

# SPORT

## Good start spoilt

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh surrendered an early lead to suffer a 2-1 defeat against Singapore in an international friendly between the two nations after a gap of 42 years at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Hameed Newaz canceled a four-minute strike from Nasir Chowdhury on the half-hour mark before MKA Bin Kamal struck the winner in the 72nd minute much to the disappointment of some 5,000 home fans at the 'big bowl'.

While the last meeting of the two teams way back in 1973 produced a 1-1 draw, this game in particular was a build-up for Bangladesh as part of their preparation for joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifying games against Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

But despite the early lead the game was far from being convincing for the boys of Lodewijk de Kruif as they ran out of gas with the progress of the game and the backline struggled against an opposition that were not as technically sound as anticipated.

Nasir gave the home side an ideal start with a glancing header into the far post from Mamunul Islam's free-kick.

The early advantage put the hosts in pole position to control the game, but they continued to make unnecessary fouls around the danger zone and it resulted in two free-kicks that goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel negotiated well.

Singapore, who enjoyed the lion's share

of possession, kept attacking down the flanks that exposed the Bangladesh backline time and again.

Abu Sujad ran down the left flank to enter the box before delivering a nice chip for Hameed, who saw his header come off the post but sent the follow-up home with defender Yeasin Khan acting as a mere spectator.

Singapore came close to taking the lead in the 63rd minute but an unmarked Kamal headed wide. He however made amends soon after with a nice over-head chip to silence the home fans. Himel was partly responsible for the goal as his feeble clearance fell to the feet of lurking Kamal on edge

**BANGLADESH 1 - 2 SINGAPORE**  
NASIR CHOWDHURY-4 HAMEED NEWAZ-31  
BIN KAMAL-72

of the box.

"Overall, I'm not happy with everybody. Let's say I'm okay with eighty percent of the players. But we have to work on tactics and physique of the players so that everyone can play 90 minutes," said de Kruif at the post match briefing.

"We always start badly but I think we will play better football against Afghanistan as well as in the World Cup qualifiers", said captain Mamunul Islam, whom Singapore's German coach Bernd Stange termed as a very good player.

Bangladesh will play their second friendly against Afghanistan on June 2.



Bangladesh goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel soars to parry a flag-kick, one of the many set-pieces that he faced, in the international friendly against Singapore at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Nat'l cricket from Monday

SPORTS REPORTER

Akram Khan promised that the National Cricket Championship, starting tomorrow, will be better than its previous versions.

"All the matches will be played on turf wickets so that players get the opportunity to show their mettle. Rain always plays foul in this tournament due to the weather at this time, but we have no other suitable season. We tried to arrange the matches at good venues so that we could arrange curtailed-over matches if it rained," said the former national skipper.

"The semifinals and final may be two-day affairs but it's not yet confirmed. We are thinking of arranging a few matches with the best players of the tournament, who will be selected by match referees and our observers," he added.

64 districts enrolled for the 35th edition of the competition, which will be played at 12 venues across the country.

Two teams from Dhaka division and one team each from the remaining six divisions will move to the second round. The eight teams will be divided into two groups for the second round with the top two finishers from each group qualifying for the final.

## Tour to go on despite blast

AGENCIES, Lahore

Pakistan's information minister admitted Saturday a suicide bomber was behind an explosion that killed two people outside the stadium during a Pakistan-Zimbabwe cricket match.

Friday's explosion -- which police still insist was an accidental blast -- threatened to torpedo cricket-mad Pakistan's first series on home soil since an attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in March 2009.

The visiting team members met PCB and security officials held a meeting Saturday afternoon to discuss the fate of the ongoing cricket series.

"The tour will go ahead as planned and the Zimbabwe team will continue with their usual activities today."

## Soumya sets Test target

SPORTS REPORTER



Soumya Sarker came to the national team loaded with promise. The left-hander's 'take it easy' batting approach has already been praised by many. The 22-year-old added a positive vibe to the team; his batting performance in ODIs especially made many believe that he came here to stay as a batsman. However, Soumya yesterday said that he has been working hard to establish himself as a valuable all-rounder in the team.

"Whenever I get the chance I try to bowl. I got a chance to bowl against Pakistan in the last Test and I tried my

best. I also bowl in practice whenever I have the chance so that I can overcome the shortages in my bowling," said the batsman cum gentle medium-pacer while talking to reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

Soumya also said that he has started to prepare himself as a good player for Test matches.

"I already started the preparations to become a good Test player. In the first Test against Pakistan I could not capitalise on good starts in both innings and I also failed to do anything significant in the second Test, but after that I began trying to mentally prepare myself for the longest version of the game. I started with how to understand

when to leave the ball," said the young cricketer.

He plays as a top-order batsman in ODIs but he has to bat at the number seven position in Tests, but the player himself has no problem with playing in different positions in the batting order.

Soumya was very much confident with the coming series against India and he even said that Bangladesh would be the favourites in the series, though his senior colleagues echoed a different sentiment, considering the strength of the Indian side.

"To me Bangladesh are favourites. If we can continue our good form then good result should come our



The Tigers are back in business and began shaping up at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday so they can properly greet neighbours India on June 10.

PHOTO: STAR

## Rafael, Novak into last 16

AFP, Paris



Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal moved to within one win of a French Open quarter-final blockbuster Saturday as the sport's next generation endured a Grand Slam reality check.

World number one and top seed Djokovic reached the last-16 for the sixth straight year with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 win over 19-year-old Australian Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Defending champion Nadal, chasing a 10th title in Paris, brushed aside Russian world number 120 Andrey Kuznetsov, 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

Third-seeded Andy Murray, twice a semi-finalist, was also untroubled as he cruised to a 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 victory over Kokkinakis's 20-year-old compatriot Nick Kyrgios.

It was a chastening day for the sport's youngsters at Roland Garros with Kokkinakis and Kyrgios joined at the exit door by 18-year-old Croatian Borna Coric, defeated by America's Jack Sock, 6-2, 6-1, 6-4.

career Grand Slam, will face either South African 15th seed Kevin Anderson or French 20th seed Richard Gasquet for a place in the quarter-finals.

There was no sign of the hip problem which bothered him in his second round as he swept past his world number 84 opponent.

Nine-time champion Nadal reached the fourth round courtesy of eight breaks of the Kuznetsov serve.

Nadal will tackle unseeded Sock who, at 22, became the youngest American man to make the last-16 since Pete Sampras in 1993.

Kyrgios, the 29th seed and bidding to add a first French Open last-16 place to his runs to the 2014 Wimbledon and 2015 Australian Open quarter-finals, wasn't helped by requiring a medical timeout for an elbow injury late in the second set against Murray.

Murray, who fired 12 aces and 45 winners while Kyrgios was undone by 37 unforced errors, goes on to face unseeded Frenchman Jeremy Chardy who surprised 17th seeded Belgian David Goffin 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Marin Cilic, the ninth-seeded US Open champion, continued his quiet progress to reach the fourth round for the third time.

The 26-year-old eased past Leonardo Mayer, the Argentine 23rd seed, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 and will take on either 2013 runner-up David Ferrer or Simone Bolelli for a quarter-final slot.

In the women's tournament, Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova powered into the last 16 at the French Open on Saturday.

The fourth seed from the Czech Republic outplayed Romanian Irina-Camelia Begu 6-3, 6-2 in just 58 minutes.

Next up for Kvitova will be a fourth round tie against Timea Bacsinszky of Switzerland who upset 16th seeded American Madison Keys 6-4, 6-2.

Also through to the last 16 in early play was Italian Sara Errani, who gained revenge on Andrea Petkovic of Germany 6-3, 6-3.

There was disappointment though for another Italian, Francesca Schiavone, who lost 7-5, 6-4 to Andreea Mitu of Romania.

## Mushy still ill at ease

SPORTS REPORTER



Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim batted yesterday after taking a week's rest to heal his injured finger. Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that the team

management was hopeful of getting a fully-fit Mushfiqur for the one-off Test against India from June 10 at Fatullah.

"It was nice to see Mushfiqur bat today. We have enough time before the Test against India and we are hopeful that he will be okay by then," said Faruque yesterday.

National team physio Bayjedul Islam Khan informed that while Mushfiqur's condition had improved, the swelling and pain was still there. He also said that pacer Rubel Hossain was now fully fit and opener

Tamim Iqbal took part in the fielding session yesterday without any discomfort.

BCB physician Debashis Chowdhury said that they were not in a hurry with Mushfiqur.

"It will take some time to see him fully fit. Actually we are not in a hurry with him as we have plenty of time," said Chowdhury.

Whether the little man will be able to play the role behind the stumps remains a big question and Chowdhury said that it will fully depend on the player.

"It's nothing new that a player plays through pain and Mushfiqur may play but it will fully depend on him whether he continues keeping. I think everything will be clear within next two or three days," added Chowdhury.

The uncertainty over Mushfiqur's keeping however will not hinder the announcement of the Test team, which is likely to be announced on June 3.

## More series for A team

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is planning to arrange a number of series for the Bangladesh A team to strengthen the national team's pipeline.

An away series in Zimbabwe in October is confirmed, but the board is also trying to arrange a series in South Africa.

"We need our A team in action and that's why we will try to arrange a number of series for the second string team in the coming days. The Zimbabwe tour is confirmed, while Sri Lanka have also agreed in principle. We will also try with other Full Member nations," said Naimur Rahman, chairman of cricket operations, yesterday after a committee meeting.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus said: "We also discussed sending board officials to England to see if we can have a few tours for national and A teams as we don't have any away series in England in the FTP."

During the meeting it has also been decided that they will not host West Indies in the later part of the year if they do not agree to play ODIs.

"West Indies proposed four T20Is but we made it clear that the series should comprise at least two or three ODIs and two T20 Internationals," said Naimur.

The cricket operations committee also approved the proposal of sending injured pacer Shahadat Hossain to Australia for surgery.

## IN A NUTSHELL

### Children put on 'Crying sumo'

AGENCIES

More than 100 babies faced off in the sumo ring on Saturday in an annual contest pitting crying toddlers against each other in a Japanese tradition believed to bring infants good health.

The "crying sumo" event, held at Tokyo's Sensoji Temple in the historic Asakusa district, saw hulking sumo wrestlers attempt to make 120 babies bawl on command to the delight of parents and onlookers.

The ceremony dates back to some 400 years and is held at shrines and temples nationwide. The rules vary from region to region -- in some versions the babies are raced against each other to see who will cry first, while in others the first crier is the loser.

### Akram awaits Indo-Pak series

AGENCIES

Legendary fast bowler Wasim Akram has said he is hopeful about the India-Pakistan cricket series being revived. The former Pakistan captain said that an India versus Pakistan series should happen, wherever it happens, because the beauty of such a contest is unmatched and no match could beat that, the Dawn reported.

He also said that people are starved of India-Pakistan cricket and are desperate waiting for that.

### Federer's security upped

AGENCIES

When a young fan breached the French Open security and came onto the court with the hopes of getting a selfie with Roger Federer last Sunday, the tennis star demanded more security.



When Federer was escorted to the Tennis Channel studio, 14 men completely encircled the Swiss in the walkways of Roland Garros.