

SPORT



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'Bangladesh has always been special'

SPORTS REPORTER



Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar unveiled the logo of Dhaka Premier League club, Legends of Rupganj, in a celebratory programme organised at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon yesterday.

Tendulkar, who happens to be a good friend of the club's owner Lutfur Rahman Badal, also unveiled the team's cricket jersey for this year.

"Visiting Bangladesh has always been special for me. Each and every trip has been memorable. Right from the time we played the ICC trophy here in 1998, followed by the time when Bangladesh played their inaugural Test against India in 2001," Tendulkar said while addressing the audience.

"I remember I got a wonderful reception here when I equalled Sunil Gavaskar's record of 34 Test hundreds; a big moment for me. From there on I scored my 100th 100 in Bangladesh as well," said the batting maestro while recalling his century in the Asia Cup in 2012.

"All the love and respect that people from Bangladesh have showered upon me have made the memories everlasting," added the cricketing legend.

The programme, which also witnessed the presence of ICC President AHM Mustafa Kamal, began with a presentation displaying the timeline of Badal's association with Premier League cricket. It included interviews of Badal, Legends of Rupganj captain Shakib Al Hasan and his teammate Tamim Iqbal.

That was followed by a video depicting Tendulkar's career.

"When this film was (being) shown Mr Kamal said that I started my career very early. My response to him was yes. I started my career from no hair to grey



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When you have living legend Sachin Tendulkar with you, smile is omnipresent. 1. The Indian cricket great shares a light moment with Bangladesh superstar Shakib Al Hasan and Lutfur Rahman Badal, a businessman and a passionate sports organiser, whose invitation for a brief Dhaka sojourn which Sachin happily complied. 2. Sachin, a goodwill ambassador of UNICEF, demonstrates to a girl how to wash hands properly. 3. Students of a school in Rupganj wait for their turn to display their cricketing skills to someone who has mastered it in every way possible. 4. It was a long wait for this girl to catch a glimpse of Sachin. 5. The honorary Indian Air Force group captain waves to photographers from the cockpit of a chopper.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

hair," said Tendulkar on a lighter note.

He then congratulated Badal and wished him the very best of luck for his future endeavours.

"Having known Badal and his love for the



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sport, I think the club is in the right hands,

"Also Tamim (Iqbal) and Shakib (Al Hasan) both play for his club. It's a big boost for the club and the youngsters. You need role models like them to bring glory to the country and make cricket more exciting all across the world," he said.

After the end of the programme Badal told reporters that apart from running a 'top-notch' club he also aims to open the 'world's best cricket academy' in the near future.

Tendulkar left the country yesterday evening soon after the end of the programme.

AFC U-16 WOMEN'S QUALIFIERS

Girls eager to make a mark

SPORTS REPORTER



Social and religious constraints have long been a hindrance to the growth of women's sports in Asian Muslim countries, but those

hindrances will be set aside as four of the Asian Muslim countries along with India lock horn in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers, which begins in Dhaka today.

Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan and United Arab Emirates (Qatar pulled out of the qualifiers at the last moment) have been placed along with India in Group B of the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers from where the group champions would get a ticket for the eight-team final round to be held in China in 2015.

Though there was interest among journalists to know about the state of women's football in these countries, the coaches of the respective sides were more interested to talk about their target and preparation for the qualifiers, at the official press conference yesterday.

Preparation wise, Jordan are ahead

of the others as they trained in Germany and played two practice matches there. The Jordan Football Association and their royal family are eager to take women's football ahead.

"Our Queen is eager to take country's women forward, not only in sports but in all arenas. We have three age-level women's teams starting from the U-14 team," said head of Jordan delegation Rana Ahmad Ali Hussein.

Jordan coach Manar Mustafa Ahmed Fraij is thinking of securing the final berth for China and believes they are strong enough to become group champions.

Like Jordan, Iran have the same target to win the group stage and they are on the back of seven-month's preparation, having played three practice matches in Uzbekistan.

"The federation has been very supportive for the last 12 years and we have now three women's leagues. We are facing no problems playing football at home and I think we are on the right path," said Iran captain Fatemah Geraelisheikh.

UAE just started women's football a few years ago and it is the first time that the UAE U-16 team is participating in

an international tournament. They are taking the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers as part of their preparation for AFC U-14 tournament to be hosted by UAE.

"Most of the players are from U-14 team and this tournament has been taken as a preparation for AFC U-14 championship," said UAE coach Samir Al Andaluse.

"It is difficult to find local girls for football but now we have nearly 1500 girls in different ages and we are looking forward to form UAE national women's team within five years with these girls," said Samir.

India coach Maymol Rockey has also set her sights on the final round but she believes Jordan and Iran would be toughest opponents in the group.

"All over the world, women's sport is treated with less importance and India is not an exception. But the present situation in India is better than the past," said Rockey.

On the opening day, Iran take on UAE at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from 2:00pm while hosts Bangladesh will be playing against Jordan in the second match from 5:00pm.

Clarke passed fit

AFP, Sharjah



Fit-again Australia captain Michael Clarke said Tuesday he hopes his team can carry the momentum of its Twenty20 and one-day wins over Pakistan into the two-match Test series starting next week.

Australia routed Pakistan 3-0 in the one-day series which finished on Sunday and also won the only Twenty20 match by five wickets in Dubai.

The 33-year-old, who sat out the

one-day series due to a hamstring injury, will test his fitness in the four-day preparation match against Pakistan 'A' starting from Wednesday.

That will put Clarke on course for the first of two Tests starting in Dubai from October 22. The second Test will be played in Abu Dhabi from October 30.

"It's obviously a different format of the game but the players that have been involved in T20 and One day series will take that confidence into the Test matches," said Clarke.

"In any form of the game I love seeing Australia have success and win and the momentum players have

been able to produce is really exciting and hopefully, the Test players can grab that momentum and continue to run with it."

Pakistan have not beaten Australia in a Test series since the match-fixing 1995 home games.

Then Pakistan captain Salim Malik was banned for life after Australian players – Shane Warne, Mark Waugh and Tim May – alleged he offered them a bribe to underperform on that tour.

Clarke showed confidence of regaining full fitness after getting injured on the tour of Zimbabwe in August.

Rookie spinner for Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan Tuesday named uncapped leg-spinner Yasir Shah to replace the suspended Saeed Ajmal in their preliminary 19-man squad for the two Tests against Australia starting next week in the United Arab Emirates.

Shah, 28, was one of the leading wicket-takers in the domestic season last year, with 48 scalps, but had little success in one-dayers or the two Twenty20s he played on the tour of Zimbabwe three years ago.

He has yet to play a Test but chief selector Moin Khan said he expects Shah to deliver.

"Shah is one of the fast-rising spinners at the domestic level and we have hopes that he will come good against Australia," Khan told AFP by telephone from Dubai.

The first Test begins in Dubai on October 22 and the second in Abu Dhabi on October 30.

Pakistan face a tough challenge to replace Ajmal, who has single-handedly anchored the team's wins across all three formats over the last five years.

SQUAD

Misbahul Haq (captain), Ahmed Shehzad, Mohammad Hafeez, Taufiq Umar, Shan Masood, Sami Aslam, Younis Khan, Asad Shafiq, Azhar Ali, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Talha, Rahat Ali, Imran Khan, Ehsan Adil, Attaullah, Sarfraz Ahmed, Zulfiqar Babar, Yasir Shah, Raza Hassan.

'Prison would break Oscar'

REUTERS, Pretoria



South African athlete Oscar Pistorius would be "broken as a person" if he were jailed for killing his girlfriend because of his disability and psychological problems, a defence witness at his sentencing hearing said on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old Paralympic and Olympic athlete, whose lower legs were amputated as a baby, was convicted of culpable homicide last month for shooting dead his girlfriend, law graduate and model Reeva Steenkamp, 29, on Valentine's Day 2013.

Probation officer Annette Vergeer, who was paid by the defence to produce her report, said South African prisons were not conducive to the disabled and Pistorius would be vulnerable to violence and highly stressful situations.

"It will not assist him but break him as a person. The death of the deceased and the period since have been a far bigger punishment than incarceration," Vergeer told the court.

"His disability and state of mind would cause his detention to be an excessive punishment with no benefits to him, society and the deceased's family," she said.

Pistorius, dressed in a dark suit and tie, sat impassively in the packed courtroom as one of the most closely watched murder trials in history edged towards its conclusion.

The athlete has broken down in tears and wretched into a bucket during the on-off, six-month trial. His psychologist told the court on Monday he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and sometimes spent sessions weeping.

On the first day of the hearing on Monday, a social worker recommended Pistorius be sentenced to partial house arrest and community service, which state prosecutor Gerrie Nel described as "shockingly inappropriate".

Nel will call at least two witnesses as the state pushes for a lengthy prison term. Sentencing is expected to conclude by the end of the week.

Culpable homicide, South Africa's equivalent of manslaughter, can be punished by anything from 15 years in jail to a suspended sentence or community service.

A non-custodial sentence would be likely to cause public anger, fuelling a perception among black South Africans that, 20 years after the end of apartheid, wealthy whites can still secure preferential justice.

Judge Thokozile Masipa cleared Pistorius of murder, saying prosecutors had failed to prove his intent to kill when he fired four 9mm rounds through a toilet door in what he said was the mistaken belief that an intruder was hiding behind it.

Pistorius, known as the 'Blade Runner' because of the carbon-fibre prosthetics he uses on track, said the shooting in his upmarket Pretoria home was a tragic mistake as he thought Steenkamp was asleep in bed, not in the small toilet cubicle.

India take in Akshar

CRICINFO, New Delhi

Akshar Patel, the Gujarat and Kings XI Punjab left-arm spinner, has been added as the 15th member to an otherwise unchanged India squad for the remaining two ODIs against West Indies. Akshar, along with Manish Pandey, has also been included in the 14-man squad for the only T20 International that follows the ODIs.

Suresh Raina, who hasn't played Tests since August 2012, will lead the Board

President's side in the three-day match in Kanpur before the Test series. Rohit Sharma, who has been

sidelined since the England tour in August with a finger injury, is also part of the

squad for the Kanpur game, as is young chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav.

Akshar, who has played three ODIs, made his India debut against Bangladesh in June following a strong IPL season.

Misbah faces tax evasion allegation

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's revenue authorities have frozen the bank accounts of cricket captain Misbahul Haq over alleged tax evasion, officials said Tuesday, plunging the star into fresh crisis.

Misbah is currently struggling with poor form with the bat and pulled out of the third and final one-day against Australia in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.