

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2

Bundesliga
Hertha Berlin v Hoffenheim
 Live from 12:30am (Saturday)

SONY SIX
La Liga
Espanyol v Real Betis
 Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

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:

Neuer out for two matches

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will be out for two matches after sustaining an injury in training, but should be fit for the Champions League showdown with Real Madrid.



Van Gaal in talks over Dutch FA role

The Netherlands Football Association have started talks with Louis van Gaal as they begin their search for a new coach but want the veteran trainer to take on a senior role in the organisation.



Lehmann hails 'Bradman-like' Smith

Australian coach Darren Lehmann has hailed captain Steve Smith as "Bradman-like" after a hard-fought and fiery Test tour against India, while praising the entire "impressive" team.



'Signing Neymar is impossible'

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho believes signing Barcelona star Neymar is "impossible". The Brazil international has regularly been linked with a move to Old Trafford.



Nadal on track for Federer showdown

Rafael Nadal took a step closer to a possible final against long-time rival Roger Federer in the Miami Open after a straight sets win over American Jack Sock at Key Biscayne.



Richardson puts positive spin to Olympic slot

The time is right for cricket to bid to become an Olympic sport with the 2024 Games being eyed as a strong possibility, International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive David Richardson said.



NATIONAL WEIGHTLIFTING

Army rule day two

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army dominated the second day of the ARK Group 35th Men's and 12th Women's National Weightlifting Championships by winning three out of six gold medals at the National Sports Council Gymnasium yesterday.

Bangladesh Army's SA Games gold medallist Hamidul Islam and Shimul Kanti upheld their supremacy in their respective events by winning gold medals in the 77kg and 69kg categories while their female teammate Smriti Akter bagged gold in the 44kg category to lead the medal table. Meanwhile, Hamid Shah Parvin of Dinajpur won gold in the women's 44kg category.

Ashiqur Rahman of Narail and Shafayet Hossain of Bangladesh Ansar won gold medals in the 50kg and 85kg categories respectively.



Ace Bangladesh golfer Siddikur Rahman carded a brilliant six-under-par (66) yesterday to take his overall score to nine-under in the City Bank American Express Chittagong Open at the Bhatiary Golf and Country Club.

PHOTO: STAR

'I SAID IT TO THE AIR'

Lionel Messi has refuted allegations that he had abused an assistant referee during Argentina's 2018 World Cup qualifier against Chile, an offence for which he was banned for four games and fined 10,000 Swiss Francs. The ban means that the Argentine ace will not be able to represent his side until November. However, in an interview with Argentinian newspaper La Nacion, Messi said: "My comments were never directed at the assistant, they were comments made to the air," he said. Speaking to the air is a common expression in Argentina, which alludes to people voicing their frustration at nobody in particular. This was also the explanation that the Argentinian Football Association (AFA) sent to FIFA in an effort to clear their captain of any wrongdoing. A journalist who had access to the statement sent from the AFA added there was a note attached to the AFA's statement by Messi.

—AGENCIES



Siddikur opens up six-stroke lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Siddikur Rahman raced into a six-stroke lead after the second day of the City Bank American Express Chittagong Open yesterday. The two-time Asian tour winner began the day one stroke off first place, but he carded a blistering six-under-par (66) to open up the considerable lead with a nine-under-par (135) at the Bhatiary Golf and Country Club.

The Indian quartet of Shamim Khan (72), Sanjeev Kumar (71), Khalin Joshi (70) and Harendra Gupta (72) were tied for second alongside Sri Lankan Anura Rohana (72) with scores of three-under-par.

The leaders of round one, Samarth Dwivedi and Honey Baisoya of India, both slipped to eighth after carding three-over-par (75).

Starting the day tied for third place, Siddikur returned three straight birdies from the fifth hole onwards, before carding three more on the 10th, 11th, and 13th. A

bogey on the 15th was the only blemish, but Siddikur restored the six-stroke lead with another birdie on the 18th and final hole.

"I'm really enjoying playing here in Chittagong. The Bhatiary Golf & Country Club has a challenging layout and is one of my favourite courses. The City Bank American Express Bangladesh Open will go a long way in further popularizing golf in the country," Siddikur said.

"I had a decent start in round one, but really got my game going today. I struck it well and also took my chances on the green. I have a healthy lead at the moment but won't take anything for granted as there is a lot of golf still to be played. I would love to do well here in front of my home crowd this week," added the five-time champion in the Indian circuit.

Md Jakiruzzaman Jakir (70) was the next-best Bangladeshi golfer, finishing at seventh with a two-under-par (142).

Bangladeshi amateur Md Nobil Hossain had the highlight of the day as he hit a hole-in-one on the 17th hole. However, he missed the cut with a 19-over-par (163).

New AFA president vows to get Messi ban reduced

REUTERS, Buenos Aires



The Argentine FA, lacking proper leadership since 2015 and fearful its national team might not reach the World Cup finals without banned captain Lionel Messi, elected a third-tier club chairman and former roadsweeper as its president on Wednesday.

Claudio Tapia of Barracas Central, who play in the Primera B Metropolitana division, was the sole candidate in the election but still needed the support of a majority of delegates, which he achieved by scooping 40 of 43 votes cast.

He will serve a four-year term, but some of the power behind the scenes is expected to be wielded by his deputy Daniel Angelici, who is president of top flight Boca Juniors and was a key figure in promoting Tapia's candidacy.

Tapia, who is also known as "Chiqui" (little one), said one of his first tasks would be to get Messi's four-match suspension reduced and said it

was imperative everyone got behind beleaguered coach Edgardo Bauza.

Messi was suspended on Tuesday after FIFA said he had "directed insulting words at an assistant referee" during their 1-0 World Cup qualifying win over Chile on Thursday.

The match officials did not include the incident in their reports but FIFA acted on video evidence and Messi missed Tuesday's 2-0 defeat to Bolivia in La Paz.

"(We) will make the necessary efforts before FIFA for the sanction to be ... reduced because it is unjust," Tapia said. Messi will miss games away to Uruguay and at home to Peru and Venezuela, before returning for their final match in Ecuador in October.

Tapia said it was crucial to give Bauza backing if he was to help Argentina rise from fifth place in the South American qualifying campaign.

Only the top four teams qualify automatically for Russia in 2018 while the fifth-placed team must go into an intercontinental playoff against a side from the Oceania zone.

"We must back him ... as well as all the players," he told a news conference.

"We must meet with him to sit down and see what's best (for the team). We must find the way to recover our confidence so our beloved Argentine national team represents us in Russia and does its best possible."

The AFA has been under the administration of a FIFA-appointed Regularising Committee, headed by Argentine Armando Perez, since last June after a presidential election in 2015 ended in a 38-38 tie between two candidates when only 75 delegates had a vote.

Tapia is the first man to win the AFA presidency in an election since Julio Grondona in 1979. Grondona ran the AFA as his personal fiefdom for 35 years until his death in 2014.

The 49-year-old Tapia, who came to Buenos Aires from San Juan province with his family when he was a boy, spent nine years working for the capital's refuse collection company while playing for Barracas and became a trade union leader and president of his club aged 35.

Maradona brands Messi ban 'terrible'

AGENCIES, Buenos Aires



Argentina legend Diego Maradona branded FIFA's decision to ban Lionel Messi for four matches 'terrible' and said that he would raise the issue with FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

"I am going to speak with Infantino, I think it's terrible," Maradona told Argentine Radio show 'La Oral Deportivo'.

"The absence of Messi is decisive. There is one Argentina with him and another without him."

"Four games is a lot. However, the seriousness of Messi's words are also very strong, but I think it can be changed."

Maradona added that Messi's exemplary attitude throughout his career should be taken into consideration.

"He is a sensational person and doesn't do anything except train. He is a teddy bear with his teammates, with everyone," Maradona added.

"You have to be part of the dressing room or a training session to know if it is the kind of thing which truly reflects him."

Maradona also likened the situation to Frenchman Zinedine Zidane's headbutt in the 2006 World Cup final against Italy, saying it happened in the heat of the moment.

"I would compare it with Zidane's headbutt on [Marco] Materazzi," he said. "He left France with 10 men and was no longer the best player at that World Cup."

Finally, Maradona insisted that he had had no input in the sanction, despite his role as an ambassador of FIFA.

"The ban started with CONMEBOL. I investigated and asked about it, but I didn't influence anything."

All regions get more slots in 2026 World Cup

AFP, Zurich



All football regions will see their World Cup slots increased when the tournament expands to 48 teams in 2026, with Africa the biggest winner, according to FIFA recommendations released Thursday.

The plan to expand the competition beyond its current 32-team format, which is subject to approval at FIFA's May Congress in Bahrain, guarantees Africa nine places, marking an increase of four.

Asia, currently guaranteed between four and five World Cup entries, will get eight slots, while European confederation UEFA gets a boost from 13 to 16.

The confederation for North, Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF) will have six places, above its current level of between three and four.



FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

South America (CONMEBOL), which now has between four and five slots, will get six, according to the recommendations from FIFA's ruling council.

Oceania, which has not been guaranteed an entry in past World Cups, will be assured one spot.

The January 10 decision to expand the World Cup marked a major victory for FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who has been on the job for just over a year.

He boasted at the time that under the new format more countries "will have the chance to dream" and that a larger tournament will reflect "the World Cup of the 21st Century".

FIFA's decision to expand the tournament infuriated many in the football world, with some branding it a money grab and a blatant bid by Infantino to win favour among developing world federations who helped elect him.

BJMC, Army, Ansar share the glory

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Ansar shared the honours on the second day of the 38th National Cycling Championship after winning two gold medals each at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

BJMC, who bagged two gold medals on the opening day, got two more when Swapan Alam and Rony Masud Rana won their 1000 meter sprint and 12000m Point Race respectively while Subarna Barman and Shilpi Khatun of Army won gold medals in the women's 4kg Team Time Trial and women's 1000m Sprint respectively.

Bangladesh Ansar grabbed the 8kg Team Time Trial gold medal while Chingbai Marma won Ansar's second gold in the women's 6000m Point Race.

Mori out for season

AFP, London

Everton defender Ramiro Funes Mori is set to miss the rest of the season after suffering a serious knee injury playing for Argentina.

Funes Mori was stretched off with a torn meniscus in the first half of Argentina's World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in La Paz earlier this week.

Bangabandhu Cup deferred

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday deferred the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament by eight months till December, citing the unavailability of participating foreign teams during the earlier stated time in April.

The decision was made at an emergency meeting of the BFF executive committee, which had last month decided to hold its annual international competition in the third week of April with the participation of six nations.

"It is an international tournament featuring national teams and Olympic teams from different coun-

tries and we have talked to teams in the subcontinent and in other parts, but we could not assemble the teams together in the time we had earlier scheduled. Having analysed the conditions of the teams, the international commitments of the participating teams, and our preparations, it was decided to hold the Bangabandhu Gold Cup from December 18 to 31 in Sylhet and Dhaka," BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy said after emerging from the meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag had earlier informed that the participating teams were ready to take part, but the tournament could not be held due to financial constraints and

lack of sponsors. However, Murshedy denied those claims and said there were no financial problems and that sponsors were ready for the start of the tournament.

Murshedy also believes that the Bangabandhu Gold Cup will be a good platform for preparing the national team ahead of the SAFF Championship, which is supposed to be held in Dhaka in January.

Murshedy added that they had talked with Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Cambodia -- teams that will remain available in December -- and that the number of participating teams may be increased from six to eight as they have got more time to talk with other countries.

Join the **Sesame Workshop Bangladesh** Team to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder



Sesame Workshop Bangladesh is looking to fill the **Project Director** position for an upcoming USAID Project. The Project Director will provide overall management leadership, technical direction, administrative and financial control. S/he will have demonstrated leadership and administrative skills in program management, including managing budgets and personnel, motivating and supervising teams and achieving success with complex activities. Please note, only Bangladeshi citizens are eligible to apply for this position.

For details on essential candidate skills and qualifications and to apply, please visit bdjobs.com

The deadline is April 10, 2017



Join the **Sesame Workshop Bangladesh** Team to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder



Sesame Workshop Bangladesh is looking to fill the **Executive Producer** position for the educational children's program, Sisimpur. The Executive Producer (EP) must be creative, dynamic, and innovative. The Executive Producer will lead the production for Sisimpur, and other associated media, in order to spread the Workshop's mission of helping kids grow smarter, stronger and kinder. This role is primarily responsible for the ongoing development and long term planning of the show to drive forward the mission, increase child engagement and build on its educational core.

For details on essential candidate skills and qualifications and to apply, please visit bdjobs.com

The deadline is April 10, 2017

