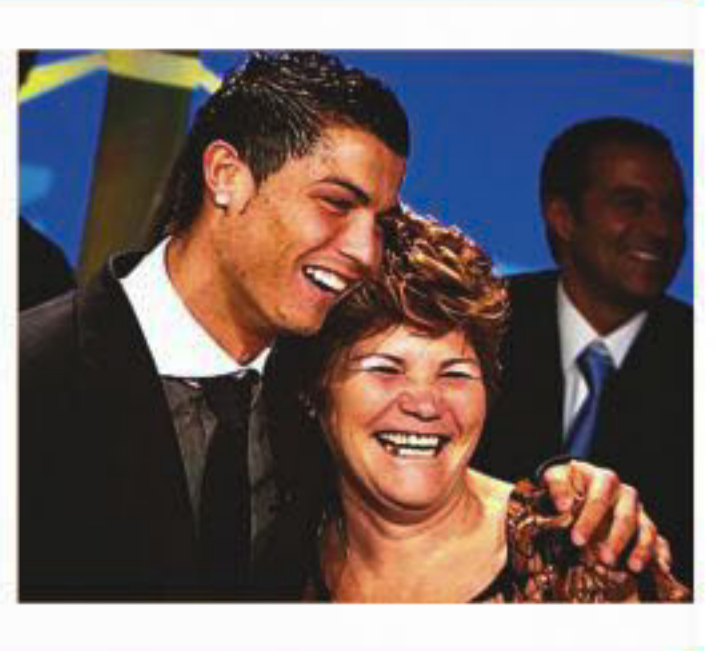
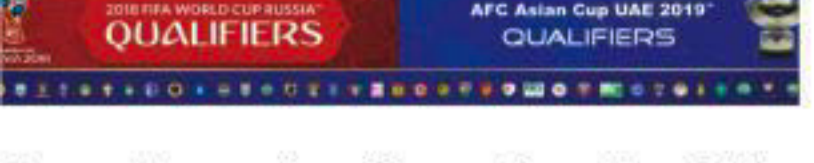


**€55,000 IN LUGGAGE!**  
 The mother of Cristiano Ronaldo was stopped by Spain's civil guard from returning home to Portugal with 55,000 euros in her handbag. Dolores Aveiro, the Real Madrid star's 61-year-old mother, had been waiting to take a flight out of Madrid late April when her hand luggage was inspected and the cash discovered, a spokeswoman for the Civil Guard said. The 55,000 euros was way over the 10,000 euros that passengers are allowed to take out of Spain without declaring the transfer. The offending 45,000 euros were seized, pending justification for it from Aveiro. -- AFP



# Home qualifiers give hope

SPORTS REPORTER



Ever since the draw for the Joint Qualifiers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2019 Asian Cup was held in Kuala Lumpur this April, there has been a renewed hope about Bangladesh's chances of making some positive impression, if not reach the final round of the Asian Cup.

Even though qualifying for the 12-team final round of the World Cup Qualifiers seems like a target too far, finishing among the top-three in five-team Group B is what Bangladesh are realistically aiming at. If they can finish among the top-three, Bangladesh will have a direct entry into the 24-team final round of Asian Cup Qualifiers. Bangladesh are pinning their hopes on snatching points from their first two matches against Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which will be held at home on June 11 and June 16, while Australia and Jordan are thought to be beyond the reach of Bangladesh even at home conditions.

The history in World Cup Qualifiers and international matches against these

teams doesn't speak much in favour of the red and greens. Bangladesh played twice against the Kyrgyz and lost on both occasions while they suffered four defeats, forced one draw and eked out a victory against the Tajik in international fixtures.

As far as World Cup qualifiers are concerned, Bangladesh have so far played 40 matches, winning nine times, drawing thrice while losing the remaining matches. Bangladesh's first appearance came in the Mexico World Cup qualifiers in 1985 where they played six matches against India, Indonesia and Thailand. Bangladesh managed to beat Indonesia (2-1) and Thailand (1-0) at home but lost the four remaining matches. Four years later, Bangladesh managed only one win against Thailand (3-1) out of six matches for the Italy World Cup Qualifiers in 1989.

In the USA World Cup Qualifiers in 1993, Bangladesh posted two victories over Sri Lanka while losing six times against Thailand, Japan and United Arab Emirates. In the next two editions, Bangladesh managed wins against Taiwan (2-1) and Mongolia (3-0).

But the men in red and green struggled in pre-qualifiers for the 2006 and

2010 World Cup. Both times Bangladesh were pitted against Tajikistan and they lost all four matches against the former Soviet state.

Bangladesh, however, shrugged off their poor performance in the last edition when they came through with a 3-0 aggregate win over Pakistan in the preliminary pre-qualifier before pushing Lebanon hard in the second phase of pre-qualifiers. Bangladesh suffered a 4-2 aggregate loss to the Lebanese despite beating them 2-0 at home.

As Bangladesh will be playing the first two matches at home this time, many believe that they have a good chance to secure points against Kyrgyzstan, who arrived here yesterday just 42 hours before the kick-off, and Tajikistan, who are also scheduled to arrive here some 48 hours before the June 16 fixture.

"It is possible to achieve the target of winning the first two matches as Bangladesh will be playing in familiar conditions in front of home crowd. The target may seem hard if we consider compare players individually, but if we count it as a team game, Bangladesh have a good opportunity to do well," said country's experienced coach Maruful Haque.



The Kyrgyzstan booters enjoy their moment as they walk out of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after arriving here yesterday evening. The Central Asian nation will take on hosts Bangladesh in the first match of the Joint Qualifiers for the World Cup and the Asian Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow.

## SA Games in India this year

SPORTS REPORTER

The South Asian (SA) Games is set to return after a five-year hiatus as the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) finally obtained permission from the Indian government to host the regional sporting extravaganza this year in Shillong.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has already received the invitation to the Games, which was last held in 2010 in Dhaka. India was supposed to host the 12nd edition of SA Games in 2012 but failed to do so following International Olympic Committee's (IOC) 14-month suspension, which was lifted in early 2014.

"India confirmed that they would host the Games in Shillong in the latter part of this year," BOA secretary general Syed Shahed Reza told reporters yesterday adding that representatives of all eight nations would sit in India on July 1 to finalise the schedule of the Games, which will feature 23 disciplines.

## Rakib 15th, Zia 16th

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Abdullah Al Rakib finished 15th in the 8th Mumbai Mayor's Cup International Open Chess Tournament which concluded in Mumbai, India yesterday.

Rakib drew against Georgian GM Mchedlishvili Mikheil in the final round to share the joint fifth position with seven points before his position was decided in tie-breaking system.

GM Ziaur Rahman and GM Enamul Hossain Razib finished 16th and 25th respectively.

GM Kravtsov Martyn of Ukraine and Georgian GM Paichadze Luka emerged champion and runners-up respectively, said a press release from Bangladesh Chess Federation yesterday.

## Golf academy opens amid hush-hush

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Golf Academy, the first institution for golf education in the country, was inaugurated at the Army Golf Club yesterday.

Chief of army staff and president of Bangladesh Golf Federation (BGF), General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan inaugurated the academy in a grand ceremony organised by the BGF.

The programme was attended, among others, by secretary general of Bangladesh Olympic Association Syed Shahed Reza, BGF secretary general Brig Gen Abul Fazal Md Sanaulah and Major General Mashud Razaq, president of the Army Golf Club.

However, there was curiously no media personnel invited to the programme and neither was any press release issued by the federation which raised quite a few eyebrows.

It may be mentioned here that the inauguration of this academy comes hot on the heels of the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open last month, the first ever Asian Tour event hosted here, which was covered in detail by most of the popular national newspapers.

It has been learnt that the academy will start functioning with from July 1 with golfers from R&A (The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews) programme. The academy will have residential facilities for around 50 golfers alongside training facilities for a higher number of golfers.

## Messi aims to end jinx

AFP, La Serena



Lionel Messi has won everything possible with Barcelona but has been left staring at an empty shelf gathering dust for his Argentina honours.

And 20,000 Argentine fans will cross the Andes hoping that the jinx is ended at the Copa America starting in Chile on Thursday. Barcelona's 3-1 victory over Juventus on Saturday provided Messi's fourth Champions League crown in 10 years. He also has seven Spanish titles and two World Club Cups and has been world player of the year four times.

But Argentina's defeat to Germany in the World Cup last year extended a national title drought lasting back to the 1993 Copa America.

"Our aim is to win this year," said Messi, who has nevertheless tasted Olympic gold with his country at the 2008 Beijing Games.

But while he was declared player of the World Cup, the Little Genius's speed and jinking runs never seem the same on the international stage as they do when he pulls on a Barcelona shirt.

Messi scored 43 goals in 38 Spanish championship matches this season -- behind eternal rival Cristiano Ronaldo on 48 -- and has the most goals in La Liga history with 286 and also a record 77 in the Champions League.

But the rate falls for Argentina, with 45 goals in 97 appearances.

Messi says he is always being asked why Argentina, who start this tournament again as one of the favourites, never win.

He wept uncontrollably after losing the 2010 World Cup quarterfinal 4-0 to Germany when Argentine legend Diego Maradona was the coach.

"It's great to play with the national team, to wear the shirt and to be captain," Messi said recently. "But getting a title would be the ultimate for me."

In 2007, Messi was part of the Argentine team that lost the Copa America final 3-0 to Brazil. In 2011, they lost to Uruguay in the quarterfinals on penalties when playing in his home province of Santa Fe.

Messi was jeered by Argentine fans for the

first time in his career, according to his father Jorge.

Argentina start this tournament against Paraguay in La Serena on Saturday and also play Uruguay and Jamaica in Group B.

Argentina coach Gerardo Martino believes that this will be his country's year because Messi has been in precocious form for Barcelona after two seasons marked by injury absences.

"He is doing things I have never seen him do before. I can see that he is taking pleasure being with his counterparts in attack," added Martino who coached Messi at Barcelona for the 2013-14 season.

As Martino can choose between Messi, Carlos Tevez, Sergio Aguero and Gonzalo Higuain up front there is no reason the goals should not flow.



Messi and Tevez only arrived in Chile on Monday to join up with their teammates in La Serena after their clash in opposing sides in the Champions League final.

Barcelona's Javier Mascherano and Juventus midfielder Roberto Pereyra were also late arriving because of the final.

No matter the result in Chile, Messi will be welcomed back to Barcelona with open arms.

But a statue of Messi put up during the World Cup last year was vandalised during the tournament.

And the Little Genius will have to use his magic to lift the Copa America in Santiago on July 4 to become a real Argentine hero.

## 'Shakib an inspiration'

PTI, Bengaluru

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahaman feels that rise of star cricketer Shakib Al Hasan as a national icon has been an inspirational story for all sports persons in his country. Siddikur, who will lead the Kapil Dev Ellora Pune team in the 4th Louis Philippe Cup, said he dreams of doing it for golf what Shakib did for cricket in Bangladesh.

"How often does a sports person from our nation get to play in the best league in the world. Surely Shakib's rise is an inspiration to all of us. I am glad that I could achieve a similar feat by being able to play in Louis Philippe Cup, which is like the IPL of Golf in India.

Describing the fan base in Bangladesh for cricket and golf, Siddikur said, "I can still walk in the crowd and not be recognised but Shakib cannot. He changed the way Bangladeshis look at cricket, and I hope I

will be able to do the same for golf in my country."

"I will also be keeping an eye on Shakib's performance in the Test match that begins tomorrow, and I hope Bangladesh shines there as well," said the two-time Asian Tour winner.

"I met Shakib twice in an award ceremony where he came to me and wished me all the best. He wanted me to teach his wife some golf but due to the busy schedule it never happened. I am happy that a guy of his stature came to meet me on the stage and asked me for help. It was a great feeling," added Siddikur.

Siddikur had earlier represented the Lucknow team in the inaugural edition of the Louis Philippe Cup at KGA in 2012.

"Leagues are the future of most sports and I was very happy to know that India is bringing a golf version of the IPL. There was no way I was going to miss on the opportunity of playing in the first season."



SIDDIKUR RAHAMAN

## Neymar leads challenge

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



A resurgent Brazil are determined to bury the memory of last year's traumatic World Cup campaign as they prepare to regain their crown as the kings of South American football at the Copa America.

Brazil's challenge at the World Cup on home soil was obliterated in a 7-1 semifinal mauling by eventual champions Germany, a result that was compared to the hosts' infamous defeat to Uruguay in the climax of the 1950 tournament.

An emphatic 3-0 defeat to the Netherlands in the third place play-off only added to the mood of disarray surrounding Brazil as the world's most successful footballing nation came to terms with its early exit.

But fast-forward nearly a year, and Brazil are heading into the Copa

America in Chile with renewed confidence after a sequence of nine straight wins since the World Cup debacle under the guidance of former captain Dunga.

Dunga, who succeeded Luiz Felipe Scolari, has overseen a steady return to winning ways since his reappointment.

Brazil's run of victories has included friendly wins over Colombia, Chile, Argentina and France, with Mexico becoming the latest victims in a 2-0 win in Sao Paulo on Saturday.

Dunga, who coached Brazil to their last Copa America win in 2007, believes the form of star striker Neymar is one of the keys to the revival.

One of Dunga's first acts last year was to hand the captain's armband to the Barcelona forward, and the 23-year-old has thrived on the added responsibility.

"It is not a surprise, but the statistics are there to show that when Neymar

puts on the captain's armband, he takes a step forward," Dunga said in March.

"He is a player who likes challenges. The more responsibility he has, the more he will develop. He is making history in European football."

Neymar missed Sunday's friendly with Mexico but will reunite with the squad bristling with confidence after scoring the final goal for Barcelona in their 3-1 Champions League final defeat of Juventus on Saturday.

Neymar's late strike in Berlin was the final act of a superb season for the Spanish treble winners which saw him notch 39 goals.

Dunga believes Neymar's goalscoring performance in the Champions League final augurs well for Brazil's Copa America campaign.

"This is good for Brazilian football as a whole, having a player scoring in the final and winning the Champions League," Dunga said.



Bangladesh cricket stars Soumya Sarkar (2nd from L) and Mominul Haque (2nd from R) become brand ambassadors for Kaymu Bangladesh Limited during a ceremony at their office in Banani on Sunday. PHOTO: COURTESY

## England 408 for 9

AFP, Birmingham



England, after losing the toss, made a record 408 for nine against New Zealand in the first one-day international at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

England's total was their highest in all one-day internationals, surpassing the 391 for four they made against Bangladesh at Trent Bridge in 2005.

Jos Buttler made an ODI best of 129 after Joe Root scored 104. England's total owed much to a stand of 177 between Buttler and Adil Rashid (69) -- a record for the seventh wicket in all ODI cricket, topping the 130 put on by Zimbabwe's Andy Flower and Heath Streak against England in Harare in 2001.

Grant Elliott took two wickets in two balls in the last over but Liam Plunkett survived the hat-trick by driving him for six to bring up England's 400.

## FIFA needs 'painful' reform: IOC chief

AFP, Lausanne



Olympic chief Thomas Bach said Monday that scandal-plagued FIFA needs "painful" but necessary reform.

The IOC president said the crisis at football's world governing body was bigger than the bribes-for-votes furore over the awarding of the 2002 Winter Games to Salt Lake City.

"We know from our experience that putting everything on the table can be painful but it's absolutely necessary. We've seen that in our past," he said at the International Olympic Committee's Lausanne headquarters.

to pursue the reforms that it has chosen to carry out. We appreciate that FIFA should be ready for substantial reforms."

Bach said the scale of the 2002 Games affair was nothing in comparison to the storm enveloping FIFA.

"The difference in magnitude is enormous," the 61-year-old told media after an IOC meeting.

"There is almost no comparison with what happened with Salt Lake City and what is happening at FIFA."

"It's hard to compare, perhaps on the principle, but not on the scale."

Bach addressed FIFA's Congress last week in Zurich 24 hours after the corruption scandal blew up with the arrest of seven FIFA officials as part of a US-led corruption inquiry.