

SPORT



SPORTING EID AROUND THE WORLD

During Eid-ul-Azha the Muslims and their communities across the world come together to celebrate and sacrifice. (CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM L) In Bangladesh, Tigers Mustafizur Rahman, Sabbir Rahman, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim celebrated the day with their families. Pakistan cricketer Umar Akmal posed with his sacrificial offerings, a camel and a few goats, while Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed headed out for a fun-filled day. Even international stars such as Paul Pogba and Moeen Ali donned traditional garbs on the holy occasion.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Krishna's success turning the tide

MIRZA SHAKIL from Tangail

Her mother Nomita once took her football, punctured it and cut it in half. The vehemence in that simple, brutal act may not be obvious at first. A girl raised in poverty wanted only to play her favourite sport in the evening, and a desire as innocuous as that led a mother to bring out the knife to cut it down.

The girl who was moved to tears by her mother's action is none other than Krishna Rani Sarkar, the captain of the Bangladesh U-16 women's team that emerged Group C champions of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers earlier this month. She led from the front, scoring eight goals in matches against Iran, Chinese Taipei, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore and United Arab Emirates as her side put together a display of dominance that belied their humble origins.

Not just for Krishna, it is a reality for most of her teammates that playing football and winning are the least of their struggles, which began with the very decision to play the sport they love. In the acutely conservative societies of rural Bangladesh, the pursuit of sporting excellence by girls is frowned upon.

"What could I do? I could not control myself after the non-stop aggravation from neighbours and also because of the uncertainty surrounding my daughter and my fam-

That she was good in her studies -- her exam results placed her at or near the top of the class from classes one to five -- did nothing to diminish the prejudice.



Bangladesh U-16 women's football team captain Krishna Rani, who for years past used to traverse the seven kilometres from her home to the school ground for practice, is seen taking a joy ride near her Tangail home yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ily's uncertain future," Nomita said. The neighbours' tongues had been wagging ever since Krishna, aged only four, started playing football with local girls and boys at a playground adjacent to her house.

Nothing changes attitudes like success, however, as the same neighbours are now full of praise. Her and the U-16 team's rousing success has lifted the profile of the remote Uttar Pathiala village, populated by

around 300 families. Now people from all over the country come to see Krishna.

Neighbour Badsa Miah said that previously almost no one from outside the village had visited the area prior to Krishna's success. "We are amazed at Krishna's success and she has enabled us to hold our heads up in pride in front of others," he said.

"Now the situation has changed and the same neighbours and villagers are coming to my house and expressing their delight and pride at my daughter's success," Nomita, singing a different tune now, added.

When Nomita destroyed her daughter's football, it was Krishna's paternal uncle Gour Chandra Sarkar who kept the flame alive by buying her a new one and inspiring her to keep playing.

"Girls are playing football and doing well now, but girls who want to play need the support of their parents, relatives and neighbours," Krishna said, who believes that the support from her father, her paternal uncles, primary school teacher Sayim-Al-Mamun and high school teacher Golam Raihan Bapon have proved crucial in her development.

"Of them, Bapon Sir not only gave me inspiration; he actually made me a footballer," she added.

Back to business for U-16 girls

SPORTS REPORTER



Having enjoyed a week-long vacation after emerging as group champions in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers, the girls of the under-16 women's team are all set to get back to business as their preparations for the 2017 finals begin today.

The girls are supposed to report to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) today after starting the journey from their respective districts -- Mymensingh, Tangail, Rangpur, Satkhira, Kushtia and Rangamati -- and the BFF, who will bear the girls' travel expenses, has instructed them to travel with their guardians to avert any unwanted situations on their way to Dhaka.

Meanwhile, the game's governing body will sit in an emergency meeting today to finalise the future plan for the U-16 women's football team.

Though BFF president Kazi Salahuddin did not reveal details, he said he wished to go phase by phase with the U-16 women's footballers.

"There is a big task ahead when the girls will play in Thailand where the top Asian teams, who are also top teams in world football, will take part. Our girls struck eight or 10 goals against opponents in the qualifying round but now they will be targeted by those top Asian teams. So we have to protect and inspire them to do the best they can," said Salahuddin, adding that he wants to see these girls win the SAFF Women's Championship in the next four years.

In a bid to protect the girls from conceding a glut of goals against the top Asian teams, Salahuddin said he wants to strengthen the coaching staff by hiring a physical fitness trainer, female physiotherapist and goalkeeping coach.

FIFA RANKINGS

Bad to worse for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh dropped two spots to 185 in the latest FIFA Rankings circulated yesterday. The demotion in the rankings is not unlikely for Bangladesh, who have been performing badly for quite some time. They drew against Bhutan in their last match, a crucial home tie in the AFC Asian Cup Playoff Qualifiers, after a 5-0 hammering by Maldives in an international friendly.

Interestingly, apart from Bangladesh, most of the South Asian countries have improved their positions. The most impressive among them are Maldives, who jumped nine spots up the ladder to 165.

India gained four spots and are now leading the South Asian pack with a position of 148, just one spot above Afghanistan. Nepal have moved up two spots, and so did Bhutan, who improved their position from 192 to 189.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka remain unchanged at 194th and 193rd respectively.

42ND CHESS OLYMPIAD BD experience worst-ever result

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh men's chess team produced their worst-ever result in a Chess Olympiad in the 42nd Chess Olympiad in Baku on Tuesday.

Bangladesh, whose best finish was 33rd in the 40th Chess Olympiad, hit the new low of 76th among the 180 participating nations. Their previous lowest finish was 73rd in the 2010 Chess Olympiad.

Bangladesh suffered a shocking 1.5-2.5 defeat to lightweights Qatar to complete the most forgettable campaign since their inaugural participation in 1984.

The Bangladesh women's team followed the footsteps of the men as they finished 77th among 142 teams after suffering a 1.5-2.5 defeat to Kyrgyzstan.

Sarwan set to retire

CRICINFO

Former West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan is set to announce his retirement from international cricket in Guyana on Thursday. Sarwan's last international match was an ODI against India at The Oval during the 2013 Champions Trophy. He has made 286 international appearances for West Indies in his career.

Sarwan, 36, who made his first-class debut for Guyana, against Barbados in the Red Stripe Cup of 1995-96 at the age of 15, played the first of his 87 Tests four years later, in May 2000 against Pakistan in Barbados, and scored 84 and 11*. He struck his maiden Test century in his 28th match, against Bangladesh in Dhaka, and gradually cemented his place at No. 3 in West Indies' Test line-up.

Eng to name squads sans Hales, Morgan

STAR SPORT DESK



The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will name their squads for England's Test and ODI tour of Bangladesh on October today after the withdrawals of ODI captain Eoin Morgan and Test and ODI opener Alex Hales on Sunday.

England look set to announce a 17-man squad for the two-Test series, plus a 15-man squad for the three-match ODI series in Bangladesh.

Hales and Morgan refused to tour because of the security fears engendered by the July terror attack on a Gulshan cafe which claimed the lives of 20 hostages. A security inspection of Bangladesh by the ECB in August led to the tour being given the go-ahead.

By refusing to tour Bangladesh, the 31-year-old Morgan has become the first England captain to pull out of a series for security reasons. Jos Buttler, the Lancashire wicketkeeper-batsman, will captain the one-day side in Morgan's absence.

"As with all England overseas tours, the safety and security of players and staff is of the utmost importance to ECB," said Andrew Strauss.

"Whilst we understand and respect Eoin and Alex's decision, we are disappointed that they have made themselves unavailable for selection for the Bangladesh tour."



STAN'S EMPIRE: He may not have set the tennis world alight like Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer or Novak Djokovic, the man he beat in the final of the US Open on Sunday, but Switzerland's World No. 3 Stanislas Wawrinka has made for himself a unique tennis career. A nearly-man till the Australian Open in 2014, he has now won his third major and has a hundred per cent record in Grand Slam finals, with his latest success making him the oldest man, at 31, to win the US Open in 46 years. His achievements mean that he will be universally feared as the ultimate big-match player, who has now won his last 11 finals on the ATP Tour.

PHOTO: REUTERS