

Six-shooter women in maiden final

To face champions India tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh confirmed their maiden final berth in the SAFF Women's Championship with a 6-0 mauling of Maldives in the second semifinal at the Kanchenjunga Stadium in Siliguri yesterday.

Young striker Sirat Jahan Swapna scored a hatrick while captain Sabina Khatun bagged a brace and centre-back Nargis Khatun added another as Bangladesh made it to the final of the competition after having been eliminated from the semifinals twice and the group stages once.

Golam Rabbani Choton's charges will play the final tomorrow against hosts India, who had earlier in the day confirmed their fourth successive final after beating Nepal 3-1 in the first semifinal at the same venue.

The final will be a replay of the group fixture where Bangladesh had held their mighty neighbours to a goalless draw to clinch the top spot in the group after having made a flying start to the competition with a 6-0 win over Afghanistan.

The women in red and green wasted little time to establish their supremacy over Maldives, whom they had previously beaten twice - first time by 3-1 goals in the 2014 SAFF Women's Championship and then by

2-0 goals in the 2016 South Asian Games. Young striker Swapna hogged the limelight with a hatrick as well as turning provider for two more goals.

The lanky forward broke the deadlock in the 13th minute with a solo effort before doubling the lead 11 minutes later as she turned in a through-pass from fellow striker Sabina.

The women in red and green did not add any more goals in the first half, but wreaked havoc at the Maldives defence after the restart, scoring four more within first 13 minutes.

In the 48th minute, Swapna whipped in a well-judged cross for Sabina, who bagged her sixth goal of the campaign with a placing shot before Nargis made it 4-0 four minutes later by smashing home a through-pass from Swapna.

Swapna then completed her hatrick in the 56th minute with a solo effort as she ran down the left to advance into the box and drive past Maldives goalkeeper.

Two minutes later Bangladesh were awarded a spot kick when substitute midfielder Marzia was brought down by Maldives captain Marium inside the danger zone. Sabina stepped up and calmly found the net to complete the rout. The prolific striker did have an opportunity to strike her second hatrick in the tournament eight minutes later, but she failed to turn home a rebound.



Goalscorers Nargis Khatun (L), Sirat Jahan Swapna and Sabina Khatun (R) show the number of goals they scored with their gestures while posing along with their coach Golam Rabbani Choton after thrashing Maldives 6-0 at the Kanchenjunga Stadium in Siliguri yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF



Brazilian midfielder Oscar is cheered upon his arrival at the Shanghai airport yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Oscar lands in Shanghai

AFP, Shanghai

Brazilian midfielder Oscar landed in Shanghai on Monday where the 25-year-old was set to smash the Asian transfer record with a reported 60 million euros (\$63 million) deal with Shanghai SIPG.

Dozens of supporters chanting club songs swarmed the former Chelsea player at the city's Pudong airport.

Oscar's arrival in the Chinese Super League comes ahead of that of Argentina's former Manchester United striker Carlos Tevez, who signed for Shanghai Shenhua in another big-money deal last week.

Tevez's transfer fee was 10.5 million euros, according to the website transfermarkt.com, which tracks dealings in the sport, though the reported two-year contract of 38 million euros per season (\$40 million) makes him the world's highest

salaried footballer.

SIPG's general manager on Monday dismissed concerns raised by state media of a market bubble in the super-rich Chinese league, arguing prices have to be higher to attract players away from big European leagues.

"The league is developing so of course it will go through many different stages," Sui Guoyang told AFP, after escorting Oscar through a media scrum.

"I believe that from now on the Chinese Super League will become healthier and more normal," he added.

Some fans put it more bluntly. "In the end if you do not pay the money then nobody would be willing to come over here," said SIPG supporter Zou Jiahao.

Oscar will join fellow Brazilian player Hulk who joined SIPG for a reported 55 million euros in July 2016.

The pair will be coached by former Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea manager Andre Villas-Boas.

Costa reveals he wanted to leave

AFP, London

Chelsea striker Diego Costa has revealed he came close to leaving the club during the close-season transfer window.

The Brazil-born Spain international had a poor 2015-16 campaign as Chelsea's title defence unravelled and said he decided to leave the club for personal reasons at the end of the season.

But he changed his mind and has helped to send Chelsea six points clear at the top of the Premier League table with 14 goals in 18 league appearances.

"Did I want to go? Yes, yes, I was about to leave. But not because of Chelsea," Costa said in comments published by the BBC on Monday.

"There was one thing I wanted to change for family reasons, but it wasn't to be, and I continue to be happy here."

As well as his goals, Costa's on-pitch conduct has improved this season and he said he had made a deliberate effort to curb his aggression.

"I knew I had to improve that aspect because here in the Premier League there is no mercy," he said.

"A lot of the time it seemed (referees) were against me. If they're not going to change, I had to change."

Defoe defies Liverpool

AFP, London



Jermain Defoe scored two penalties as third-bottom Sunderland prevented Liverpool from significantly trimming Chelsea's lead at the Premier League summit in a 2-2 draw on Monday.

Liverpool twice went ahead, through Daniel Sturridge and Sadio Mane, but Defoe's two spot-kicks mean Chelsea will move eight points clear if they win at Tottenham Hotspur on Wednesday.

Manchester City beat Burnley 2-1 at home despite the first-half dismissal of Fernandinho.

Liverpool were left five points adrift of Chelsea in second place, with City two points back in third place.

Sturridge gave Liverpool a 19th-minute lead. Dejan Lovren miscued his volley from a corner, but Sturridge reacted sharply to swivel and redirect

the ball past Sunderland goalkeeper Vito Mannone with his head.

Defoe equalised six minutes later from the penalty spot after Didier N'Dong was fouled by Ragnar Klavan.

Mane restored Liverpool's lead in the 72nd minute, tapping in from a corner, but then conceded a penalty for a needless handball, allowing Defoe to equalise with six minutes to play.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola gave Kelechi Iheanacho a run-out in place of Sergio Aguero and the Nigerian squandered an early one-on-one with Burnley goalkeeper Tom Heaton at the Etihad Stadium.

Heaton then got down well to repel a low effort from Yaya Toure before Fernandinho was sent off in the 32nd minute for flying in on Johann Berg Gudmundsson with both feet off the ground.

Guardiola turned to his bench at half-time, sending on Aguero and David Silva, and within 17 minutes

of kick-off in the second half City were 2-0 up.

Left-back Gael Clichy broke the deadlock in the 58th minute, curling home with his weaker right foot, and four minutes later Aguero slammed home from a tight angle.

Abulunder by Claudio Bravo allowed Ben Mee to reduce the arrears following a goalmouth scramble with 20 minutes remaining, but City held on.

Substitute Enner Valencia, Leighton Baines and Romelu Lukaku scored in the last 17 minutes as seventh-place Everton overcame Southampton 3-0 at Goodison Park.

West Bromwich Albion remain a point below Everton in eighth after coming from behind to win 3-1 at home to second-bottom Hull City.

Champions Leicester City have now gone 12 league games without an away win following a drab 0-0 draw at Middlesbrough that left them six points above the relegation zone in 14th place.



Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero (C) shoots one during his side's 2-1 win over Burnley at the Etihad Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

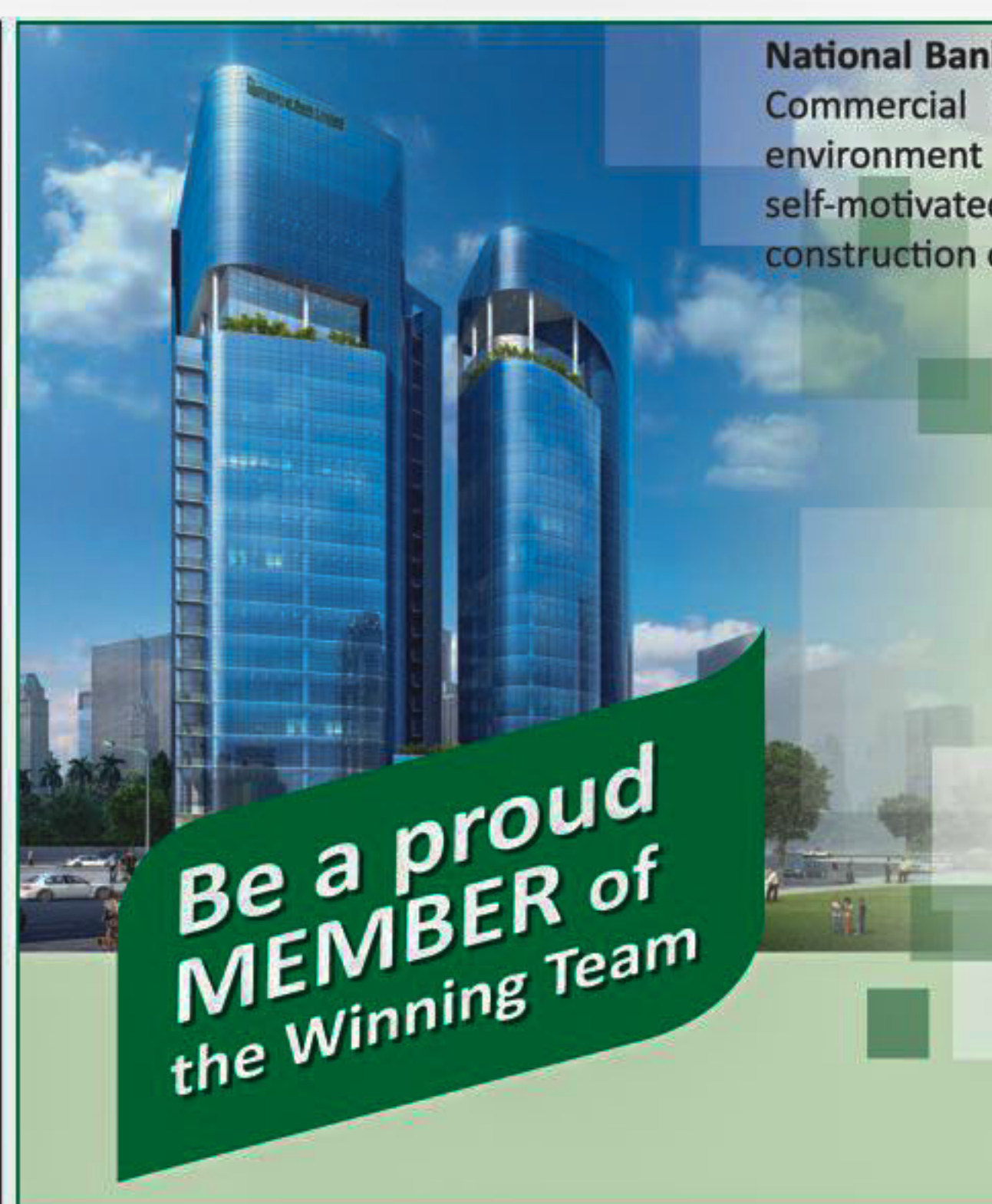
CHAMPIONSHIP LEAGUE

Saif SC remain unbeaten

SPORTS REPORTER

Saif Sporting Club kept their unbeaten run in the Marcel Bangladesh Championship League intact when they played out a goalless draw against Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With seventh draw in 12 matches, newcomers Saif SC lead the eight-team table with 22 points, one point more than Youngmen's Club, who were jointly in second position alongside Agrani Bank SC.



National Bank Limited, a leading first generation innovative and vision driven private sector Commercial Bank having 191 Branches all over the country with excellent working environment and corporate culture, invites applications from dynamic, proactive, self-motivated and talented individuals for the post of **Project Director/Engineer in Charge** for construction of high rise buildings of the Bank.

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