am, June 15)**



Players and officials of Usha Krira Chakra pose for photographs with the Walton Club Cup Hockey Tournament trophy after beating Abahani 3-2 in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Usha end 13-year wait

SPORTS REPORTER



Usha Krira Chakra ended a 13-year cup title drought in style when they staged a spectacular come-from-behind 3-2 win over Abahani in the Walton Club Cup Hockey final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The old town outfit who last won the traditional season's curtain-raising tournament in 1999 came tantalisingly close to winning the trophy two year's back but were robbed in a 'disputed final' against Mohammedan.

This time however it was a fair and highly entertaining game under a stifling summer sun and more importantly the creeping tension in the middle never turned

ugly which has often been the case in domestic hockey.

Pakistani Alim Billal and Mohammad Mudassar put Ahahani ahead before Usha's Pakistani trio of Mohammad Imran, Selim Khalid and Ehsan Ullah Khan punched back for glory in a final witnessed by sparse yet vocal fans.

Hot on the heels of an exciting tiebreak win over archrivals Mohammedan in the semifinal, Abahani began their quest for a third club cup on a bright note against Usha, who stormed into the final with a 9-2 mauling of Sonali Bank in the other semi. The men in yellow dominated the first half and created some good chances with their striking trio of Modassar, Pushkor Khisa Mimo and Hasan Jubair Niloy dictating terms.

After squandering the first penalty corner, Abahani went ahead by converting the second penalty corner in the 18th minute with Alim Billal hitting a fierce low drive.

But they struggled to keep the momentum and Usha slowly but steadily started to impose their authority.

Usha came close twice in the latter part of the first half but Abahani goalkeeper Zahid Hossain, hero of their win over Mohammedan, brilliantly foiled a fiercely driven penalty corner from Ehasan Ullah while Pakistani Selim sent the ball wide despite beating goalkeeper Zahid.

After the resumption, Usha dominated the game with better movements from midfielders Shahidullah Titu, Mosharraf Hossain Kutu, Pakistani Shahbaz Ali and Sarwar

Hossain. But Abahani doubled the lead from a counter-attack three minutes into the second half.

Availing a clearance from defence, Niloy raced down the right flank to enter the box before cutting it back for the unmarked Modassar who tapped the ball in from a hand-shaking distance.

Abahani appeared to run out of gas with the progress of the match, allowing Usha to launch waves of attacks down the left flank and they struck two goals within three minutes to level the margin.

After receiving a nice through pass from Shahidullah Tipu, Selim Khalid pushed it for Mohammad Imran inside the box who hit the board from close range in the 42nd minute while Selim Khalid emulated

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## U-22s off to Nepal for Asia Cup



SPORTS REPORTER

A 28-member Bangladesh U-22 national football team leave here for Kathmandu, Nepal this morning to take part in the qualifiers of the inaugural AFC U-22 Asia Cup hopeful of putting in a good show.

Bangladesh were placed in Group D qualifiers along with Uzbekistan, Jordan, Yemen and hosts Nepal with the top two teams advancing to the next round.

"Uzbekistan and Jordan are better sides than us on ranking and the other two are of equal strength. From that point of view, our target is to win two matches against Nepal and Yemen, then try to snatch points against Uzbekistan and Jordan in an attempt to qualify for the finals," said coach Syed Golam Jilani yesterday.

Booters had gotten only five days to practise, although they were given an opportunity to take part in the ongoing

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Portuguese forward Silvestre Varela (R) celebrates his late winner in yesterday's 3-2 win over Denmark with teammate Joao Moutinho (L) at the Lviv Arena.

PHOTO: AFP

## Portugal snatch a thriller



**DENMARK 2: 3 PORTUGAL**  
**BENDTNER 41, 80**



**PEPE 24, POSTIGA 36, VARELA 87**

AFP, Lviv

Portugal beat Denmark 3-2 in a thrilling Euro 2012 Group B clash here on Wednesday to keep alive their hopes of reaching the quarterfinals.

A stunning goal by substitute Silvestre Varela three minutes from time saw the 2004 finalists take the points after they had let slip a 2-0 lead as Danish striker Nicklas Bendtner drew the Danes level with two headers.

Goals from Pepe -- with a superb header -- and Helder Postiga, with his 20th goal for his country, had given the Portuguese a perfect start.

However, a series of terrible misses by their star player Cristiano Ronaldo had threatened to prove very costly until Varela stepped up to save them just three minutes after coming on.

The win puts Portugal level on

points with Denmark, who beat the Dutch in their opening game, while Germany top the table and take on Holland later on Wednesday.

The Danes had the first chance in the fifth minute as the ball deflected to highly-rated youngster Christian Eriksen inside the area but Pepe did well to block his goalbound shot.

The Portuguese managed to put very little together in the opening 20 minutes save once when Ronaldo drifted in from the wing into the centre and played the ball to Raul Meireles.

Meireles found the Real Madrid star -- just five goals in 15 tournament matches -- in space but he produced a woeful shot and tried to blame the pitch as he looked ruefully down at it afterwards.

However, he was not found wanting when he delivered his corner in the

24th minute as Pepe came steaming in to head home, the ball flying in over Danish midfielder William Kvist's head at the near post.

Ronaldo appeared to take heart out of that and he was unfortunate to see an on-target freekick take a deflection off a Danish defender in the 32nd minute.

But he did not have to wait long for his side to double their lead.

His former Manchester United teammate Nani was the creator, passing the ball into the box where Postiga got a yard on his marker Simon Kjaer and put the ball away with a sharp finish.

The Danes, though, got themselves back in the match four minutes before half-time as a smart header across the goal from Michael Krohn-Dehli found Bendtner unmarked and he made no mistake with a close range header to

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thursday @ 8pm