

**QUICK SINGLES**

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

**Liton ruled out of Colombo Test**  
 Bangladesh wicketkeeper Liton Das has been ruled out of the second Test, starting in Colombo tomorrow, due to a rib injury he sustained when hit on the chest by a net bowler during practice at the P Sara Oval.

**Pakistan suspends Mohammad Irfan**  
 Pakistan charged and suspended giant fast bowler Mohammad Irfan over allegations of spot-fixing during a recent Twenty20 league, in a case that has so far ensnared three other current or former national stars.

**Chelsea beat 10-man United**  
 Chelsea manager Antonio Conte gets the upper hand on Jose Mourinho for the second time this season as his double-chasing side beat 10-man Manchester United 1-0 at Stamford Bridge.

**Balde stunner helps Lazio to precious win**  
 A stunning late strike by Keita Balde helped Lazio to a 3-1 win over Torino that keeps the capital side in the hunt for Champions League qualification in Serie A.

**Kerber rallies to reach fourth round**  
 Second seed Angelique Kerber put on a determined display to rally past France's Pauline Parmentier 7-5 3-6 7-5 in the scorching desert heat to reach the fourth round of the BNP Paribas Open.

**Wawrinka advances**  
 Stan Wawrinka breezed into the fourth round of the BNP Paribas Open and saw another seed removed from his path to the final when lucky loser Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan turned his match against Tomas Berdych upside down.

# Not quite a united front

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

It would be an overstatement to say that Mahmudullah Riyad's exclusion has overshadowed Bangladesh's 100th Test match, beginning today at the P Sara Oval in Colombo at 10:30am (Bangladesh time). However, it would be an alternative fact to say that the atmosphere leading up to such an important Test match -- as much as it being the 100th, it is a match Bangladesh have to win to level the series after the 259-run thrashing in Galle -- is ideal.

At the least, one would expect that the team and the management to present a united front before an important game. The day before was one of high farce, with the team management in Sri Lanka saying that Riyad, as a senior batsman, will be sent home for the duration of the second Test before coming back here if selected for the limited-overs leg of the tour. Then, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, in a press conference in Dhaka on the same day, had blown any consideration of Riyad going back out of the water. Within hours the ODI squad was named with Riyad in it. So, with management and board pulling in seemingly opposite directions, when skipper



**Babbar Rahman is all set to make his comeback in the second Test -- Bangladesh's 100th -- against Sri Lanka starting at the P Sara Oval in Colombo today.**

PHOTO: AFP

Mushfiqur Rahim had taken his seat for the pre-match press conference at the P Sara Oval yesterday, the last official word from the Bangladesh camp was team manager Khaled Mahmud saying on Monday night that, since he is in the ODI squad, a decision on whether Riyad will go back or stay will be taken once Papon reaches Colombo, which he had in the evening yesterday. "He is possibly not playing in

the second Test, but since he is in the ODI squad, he will stay with the team. It can happen to any cricketer that he might fall into a bad patch," announced Mushfiqur when asked whether Riyad will go back or if he has gone back already. "Hopefully he will come back strongly in the ODIs."

Now, the press conference took place yesterday at 1:45pm Sri Lanka time, and Papon had not arrived yet. Riyad was initially, before

Papon held the press conference on Monday, supposed to go back in the morning yesterday but because of ticket unavailability, Riyad's flight pending Papon's approval was going to be put back to the morning of the historic Test. It was not officially announced anywhere till 8:00pm that Riyad will continue to be with the team in Colombo, if that is indeed the case.

Granted, because of the proximity of the ODI leg, which gets

underway in a week's time with the warm-up match on March 22, and Papon's own opinions on the matter, Riyad probably would have stayed behind anyway. But what message it sends to the team and the management, including coach Chandika Hathurusingha and Mahmud, that the captain announced a decision that is supposed to be made by management is anyone's guess.

"It won't have much of an impact in the team but he is a senior cricketer so you feel bad. But we are 1-0 down, so whoever plays has to focus on making it 1-1."

In this utterance at least, Mushfiqur towed the line that Mahmud was tugging at the day before when the former Bangladesh captain said: "We are behind in the series and it is not a place for emotions; performance is paramount."

It is certainly a sign of a professional team when even someone as established as Riyad is dropped, that too for a momentous Test, because of underperformance.

The decision to send Riyad back may have raised a few eyebrows, but it was made by a management entrusted with making these decisions according to how they see it. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that decision it now seems that Riyad is staying and the team, by conservative estimate, is a little out of sync.

# Bolt set to skip World Relays

AFP, Kingston



Usain Bolt is poised to skip next month's IAAF World Relays in the Bahamas as he prepares to retire from the sport later this year. The reigning Olympic 100m and 200m champion told reporters at a track meeting in Kingston on Saturday that he was unlikely to feature in the Jamaica squad for the two-day championship set for April 22-23.

"My coach hasn't said anything about it (World Relays), so I doubt that I will be competing there this year. I am just trying to stay injury free," said Bolt, who is looking forward to his final race on Jamaican soil, the Racers Track Club Grand Prix set for June 10.

"It's just going to be exciting and emotional, I think it might be a little bit emotional, but I am looking forward to it, it's my coach's meet, so I am excited to be a part of it."

As the reigning world champion over 100m and 200m, Bolt qualifies automatically for the World Championships in London and will not take part at the Jamaican Championships qualifying event in June.

The 30-year-old said he was happy with his training for the final few months of his career, which will end with his retirement after the World Championships.

"Everything is going smooth, so the key thing is to stay injury free. I am just going to continue pushing myself and pushing my body and I hope it will work out," he said.

Bolt, the world record holder, successfully defended his Olympic 100m, 200m and 4x100m crowns at last year's Rio de Janeiro Games.



# Losing start for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani got off on the wrong foot in the AFC Cup when the Bangladesh Premier League champions suffered a 0-2 defeat at the hands of Maziya S&RC of Maldives in their Group E opener at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Maldives Premier League champions struck on both sides of the break to prove once again that their outfits are ahead of Bangladeshi counterparts as Abahani had also been beaten earlier by another Maldivian side, TC Sports Club in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup tournament in Chittagong.

Abahani coach Drago Mamic started with a five-man backline, keeping Nigerian marksman Emeka Darlington upfront, but the proven striker was hardly assisted by teammates throughout the match. And although Emeka attempted to place a nice cutback to David Jonathan in the very first minute, the Maziya defenders successfully foiled the attempt.

With better ball possession, Abahani kept pressing Maziya's backline but conceded the lead against the run of play when Imaaz Ahmed played a forward-pass to Mohamed Umair, who made no mistake as he placed the ball to the left-hand side of advancing goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel in the fifth minute to stun Abahani.

Afterwards Abahani was in control of the game, launching most of their attacks from the flanks as right-back Mamun Mia worked hard down the right. However, Abahani's forwards

**ABAHANI 0-2 MAZIYA**  
 Umair 5',  
 Abdullah 87'

were unable to capitalise as Maziya's tall goalkeeper Pavel from Kyrgyzstan and Romanian defender Andrei Cordos successfully negotiated every dangerous situation to keep Abahani away.

Abahani midfielders could hardly play any defence-splitting passes or muster any long-range shot either and so Maziya goalkeeper Pavel was all but kept untested under the post.

During the second half both sides played attacking football, with Maziya coming close twice to widen the margin but Abahani goalkeeper, Sohel, thwarted both attempts before ultimately failing to stop Asadullah Abdullah, who fired

home from inside the box with his left foot three minutes from time after starting the run from centre-field.

"I did not expect the performance the boys put up against Maziya Club who are boosted with four foreign players and all national players. I am really satisfied the way they represented Bangladesh as I had to work with a new squad in a short period," said Mamic.

On the other hand, the 63-year-old coach criticised the Iranian referee citing that he ignored a lot of fouls in favour of Abahani during the last 20 minutes.

Mamic's counterpart Marjan Sekulovski was also satisfied with the expected win over Abahani.

"Our mission is okay now as we came here to win the match. I want to thank my boys for implementing the plan accordingly as we knew well how Abahani played," said Marjan.



**Abahani players are dejected after losing to Maziya S&RC of Maldives in their AFC Cup Group E match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.**

PHOTO: STAR

# Conte-Mourinho feud boils over

AFP, London



N'Golo Kante blasted Chelsea to a fiery 1-0 win over 10-man Manchester United in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Monday as Antonio Conte and Jose Mourinho feuded on the touchline.

Antonio Conte slammed Manchester United's cynical attempts to intimidate Chelsea but Jose Mourinho hit back at his rival by insisting he remains the Blues' best ever manager.

Chelsea boss Conte was furious with United's aggressive approach after Ander Herrera was sent off for two fouls on Eden Hazard.

Marcos Rojo escaped a red card for a spiteful stamp on Hazard late in the second half at Stamford Bridge, but the United defender is likely to face a ban if the Football Association retrospectively look at the offence.



**Chelsea coach Antonio Conte (R) gestures on the touchline as his Manchester United counterpart Jose Mourinho looks on during their FA Cup quarterfinal at Stamford Bridge on Monday.**

PHOTO: AFP

embroiled in a touchline row with United boss Mourinho that ended with the rivals being separated by the fourth official.

Asked what he made of United's tactics, Conte said: "My players want to play football, but for 25 minutes it was impossible."

"I think only that Eden got a lot of kicks. I don't think I'm crazy."

"He started the match receiving kicks and he finished it receiving kicks."

"This is the truth and I don't think one person can say this didn't happen. It's not football for me."

"It could be United's tactic. Sometimes when you play against players with great talent you try to intimidate them."

"The referee must try to protect these type of players because they can go out with a bad injury."

It was a chastening return to west London for former Chelsea boss Mourinho, who endured his old

club's fans calling him "Judas" and chanting "you're not special anymore".

Mourinho responded to the jibes by holding up three fingers to the crowd to remind them how many Premier League titles he won in his two spells with Chelsea.

And, determined to have the last word, Mourinho, sacked by the Blues last season, took the opportunity to remind Conte and Chelsea's supporters that they have a long way to go to match his achievements at the Bridge.

"They can call me what they want. I'm a professional," he said.

"I feel responsibilities on Chelsea's bad Premier League last season, but when I left we were in the Champions League, winning the Champions League group."

"Now they don't play in Europe. It's not my fault."

"Until the moment they have a manager that wins four Premier Leagues, I am number one."

"If a manager wins four 1 become number two. Until then, Judas is number one."

# 'No need to curb aggression'

PTI, Ranchi



India coach Anil Kumble Tuesday said there was no need for his team to curb its aggression despite the din over on-field behaviour in what is turning out to be an intensely-fought Test series against Australia.

"I don't want to curb any natural instinct of the players as long as they go out there and do what is expected of them."

"I don't think we need to read too much into the aggression."

"Every player has his own way of having a game face," Kumble said ahead of the third Test.

The big-ticket series is poised at 1-1, with everything to play for in the remaining two matches.

On aggression, Kumble added, "And that's what you want."

"You want everyone to go out there and show what they are capable of. This is a very important series. It's 1-1. Both teams will come hard in this game. I'm sure cricket will be the winner."

"As custodians of this great game, we believe it's important that we look after the game. Key stakeholders are the players and they certainly understand their responsibility," the former India captain told reporters.

Kumble lauded the BCCI for taking a "matured call" and bringing the focus back to cricket.

# Emerging Cup takes shape

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take over Hong Kong at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium (SKICS)-1 on March 27 in one of the opening day's matches of the Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

The itinerary of the eight-team tournament, which will take place in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, was announced yesterday.

Eight Under-23 teams divided into two groups will take part in the meet. India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Malaysia have been drafted in Group A while Group B comprises Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Pakistan and Nepal.

The hosts have already started preparations and chief selector Minhajul Abedin said yesterday that they will announce a 15-member squad on March 17. A team can include four national players and the rest must be U-20 players.

**ITINERARY**  
**March 27:** India v Sri Lanka (ZACS), Afghanistan v Malaysia (MAAS), Bangladesh v Hong Kong (SKICS)-1 and Pakistan v Nepal (SKICS)-2

**March 28:** Sri Lanka v Afghanistan (ZACS), India v Malaysia (MAAS), Pakistan v Hong Kong (SKICS)-1, Bangladesh v Nepal (SKICS)-2

**March 30:** India v Afghanistan (ZACS), Sri Lanka v Malaysia (MAAS), Bangladesh v Pakistan (SKICS)-1 and Hong Kong v Nepal (SKICS)-2

**April 1:** First Semifinal (ZACS) and Second Semifinal (MAAS)

**April 3:** Final (ZACS)

# Satkhira clinch 11-goal thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

Satkhira notched up a thrilling 6-5 win over Khulna in the U-18 National Football Championship in Gopalganj yesterday.

The match rolled into the second half's stoppage time with the scores locked at 5-5 before Suman struck the decisive goal two minutes in to provide Satkhira an exciting victory. Meanwhile at the same venue, Narail and Magura played out a 2-2 draw.

At different venues across the country, Barisal beat Madaripur 2-1, Jhalakathi defeated Bagura 2-0, Netrokona blanked Sherpur 3-0, Dhaka outplayed Mymensingh 4-0, Sunamganj beat Comilla 3-2, Lalmonirhat beat Kurigram 1-0, Nilfamar beat Panchagarh 1-0, Chittagong outshone Bandarban 3-0, Cox's Bazar thrashed Noakhali 3-1, Rajshahi defeated Naogaon 4-0, Natore beat Kushtia 2-0, Sirajganj overcame Chuadanga 2-1, Narsingdi drew goalless with Brahmanbaria while BKSP, riding on a hat-trick from Shahed, handed a 5-0 defeat to Munsiganj.

# Torres back in training

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid striker Fernando Torres returned to training on Monday after recovering from a sickening head clash, suggesting he could play in Wednesday's Champions League tie against Bayer Leverkusen.

Torres lost consciousness in a challenge with Deportivo La Coruna's Alex Bergantinos in a 1-1 draw on March 2 but was later discharged from hospital with no serious injuries.

Despite rejoining his teammates on the training pitch, the 32-year-old has yet to receive the all-clear from doctors though, the club indicated.